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Elia makes overhead line by Eau d'Heure lakes more visible to birds

- Natagora and Elia join forces to make overhead lines more visible to birds
- Study shows increased risk on approximately 6% of all overhead lines in Belgium
- Overhead line in Plate-Taille one of riskiest to birds, now fitted with bird markers

Bird markers help birds see the overhead line better so they don't collide with it. Elia, the operator of the Belgian high-voltage transmission grid, installed bird markers following a study that identified those lines in Belgium that are potentially the most dangerous to birds. Belgium has more than 5,600 km of overhead electricity connections, of which 325 kilometres pose an increased risk to birds. With some 50 kilometres of these lines already marked, Elia is continuing its work to ensure that all of these high-risk areas are more visible to birds. Installing markers drastically reduces the number of avian collisions.

Natagora and Elia have been working together for almost 10 years researching how to make overhead lines more visible to birds so they can notice them in time and avoid them. Elia commissioned a risk analysis of its entire high-voltage grid. The analysis, updated in 2020, reveals that 325 of the 5,600 km of overhead lines in Belgium (5.8% of the total network) pose a high risk to birds. Scientific research shows that the number of injured and killed birds decreases sharply after the markers have been installed, sometimes by more than 90%.

Since installing markers on high-risk overhead lines sharply reduces the number of dead and injured birds, we are pleased that Elia is addressing this issue with the overhead line at Plate-Taille and we hope it continues these efforts.

Antoine Derouaux, Natagora



The Eau d'Heure lakes attract many water birds. The site comprises multiple lakes used by birds (gulls and seagulls, ducks, cormorants, raptors, geese, herons and more) at different times of the day and year. It is one of the largest sites in Wallonia where water birds spend the winter and since the high-voltage overhead line is located along a major bird flight path, making it more visible was required.

Bird markers make overhead lines more visible to birds

Elia had already been planning to install markers on the overhead line for some time now, but for the work to be done safely the line first has to be de-energised, meaning electricity cannot flow through the wires while the work is in progress. The markers are installed about 25 metres apart, making the line visible to birds.



For more information

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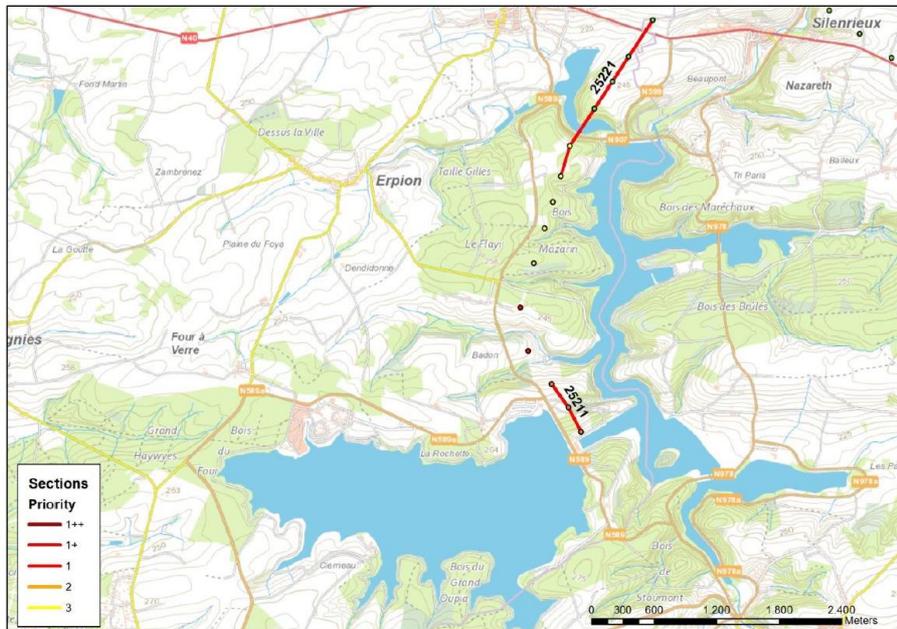
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Thanks to our collaboration with Natagora in Wallonia and Natuurpunt in Flanders, we can limit the impact of our infrastructure on the environment. Once the bird markers are installed on the line, we'll monitor them to assess the results. Previous experience with installing markers on lines has shown that we're working in the right direction.

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Ilse Tant, Chief Community Relations Officer at Elia

In recent years, Elia has installed markers on more than 50 km of overhead lines posing a higher risk than usual to birds. That total will grow by another 2.5 km once markers are added to the line on the Plate-Taille site. The best bird marker technology for a given project depends on the type of overhead line and an analysis of the situation. On this particular line, we used 'curlicues' (also called 'pigtails') that are twisted around the electrical wires.



About Elia Group

One of Europe's top five players

Elia Group is active in electricity transmission. We ensure that generation and consumption are balanced at all times. We supply 30 million end users with electricity and manage 19,271 km of HV lines via our subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and north-east Germany (50Hertz). As such, our Group is one of Europe's top five system operators. With a reliability level of 99.999%, we provide society with a robust power grid that is important for socio-economic prosperity. We also aspire to be a catalyst for a successful energy transition towards a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system.

We make the energy transition happen

By expanding international high-voltage connections and integrating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy, the Elia Group promotes both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of our society. At the same time, innovation is reshaping Elia Group's operational systems and we are developing new market products to enable new technologies and market players to access our system. In this way, the Elia Group is making the energy transition happen.

In the interest of society

As a key player in the energy system, the Elia Group is committed to working in the interest of society. We are constantly adapting our transmission grid to the rapidly changing energy mix, incorporating ever more renewable energy. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget and guarantee maximum safety. When we carry out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication with all affected parties very early on in the development process. We also offer our expertise to our sector and relevant authorities to help build the energy system of the future.

International focus

In addition to its activities as a transmission system operator, the Elia Group provides various consulting services to international customers through its subsidiary Elia Grid International (EGI). Elia is also a member of the Nemo Link consortium, which operates the first subsea electricity interconnector between Belgium and Great Britain.

Elia Group is a listed company whose core shareholder is Publi-T, a municipal holding company.

For more information: elia.be & eliagroup.eu

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