

Heads up, hunters! Shooting at power lines can be costly and dangerous.

BY VICTORIA SCHARF DECASTRO

As dove-hunting season approaches, Georgia's electric cooperatives are reminding hunters about the hazards of firing at doves perched on power lines and fiber-optic lines.

Power lines are popular roosting spots for doves, which typically congregate

on the lines while taking a break from flying or before descending to the ground to feed. This makes them easy targets.

Though it may be tempting to shoot at a bird while it is sitting on a line, firing at power lines is always a

bad idea. Shooting in the direction of power lines, fiber cables, insulators and other electrical equipment can result in extensive damage that could cost thousands of dollars to repair. Damage to equipment also could leave businesses and homes without power and internet for extended periods of time.

Fiber-optic cable often runs adjacent to and beneath the electric lines. Optical fibers are protected by glass tubing, which shatters

when shot and can disrupt phone and internet service.

On opening day of dove season last year, a main fiber cable was shot in Clarkesville-based Habersham EMC's service area. The outage affected 120 members, including internet users who were without service until repairs could be made. That same afternoon, another fiber cable was shot, and the next day, a third fiber cable was damaged.

Central Georgia EMC in Jackson experienced 15 incidents of shooting damage in the 2022 and 2023 hunting season.
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Shooting at utility facilities like wires, poles and insulators is dangerous and jeopardizes everyone's power. Never attempt to shoot through wires or anything that may be on wires or poles.

This hole-riddled cable might not look like much, but would you believe that one ill-aimed round of birdshot cost more than \$17,000 in damages? The fiber-optic cable inside allows Coastal Electric Cooperative to communicate with its substations, an important part of keeping the electric system reliable.

National IT Professionals Day is Sept. 17



Terry Cook



James Platt

Happy National IT Professionals Day to two of Coastal Electric Cooperative's unsung heroes! Terry Cook and James Platt work behind the scenes every day to protect the health and security of our information systems, which ultimately allows the co-op to function as it should and serve our members nonstop.

Thank you, Terry and James, for

all you do to protect Coastal Electric Cooperative from hackers, viruses, phishing schemes, denial of service attacks, ransomware threats—and serve your fellow employees with a smile, keeping their workflows running efficiently. Thanks for using your time and expertise to help your co-op work and serve members well!

Monday, Sept. 2
LABOR DAY

Coastal Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday, Sept. 2, in observance of Labor Day. Members can still access their accounts or report outages using the MyCoastalEC mobile app, calling (800) 421-2343 or accessing the member portal online at www.CoastalElectric.Coop. We wish you a safe and happy Labor Day weekend!

CE I WANT
SOLAR BUT WITHOUT THE COST?

Thinking of investing in solar energy but don't want the cost or complications of installing rooftop solar panels? Maybe there simply isn't enough sunlight where you live?

Cooperative Solar from Coastal Electric Cooperative is an easy way to access sustainable, maintenance-free solar energy without the hassles or costs associated with installing panels at your home.

Members who signed up for 2 blocks (4 kW) of Cooperative Solar saved more than \$300 on their electric bills last year.

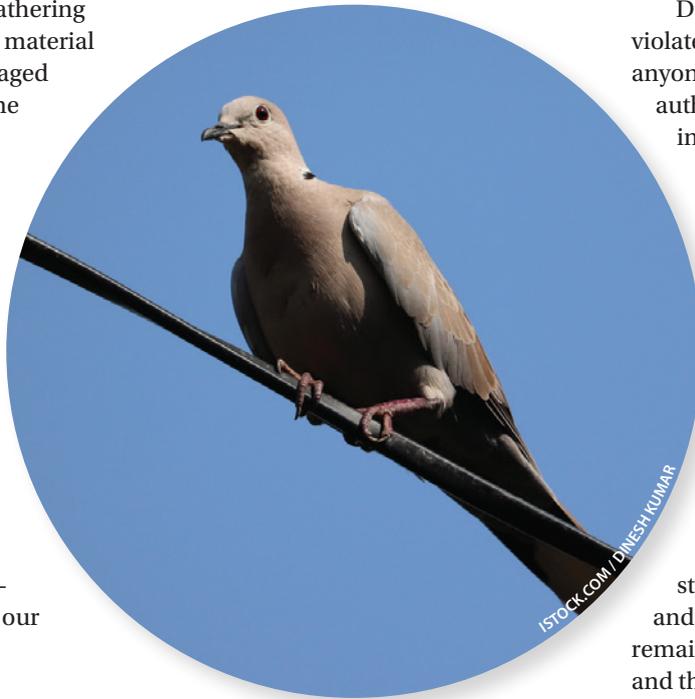


For more info about Cooperative Solar, scan the QR Code or visit www.CoastalElectric.Coop.

