Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC
P.O. Box 207
22534 State Highway 86
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
www.northwesternrec.com

Main Access Number
1-800-352-0014

Emergencies/Outages
1-800-352-0014

FAX
814-398-8064

Office Hours
Monday through Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Amy Wellington, *Editor*
Linda King, *Managing Editor*

Guest Column

Avian Protection Plan (APP)

By Stephen Miller, *Engineering Manager*

NORTHWESTERN Rural Electric Cooperative serves approximately 20,000 members in Crawford, Erie, Venango, Mercer and Warren counties in Pennsylvania. Your cooperative has approximately 50,000 utility poles and 2,600 miles of electric line. As the demand for electricity increases, the potential to negatively impact avian populations grows.

In 2017, Northwestern REC created an Avian Protection Plan to reduce negative bird interactions with our utility infrastructure.

What is an Avian Protection Plan?

An Avian Protection Plan, or APP, is a voluntary, utility-specific program to reduce the operational and avian risks that result from avian interactions with electric utility facilities. Although each utility's APP will be different, the overall goal of reducing avian mortality is the same. APPs are "living documents" that are continually evaluated and refined over time.

Birds such as hawks, eagles, owls, ospreys, and ravens commonly use utility structures for perching, roosting, hunting, and nesting. Depending on the bird's size, age and other factors, this type of behavior can be problematic.

While it is safe for most birds to perch on power lines, larger birds (such as those listed above) are at a higher risk for electrocution. Due to their size, larger birds have a higher chance of contacting two parts of a power pole at the same time that have a difference in electric potential. This difference in potential is what electrocutes a bird. Even if a bird bridges a connection between an energized line and a non-energized line, the difference in potential is still there, and the bird will be electrocuted. Typically, birds bridge a connection when they fly off of the pole, or when they land on the pole. Sometimes this can result in an outage.

Northwestern REC uses many techniques to protect birds from power lines. One common method is to use special plastic caps on equipment to prevent a bird from touching multiple conductors at once. Additionally, there are also various types of insulators that can be installed on energized wires to prevent contact with the lines. Another frequently used method is to widen the distance between equipment on the poles; a good example of this is adding wider cross arms.

We also work and partner with other organizations to learn and collaborate on efforts to protect birds in our area. Northwestern REC works closely with Erie Bird Observatory (EBO). EBO's mission is fostering enthusiasm for birds and conservation through ornithological research and public engagement. To learn more about the Erie Bird Observatory, visit eriebirdobservatory.org.

Help us by reporting avian interactions

We ask that you help us by reporting avian interactions with your electric lines. A large part of protecting local

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Cody and Bailey Conrady and their dog, Dixie

Electrical Accident Impacts Couple's Lives: 'Normal before will not be normal after'

Bailey Edenburn was packing for an unknown destination. She also had to pack for her fiancé, Cody Conrady. Many times, throwing necessities in a suitcase is for something fun. Unfortunately, packing on this day in May was for anything but.

She didn't know how long she would be gone or even where she was going. All she knew is she had to pack. And she had to get to Cody.

After finding out where he was and driving faster than she cares to admit, she reaches her destination: the Level 1 trauma center. She did not know how bad it was. She only knew he was alive.

At that point in time, Cody only knew the same — that he was alive. After nearly dying in an electrical accident, the day was a blur; most of it unetched in his mind.

Earlier that day, Cody had started his next-to-last day as assistant manager for an ag fertilizer company. He said they were shorthanded that day, so it was all hands on deck. To get ahead of the sprayer, he hopped in his truck and got going.

"I had to take loads because we needed an extra truck to take fertilizer," Cody recalls. A sprayer had been broken down for 3½ hours, and when it finally showed up, he was ready.

What happened next

After the sprayer pulled in, Cody pulled up in his truck to unload fertilizer. "I hooked on like I normally would, and the sprayer was unfolding, which is pretty much standard procedure."

What transpired next changed everything. Those who were there think that when the operator unfolded the sprayer boom, he extended the sprayer tips at the same time, and one of them grazed the power line.

Cody said they believe the sprayer tip was electrified for only a moment, but that the stray electricity moved through the tip, boom, tractor, and down to the ground where Cody was standing. When Cody touched the camlock, which connects the hoses together, 7,400 volts of electricity flowed through his body.

The force of the stray voltage threw him backwards and onto the ground. The person in the cab jumped out and started CPR (luckily the ground was no longer electrified) and called 9-1-1.

One journey. Two experiences.

As in any journey, two people experience it differently. Cody is matter of fact. He says he doesn't mind talking about it, but that Bailey does. As an outward expression of his love for her, you can tell he worries about her reliving that day.

He says he doesn't remember a lot about the accident, but he does have a few vivid memories that have to do with the stretcher — one was the sound of the collective click as it was being loaded into the ambulance. The other was him being rolled on it to the medevac.

