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Ms. Rivera.

After reviewing the *Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area 48-Hour Search Interval Bird Fatality Study* (M32) and *Smallwood's Review of M32* (P111), I would like to take this opportunity to share our thoughts on this highly anticipated report (M32). As Shawn Smallwood did, I would like to begin by acknowledging the effort devoted to making this a transparent and clear report. I think it was a vast improvement in approach to former Monitoring Team reports.

Predation & background mortality discussion.

Overall, I was looking forward to the insight into scavenging of small raptors, which was the primary focus, but I was also expecting to see some discussion of the implications of finding so few intact or fresh carcasses. Specifically the lack of discussion regarding predation (with the first mention of the topic being a note in the conclusions section (#2)) was shocking. Even the repeated suggestion of removal/scavenging taking place soon after death did not spur a conversation of predation. Also, there was little to no discussion about the lack of clear turbine strike evidence to small birds (cleanly severed wings, etc). There has been much discussion at SRC meetings regarding background mortality and its potential impact on estimating mortality in general. The only way to classify a carcass as "predated" under the current protocol, if I am not mistaken, is to discover the remains within 1 meter of an "active burrow". The odds of a small bird (raptor or not) found on the plot being a predated species is very high.

I recognize that background mortality was not a priority listed in the *Burrowing Owl and American Kestrel Mortality Survey and Scavenger Rate Study Protocols* (M2), but I was surprised by the lack of discussion on the topic none the less. Although we are not able to quantify background mortality/predation, the insight we gain from looking at results from 30+day searches and those from 48-hour searches should not be lost, due to lack of discussion.

Dispersal of remains:

For those unfamiliar with conditions on-site at these research plots and wind facilities, it may be helpful to include a discussion of what high winds can do to remains (feather piles especially) over time. It was not explicitly discussed that remains would not only be degraded or disappear due to scavengers, but also by weather conditions.

Data processing:

With two concurrent studies, there must have been a complex system to keep the knowledge of the carcasses from the monthly monitoring group, while also removing "doubles" from the data set such that a single event was not counted as multiple events. A discussion of the process whereby "doubles" were removed from analyses would be appreciated as well.

Use of "unknown age" carcasses in analyses.

I disagree with Shawn Smallwood's suggestion of excluding older remains, which I believe refers to fatalities of "unknown age." Although I could not find it explicitly defined, or explained, in this document,

“unknown age” from the Estimated Time Since Death category of the incident report is 0-90 days, non-brittle or non-decayed feathers-only (feather pile) or carcass with no flesh and no age data available (from M21). In the case of this study where turbines are being visited every two days, it would seem plausible to include these (mostly feather piles- 35.5% of all fatality detections for this study were feather piles) for a comparison value, at least, as was done. The sample size for “fresh” carcasses (12) is quite small.

Other recommendations for inclusions in final report:

I do agree with Mr Smallwood wholeheartedly in that error terms, background on determining which and how many turbines were surveyed, the number of excluded data points due to lack of information, and data as appendices should have been included. The listing of all fatalities found would have been especially helpful, rather than the sub-set given as details of those carcasses monitored for evaluating scavenger/removal rates (Table 2.) Also, if there is some explanation as to why the search radius was reduced in this study, as compared to the monthly monitoring protocol, that would be of interest as well. Shawn Smallwood’s comments regarding the curiosity of the number of shared discoveries between studies were thoughts I had as well. I too believe this oddity deserves more attention and confirmation. Finally, I agree that the authors of this report be identified individually. As the work that is ongoing in the Altamont spans quite a long period, and as research groups come and go, not only is it important to truly identify the individuals who are to be acknowledged for their work, but also to identify them for the sake of tracking information in the future.

Thank you again for your effort with this report, and the valuable information imparted. We look forward to seeing a revision in the near future.

Sincerely,



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