

Differential vulnerability of Bald and Golden Eagles to wind turbine collision on breeding grounds in Québec

Charles Maisonneuve¹, Tricia Miller^{2,3}, Junior A. Tremblay¹, Todd Katzner^{3,4}, Mike Lanzone⁵, and Dave Brandes⁶

¹Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune, Canada, ²The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A., ³West Virginia University, U.S.A., ⁴USDA Forest Service, Timberland Watershed Laboratory, USA, ⁵Cellular Tracking Technologies, ⁶Lafayette College, U.S.A.

Introduction

- Important wind energy development in eastern North America
- Wind facilities planned near nests of designated species of birds of prey: Golden eagles (GOEAs) and Bald eagles (BAEAs)
- GOEAs reported more often than BAEAs among fatalities at existing wind facilities

Objectives

- Adequate sighting of wind facilities to reduce collision risk
- Examine if differential flight behaviour between the two species may lead to differential collision risk

Methods

Adult birds captured with baited bow-net traps

- GOEAs in eastern USA and in southern Québec
- BAEAs in southern Québec

Tracked with Argos/GPS transmitters

- Hourly locations
- Altitude
- Flight activity (flying or not)

Breeding home ranges determined

- using fixed kernel density estimate
- complete breeding seasons only

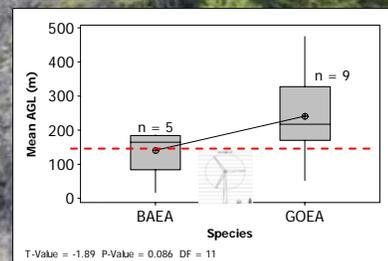
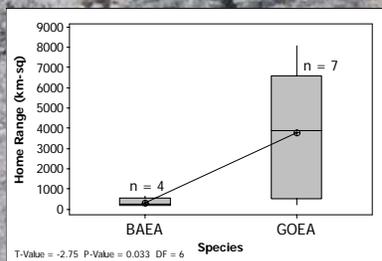
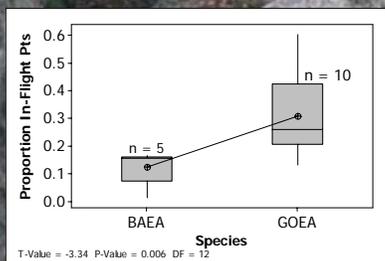
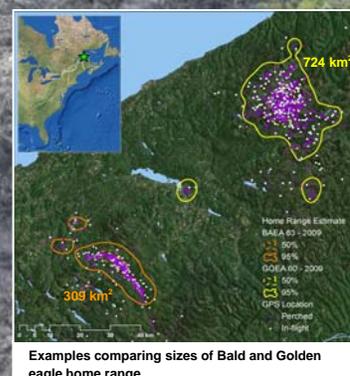
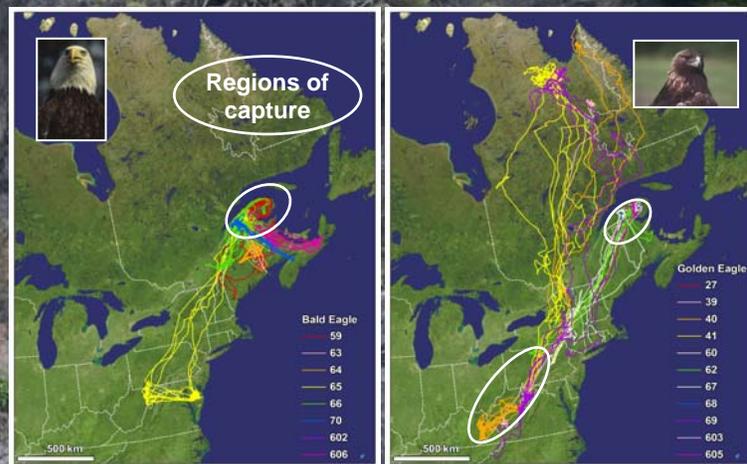
Flight altitudes estimated by

- subtracting GPS altitude from underlying elevation of each point using SRTM 90-m elevation grid

Results

Evident interspecific differences in flight behaviour

- GOEAs spend about twice as much time in active flight than BAEAs
- Mean home range areas of GOEAs considerably greater
- On average, BAEAs are flying ~ 100 m lower than GOEAs
- BAEA home ranges closely tied to water bodies



Conclusions

Variation in flight behaviour and space use may lead to differential vulnerability to wind energy development

Golden eagles

Greater home range areas and proportion of time spent in active flight may contribute to generally higher collision risk

Bald eagles

Because of relatively low flight altitude within smaller home ranges, and because of fish eating habits during the breeding season, collision risk is probably greater when siting of wind facility is close to main water bodies used within home ranges