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# Geese Hit Power Transmission Line

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In my 21 years of working for the North Dakota ame and Fish Department, I have had the portunity to investigate many reports of losses of uterfowl. Most of those losses have been the result of disease, a few from starvation, and occasionally a single bird would fly into a fence, telephone, or power transmission line. It was not until this year, April, 1977, that I had the opportunity to investigate a large loss of geese due to striking power transmission lines.

On the morning of April 22, 1977, I was enroute to Lidgerwood to meet John Violett, District Warden, and Sam Waldstein, Refuge Manager, Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge. Upon my arrival at Lidgerwood, I was informed by John Violett that the Richland County Sheriff's Office had reported a large number of dead snow geese in a field southeast of Hankinson, North Dakota. The report was being relayed to Violett after Mr. Gregory Herding, who farms in the area, had telephoned the report to the Sheriff's office. The reported location of the dead geese was approximately 20 miles from Lidgerwood, therefore, the three of us decided to investigate the report at once.

As we approached the reported location of the goose loss, we could see dead snow geese in a plowed field and a few geese wandering around the rea in a dazed condition. Most of the dead geese ere within 50 meters of the gravel road and the ene was one of death and destruction. Wings, legs, bodies, and heads were scattered over the area. Not all of the geese were dead. A few had broken wings, broken or missing legs, and some with head injuries. What could have caused such destruction? While asking myself the same question, I notice that a power transmission line passed overhead. On closer examination, I noticed blood and feathers stuck to the power lines. I do not know what caused the geese to strike the wires, however, the force of contact must have been great. The geese must have been flying rather fast at the time of impact.

The dead geese were placed in two groups for the purpose of counting the number of white phase and the number of blue phase snow geese. Thirty geese were found dead below the power transmission lines and an additional 16 snow geese were found in the near vicinity. Those 16 were badly injured and had to be destroyed. There were, no doubt, other geese injured in the strike with the power transmission lines that were able to leave the area before our arrival. Some of those injured geese might have died at a later date. Of the known 46 geese lost in this accident, 15 were white phase and 31 were blue phase snow geese.

Mr. Herding reported that he had observed numerous flocks of snow geese feeding in the general area during the previous several days. He had been working in a nearby field on April 21, and had passed by the strike site late that evening. No dead geese were present at that time. On April 22 at approximately 9:00 a.m., Mr. Herding was traveling on the gravel road and noticed the dead and badly injured geese in the field. The geese must have struck the wires during the early morning hours on April 22, 1977.

Weather conditions were clear and mild that morning in the vicinity of the accident. Mr. Herding reported that he was up by 5:30 a.m. and that there had not been any fog—visibility was good. But for some reason the geese did fly into the power transmission lines and 46 were lost.

My thanks to Mr. Gregory Herding for reporting the accident to the Richland County Sheriff's office. His concern and prompt telephone call enabled me to investigate the accident within a short period of time of its occurrence.

**Gregory Herding with the dead geese. The birds hit the transmission line that can be partially seen in the upper right of the photo. Photo by District Game Warden John Violett.**

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