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seasons. The co-op is still gathering the construction, labor and material costs for replacing the damaged fiber, but splicing costs alone have surpassed \$27,000, with the cost of labor and materials predicted to far exceed that.

Coastal Electric Cooperative equipment has even seen its fair share of damages. In 2016, one ill-aimed round of birdshot cost more than \$17,000 in repairs when a hunter riddled a fiber-optic cable used for communication between the co-op and substations, which is crucial to our electric system reliability.



Damaging electrical equipment violates Georgia law*, which states that anyone who “knowingly and without authority and by force or violence interferes with the operation of any system of public communication, public transportation, sewerage, drainage, water supply, gas, power or other public utility service or with any constituent property thereof” could face criminal charges and/or be held liable for the cost of repairs.

Although most hunters are committed to safety, gunfire damage to power lines and fiber lines is a growing issue statewide. To help ensure a safe and successful dove-hunting season, remain aware of the dangers involved and the damage caused by firing at birds perched on power lines and fiber lines.

* Code O.C.G.A. § 16-7-22(b)(2)

Gunshot damage to electrical equipment could cause an electrical arc or wires to fall, with a high risk of serious injury or death.

Fiber repairs are expensive and can be tedious, as a strand of fiber is about as thick as a strand of hair. When a technician begins splicing fiber to repair a damaged section, it’s akin to perfectly matching and fusing two strands of hair on each end of the section being replaced. For a 96-count fiber line, two crews—one at each end

of the replaced section—will make a total of 192 splices, and it could take 6-8 hours to complete.

Shooting electrical equipment also poses a risk of physical harm to oneself and others. Damaged power lines can produce high-voltage arcs that can ignite surrounding vegetation and start a fire. Plus, a downed line may electrocute people on the ground.

“When it comes to safety, hunters should always keep a reasonable distance from power lines and electrical equipment,” says James Thomas, Coastal Electric Cooperative Safety and Training Coordinator. “A wise preventive measure would be to note in advance the location of power lines and other electrical equipment on the property where dove hunting will take place.”

If you notice a downed wire or other unsafe conditions along power lines, stay away, keep others away and immediately notify Coastal Electric Cooperative or call 911.



Dove-hunting season dates

According to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the 2024-25 official dove-hunting dates are as follows:

- Sept. 7-Oct. 13
- Nov. 23-Dec. 1
- Dec. 19-Jan. 31, 2025

Statewide shooting hours for all dove-hunting dates are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. For the latest information about dove hunting in Georgia, visit georgiawildlife.com/migratory-bird-info.

DON'T LET OUR COMMUNITY FALL FOR BAD ENERGY POLICY



TAKE THE FIVE STEPS TO BECOME A CO-OP VOTER

Co-ops Vote is a program built to give members of the cooperative community access to resources and information needed not only to vote, but to vote with co-op issues in mind. Voting with an understanding of what policies your candidates support and how they will impact electric co-ops will help ensure continued access to reliable electricity and innovative energy solutions throughout rural America.

Together, we have the power to educate lawmakers, build awareness about our issues and concerns and support legislative issues that are important to our communities. The co-op voice is powerful and starts with you!

Register to vote:

- Check to make sure your registration is current.
- Learn voter details for your state.
- Get information on deadlines, absentee voting and polling places.

Get educated:

Learn about issues critical to keeping your electricity affordable and reliable.

Know the candidates and policymakers:

Learn about candidates running in your local area to see what energy policies they support, and how they would impact your access to reliable, affordable energy.

Share your story:

Talk with your family and friends about your co-op, tell them why you're a Co-op Voter and ask them to join you at the polls.

For more information, visit www.Vote.Coop.



Work with us!

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