Thousands' of geese die in toxic Montana pit mine

Thousands of migrating snow geese died after landing in contaminated pit mine waters, mine officials have said.

On 28 November, mine workers used "bird hazing" techniques to try to prevent the birds from landing in the acidic wastewater, which is acidic enough to dissolve a motorboat's steel propeller.

"The hazing techniques failed to prevent the pit from appearing like '700-square-kilometre of white birds," Mr Thompson described.

Researchers believe that the birds were forced to land due to an approaching storm, and were embarked on a late-season migration because of warming temperatures in their northern Arctic habitat.

Mine workers tried to prevent the birds from landing in the acidic wastewater, leading federal authorities to force the abandoned mine's caretakers to take measures to scare off the birds.

Officials estimate that as many as 25,000 birds landed in the Berkeley Pit last week, and since then have been seen dropping dead in the area.

The contaminated pond has become a tourist attraction since closing in 1982, with 4,000 people arriving the week before the attack.

"They're asked nicely. People money when they're asked nicely. We're sending them away. But the birds are just overwhelmed by their number," Mr Thompson said. His assessment was confirmed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which recorded 14 snow goose fatalities in the Berkeley Pit.

Between 2010 and 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) only monitored by several orders of magnitude, Mr Thompson said, adding that "there are not as many birds. In 1995, 342 snow goose corpses were found floating in the pit's metal-laden waters, leading federal authorities to force the abandoned mine's caretakers to take measures to scare off the birds.

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