



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Corrections needed in Gohmert/Ivanpah avian death article

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
To: truthometer@politifact.com

Fri, Aug 20, 2021 at 1:07 PM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

Your August 17, 2021 fact check of Louie Gohmert's claim about the Ivanpah solar energy station does more deceiving than the claim it presumes to fact check.

1. The title suggests Gohmert was referring to solar panel farms. But that description is more apt for photovoltaic solar farms than for facilities like Ivanpah that concentrate solar energy by reflecting it toward a central area for its heating effects.
2. Including **"bring the nation down"** in the title/deck misleads. In context, Gohmert was referring to the Green New Deal bringing the nation down, not to Ivanpah bird death. Fact checkers should be the last people to take quotations out of context, and that includes splicing quotations together to invent new meaning.
3. **"it's far fewer than the estimates of how many die from fossil fuel production"** Fossil fuel production isn't the same thing as the production of energy by burning fossil fuels, is it? The line makes it look like it's referring to mining, drilling, transport and refining. An apples-to-apples comparison for generating electricity will appropriately focus on that.
4. **"Scientists estimate between 37,800 and 138,600 birds die in the U.S. from all forms of solar energy production annually, compared with the 14.5 million avian deaths attributed to fossil fuel power plants."** This is the big one. Over 14 million of those supposedly annual deaths from fossil fuel power plants come from **future projected effects** on bird populations over a 40 year period from climate change. The fact check makes it sound like those future effects are happening annually now. That's highly deceptive, even overlooking the fact that the fact check fails to disclose to readers the ultimate source of the projection ([Sovacool](#)). Rather, the fact check cues readers to believe the avian deaths stem from "collisions, electrocution and poisoning."
5. "Gohmert was likely referencing a 2014 [article](#)" Was he? What's the basis for this apparent speculation? Stories about Ivanpah and "streamers" aren't uncommon. Why the CBS source rather than [any one of dozens](#)?

I could probably go on, but you get the idea. Again, No. 3 is the elephant in the room. A fact checker should not amplify that kind of misinformation, even if that same misinformation is coming from scientifically oriented publications that ought to know better. If you have any questions at all about how I know that the Sovacool paper is relying on climate change effects for its estimates of annual avian mortality at fossil fuel generating plants I can certainly explain it. But I'll also share

--
Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
editor
zebrafactcheck.com