"My first memory after that was probably a week and a half later," Cody said, adding that there were many conversations with Bailey to help him piece the details together, including the progression of his care. He said the medical staff made several attempts to save his hand, but that the damage progressed too far to do so. He also questioned why they had to take his leg.

"What we learned is that tissue is actively still dying over the course of two weeks, so it (the internal damage) just kept moving up (the affected limbs)," he said.

Bailey's recollections

When Bailey recalls what happened, her words come a bit faster than Cody's.

"Emotionally, I've probably been more of a mess (than Cody). He struggled very early on with just the circumstances (of it all) and just how badly hurt he was. But he's accepted the fact that this is his life now, and (that) he has to make this life as good as he can. I'm not quite there yet," she admits.

As with most significant journeys in life, "there are days that are perfect, (when) the world is right." And there are the bad days, she admits.

After watching Cody experience immense pain, lose two of his limbs, undergo numerous surgeries and learn to walk again, "we knew life wasn't going to be the same," Bailey reflects. "We knew that the 'normal' before was not going to be the 'normal' after.

"In the beginning, it was just all about survival"

"In the beginning, it was just all about survival," Bailey recounts. Today, their lives include more grey areas.

"I don't know what the future holds," Bailey said. "There are some days when his leg just bothers him... (but) he's not the type to want to sit still for anything. He's had to sit still and learn more patience in the last year than he has his entire life. And it (sitting still) just drives him bonkers."

The dangling carrot

Bailey recalls how at one of the initial meetings with the medical team, Cody mentioned September 7 of that same year: the day they were to be wed. "It was a giant dangling carrot, really," Bailey recalls. "I mean, he was bound and determined we were not going to put the wedding off."

Not only did they get married, but on the Wednesday before their wedding, Bailey came home to a huge surprise. "I had gone to do chores, and when I came back, he was walking around the house, without a cane, and I bawled, absolutely bawled."

Bailey recalls that Cody had gotten his leg prosthetic 10 days before the wedding. "I didn't think he'd walk down the aisle. I'm not sure in that moment in time he thought he'd walk down the aisle."

But he did, and you can hear in Bailey's voice just how special their wedding day was. "It was just the most perfect of days," she said, smiling.

The journey continues

Bailey says that the goal was and still is for "Cody to do whatever Cody wants to do."

Cody and Bailey are still packing for a destination. Sometimes figuratively. They adapt to the twists and turns of their life together. Cody navigates the challenges he faces with a different dominant hand than before the accident. Some days he can't do everything he wants to because of his pain. Bailey still struggles at times with what happened that day in May.

But sometimes they pack in a literal way. Lately, they have been busy completing baby registries for a new addition in their lives. Although a bit apprehensive like most first-time parents, bring on the next chapter, they say. The journey continues.

