

What you can do

There are measures you can take to scare birds away from your property. Monitor the usual times the birds gather and scare them away by making a loud noise, with an air horn or klaxon for example. If this method is repeated over a period of time (approximately 9 days), it can break the roosting cycle the birds have settled into, diverting them to another location.

Birds striking overhead power lines

Birds coming into contact with overhead lines can cause interruptions to power supplies. In particular swans and geese, which migrate to Northern Ireland from the Arctic Region during the winter months, increase the risk of this happening. The birds find it difficult to see the power lines and have limited ability to manoeuvre when flying close to them. Darkness and poor weather conditions, such as fog, rain or snow, may make the lines invisible to them.

New farming methods, crop rotation, feeding patterns and climate change can influence the flight paths swans and geese take, which can create problems in new areas. NIE will continue to work with RSPB and customers to monitor bird collisions and, where possible, we will fit bird diverters on new flight paths.

NIE has already taken many steps to make the lines more visible by fitting round, coloured balls to the high voltage transmission lines and reflective bird diverters on regular flight paths. This has helped reduce the number of incidences of birds colliding with power lines.

Although burying cables underground eliminates collision risks, it is not usually feasible from technical and cost perspectives.

We are here to help

NIE sympathises with anyone experiencing problems with bird fouling, or from birds striking overhead power lines and hopes that this information leaflet will help provide an understanding of the issues. NIE will continue to work with environmental groups and other utilities to research new solutions to these worldwide problems. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us by telephone on **08457 643 643** or visit our website **www.nie.co.uk**

Customer Information

Birds and the Electricity Network



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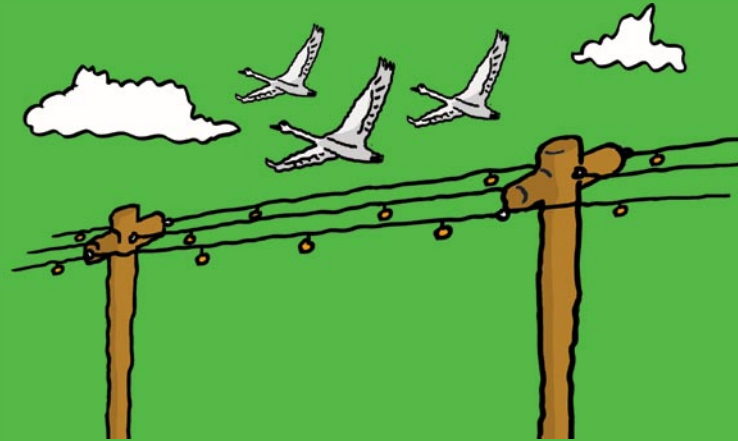
Electricity is an essential part of everyday life, travelling across Northern Ireland through an extensive network of overhead lines and underground cables. Every year Northern Ireland Electricity receives a number of enquiries from customers experiencing problems with birds roosting on overhead power lines close to or above their property and from customers who have experienced a power cut due to birds striking the overhead lines. These two very different sets of problems require separate approaches to try to counteract their worst effects.

Bird fouling

Bird fouling is a worldwide problem that affects electricity equipment, airports, town centres, landmark buildings and farmland and is classed as a vermin problem. Bird fouling is largely outside the control of utility companies such as NIE.

New housing developments

The problem of bird fouling highlights wider planning issues and, the number of new housing developments constructed beneath already present power lines. NIE is urging housing developers and planning authorities to recognise potential bird fouling problems and to design and cost new schemes accordingly so that future cases can be avoided.



What NIE is doing to help in bird fouling cases

Although NIE is under no obligation to provide assistance, we take bird fouling very seriously and will always try to help. We can provide practical advice gained from previous experiences of bird fouling and, wherever possible, offer products that might provide some respite for those customers worst affected.

Starlings usually cause the most common instances of bird fouling in residential areas. They tend to flock in large numbers, usually at the same time each day, attracted by insects and grubs contained in gardens and by feeding from householders. In town centres, buildings often provide the highest vantage point in the area, though in rural and residential areas the birds tend to use overhead power lines, as they perceive them to be safe for roosting. We recognise that bird fouling is extremely frustrating for our customers and NIE has purchased and trialed a number of methods that might help alleviate the problem.

- Hair brush rollers: On some occasions these can be fitted to overhead lines, although there are controls on their use - usually limited to one third of a span due to weight restrictions for the lines. We are unable to fit rollers where there is a clear risk of passing the bird fouling problem onto a neighbour.
- Provision of bird distress audio tapes.
- Use of specialist pyrotechnics (flashing lights or specialist fireworks). Not viable in urban areas.
- Placing imitation falcons and owls on poles.

These methods are all experimental and in many cases are not permanent solutions. There may also be costs associated with fitting most of these devices. We may also need to take customers off supply to fit them so that we can work safely on the overhead lines.

We are always monitoring and assessing the potential of new products that might provide a solution. However, any product used must be humane and comply with strict safety, technical and environmental guidelines.

