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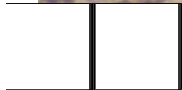
OUTDOORS

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SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2013

Mine claim markers fatal to birds are being replaced





Associated Press

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ELKO, Nev. – Wildlife officials and conservationists in Nevada say they’re making progress knocking down the white plastic pipes that miners traditionally have used to stake their claims, because such markers can become death traps for hundreds of thousands of small birds that get stuck inside.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management estimates there are more than 3.4 million of the white polyvinyl chloride pipes sticking out of the ground across the



MOST RECENT
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West – more than 1 million in Nevada alone in a 2011 survey.

The American Bird Conservancy, Nevada Department of Wildlife, BLM and several mining companies have been tracking and removing the pipes, which have been required since 2009 to be replaced by solid posts under state law in Nevada, the biggest producer of gold in the nation and sixth largest in the world.

Darin Schroeder of the American Bird Conservancy estimates the PVC markers cause the death of more than a million birds a year nationally. He said small cavity-nesting birds mistake the openings for an ideal home, but once inside are doomed by the smooth sides of the pipe with a narrow diameter that keeps them from climbing or flying out.

Nevada wildlife department biologists Pete Bradley and Christy Klinger have been at the forefront of organizing post removals since researchers started documenting the deaths in the 1980s.

Klinger said the most recent post-pulling campaign in south-central Nevada in December 2012 knocked down about 23,000 pipes and recorded about 9,500 dead birds. One marker alone contained

STORIES

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Landers: Mt. Spokane resort has more snow than peak last year
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Weekend weather: Snow, wintry mix headed for region
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Reader Photo: What are you looking at?
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Midstokke: Gifts from Santa can guide kids to the outdoors
(/stories/2015/dec/16/midstokke-gifts-from-santa-can-guide-kids-to-the-o/)

MOST

42 dead birds.

The most common victims include mountain bluebirds, western meadowlarks, cactus wrens and even some small western screech owls. Lizards and small mammals also have been pulled from the pipes.

Ali Chaney, a biologist and member of Lahontan Audubon in Reno, helped generate cooperation from Newmont and Barrick Goldstrike to pass the 2009 measure outlawing the pipes.

“We wouldn’t have been able to do it without their support,” she told the Elko Daily Free Press this week.

Chaney said the fact the mountain bluebird is Nevada’s state bird helped inspire the campaign.

“No one wanted the demise of the Nevada state bird on their hands,” she told Audubon magazine.

Brandon Teppo, the Youth Conservation Corp crew leader at Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge, fulfilled volunteer hours for an internship at Great Basin College by spending two days this past summer removing a swath of about PVC pipes south of the refuge in White Pine County.

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Oddly, he said he found roughly one mortality every four pipes among the first 55 posts but then only one additional mortality in the next 48.

“The project was mostly treated as a scan, sweep and remove mission to get the most PVC posts as possible in the smallest amount of time,” he said.

Klinger said more and more people are getting the word about the danger of the markers.

“The bottom line – anyone who sees them, knock them down,” she said.

PUBLISHED: MAY 4, 2013, MIDNIGHT

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OUTDOORS BLOG

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