Avian Protection Plan

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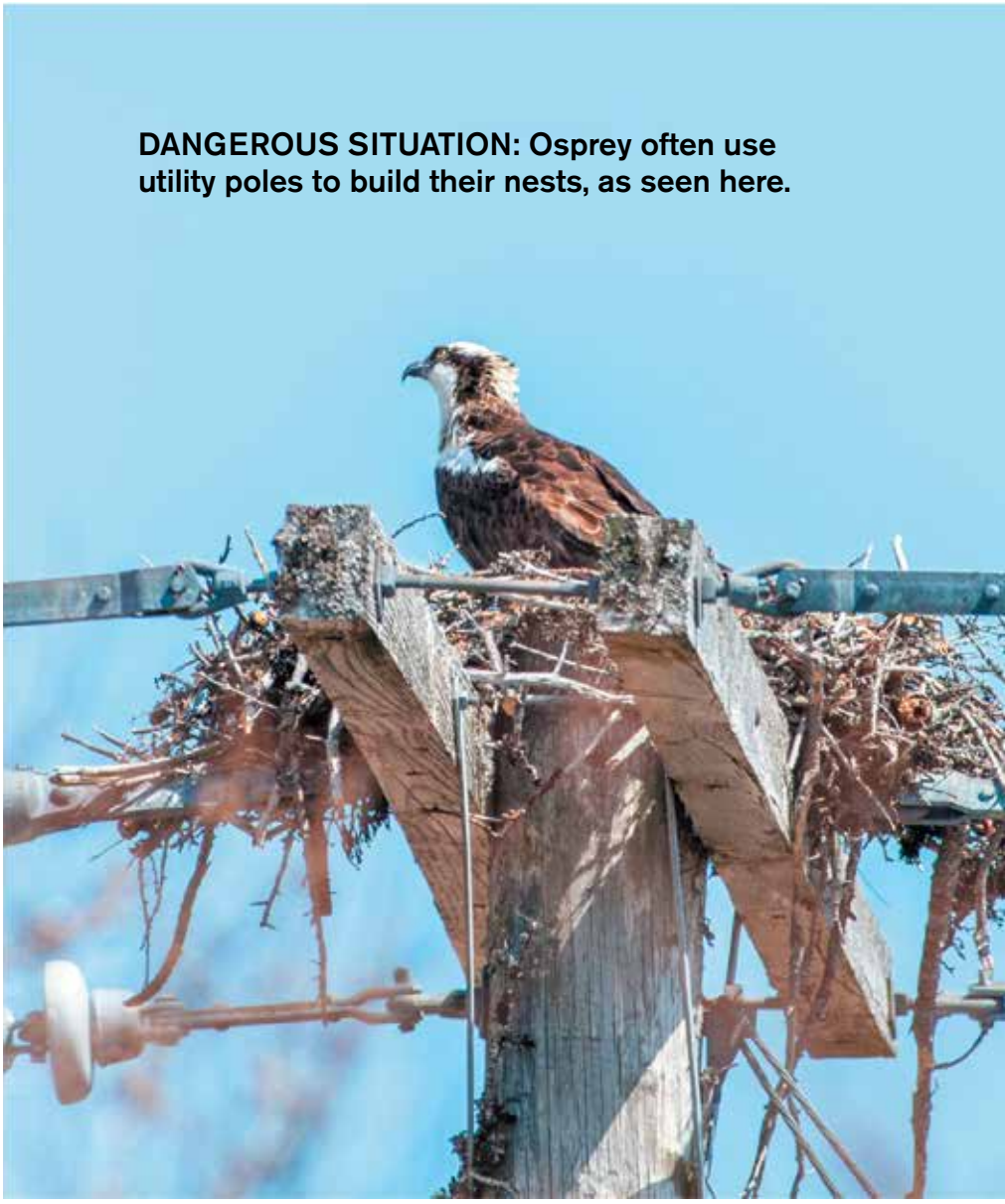
bird populations is understanding where birds are being electrocuted. By filing a report with us, you allow us to better understand how local birds are interacting with our lines. Additionally, your report will help contribute to ongoing scientific research, both nationally and locally. You can do this by contacting your cooperative's engineering department. Nesting season for ospreys begins as early as late March, and nest building will continue through April. They are particularly attracted to utility poles with crossarms. Please be on the lookout for sticks being piled up on these, usually in proximity to a body of water. It is not safe for them to nest on poles with energized wires.

What happens after you report a bird interaction?

After an interaction has been reported, a co-op employee will come out to collect information on the bird. If necessary, a co-op employee may contact you and ask a couple of additional questions. The site may be re-engineered to reduce future interactions. If a bird has been electrocuted, under no circumstances should you move the bird! From there, the appropriate agencies will be contacted, and the bird will be removed from the site. The information collected will be processed, recorded and included in future analysis.



DANGEROUS SITUATION: Osprey often use utility poles to build their nests, as seen here.

Three energizing kitchen appliances to save time *and* energy

WHETHER YOUR oven and stove top are powered by gas or electricity, it's no secret that they consume more energy than smaller countertop appliances, like slow cookers and toaster ovens. In addition to efficiency, smaller kitchen appliances can provide faster cooking times and less hassle with clean-up.

If you're looking for convenient cooking methods with the added bonus of energy efficiency, here are three energizing appliances for your kitchen:

1. Air fryers are becoming increasingly popular, and consumers have a lot of good things to say about these handy little appliances. Air fryers use convection to circulate hot air and cook the food — this means little to no oil is required, resulting in healthier meals than those from traditional fryers. Air fryers are fairly small, so they won't take up much of your counter space, and with everything cooked in the fryer, cleanup will be a breeze. Air fryers are available in a variety of sizes, and prices range from $40 to $200+.

2. Electric griddles have certainly been around for a while, and they offer several benefits for any home chef (beyond bacon and eggs!). Griddles are convenient because you can cook everything at once — like a "one-pan" meal, and the possibilities are endless. From fajitas to sandwiches to French toast, griddles can help satisfy any taste buds. They consume small amounts of energy and provide quick cooking times, so your energy bill will thank you. Prices and sizes for griddles vary, but you can typically find one for about $30 at your local retail stores.

3. Pizza brings people together, so why not consider a pizza maker for your kitchen? These compact, countertop machines are an inexpensive alternative to a costly brick oven, and they use less energy than your traditional oven. Choose your own fresh ingredients to whip up a faster, healthier pizza at home. Plus, most pizza makers are multifunctional and can be used to cook flatbreads, frittatas, quesadillas and more. You can purchase a pizza maker for about $30 to $150+ online or at your local retailer.

These are just a few energizing appliance options for your kitchen. Remember, when you're cooking a smaller meal, countertop appliances can save time and energy. For more ways to save energy at home, visit NorthwesternREC.com.