

WILDLIFE-VEHICLE COLLISIONS

1. What are the top 3 states in the nation with the highest risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions?

1. West Virginia
2. Montana
3. Wisconsin¹

In Montana, for example, wildlife-vehicle collisions make up 10% of all collisions, which is double the national average of 5%.

On roads near Yellowstone National Park, these rates are even higher:

- 25% of all collisions along US-191 through Gallatin Canyon (Four Corners to Big Sky) are with wildlife.
- 50% of all collisions along US-89 (Gardiner to Livingston) are with wildlife.

2. How much do wildlife-vehicle collisions cost society? Are wildlife crossing structures worth the investment?

- Average cost per collision: \$14,000 (deer), \$45,000 (elk), \$82,000 (moose) in personal injury and property damage alone.² First responder costs and lost hunting revenue are additional expenses.
- Wildlife-vehicle collisions lead to at least 25,000 human injuries, 200 deaths, and a cost of \$11 billion to taxpayers annually.³
- Wildlife crossing structures often pay for themselves decades in advance of their 75-year lifespan due to cost savings of vastly reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- Enlarged culverts and larger bridges with pathways beneath and sufficient clearance to allow safe wildlife passage below can also improve community resilience to climate events such as flooding.

3. How often does a driver hit a wild animal in the United States?

- A driver hits an animal every 26 seconds (or less) in the United States.⁴
- In fact, road mortality is documented as one of the major threats to the survival of 21 threatened or endangered species in North America.

4. Do wildlife crossing structures reduce collisions?

Properly sited and designed wildlife crossing structures with fencing commonly reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by 85% or more.⁵ No other method has the same level of success in preventing collisions while also maintaining habitat connectivity.

Without traffic calming measures (roundabouts, rumble strips and other physical means of slowing traffic), lowering a speed limit, alone, does not change driver behavior sufficiently to reduce collisions with wildlife. At night, drivers often overdrive what headlights make visible at about 40 mph.

5. Do wildlife really use crossing structures?

Yes. Much of what we know is based on long-term research in Canada's Banff National Park, which has had overpasses for nearly 30 years and underpasses for longer.

Overpasses are preferred by elk, pronghorn, and grizzly bear family groups, each of which teach subsequent generations to use available structures. Medium-bodied species, like black bear and deer, will readily use enlarged culverts underneath roads or cross under bridges with sufficient vertical clearance if a pathway allows for secure footing.

Crossing structures can also be important to allow smaller species that may not travel as far or as quickly, like boreal toads, to access habitat bisected by roads.

6. Can you name one road or location with wildlife crossings?

- The People's Way (US-93), on Montana's Flathead Reservation, where the "road is a visitor" that respects "the land and the Spirit of the Place": 1 overpass and over 40 bridges and enlarged culverts for fish and wildlife
- Trapper's Point (US-191), near Pinedale, Wyoming, to maintain ancient pronghorn and mule migration corridors: 2 overpasses; 6 underpasses
- Annenberg Crossing (US-101), Los Angeles County, reconnecting habitat for mountain lions and others fragmented by 10-lanes of traffic: 1 overpass
- Banff National Park (Trans-Canada Highway), site of the most overpasses (6) and underpasses (38) in the world (for now).
- Cervidae Peak (ID-21): outside of Boise, to maintain migration by mule deer, elk and pronghorn: 1 overpass; 1 underpass

Sources:

1 State Farm Insurance, 2025.

2 Huijser, M, Duffield, J, Neher, C, Clevenger, A, and T McGuire (eds). Final Report 2022: Update and expansion of the WVC mitigation measures and their cost-benefit model. TPF-5(358). NVDOT.

3, 4, 5 Huijser, M, P McGowen, J Fuller, A Hardy, A Kociolek, A Clevenger, D Smith and R Ament. 2008. Wildlife Vehicle Collision Study: Report to Congress. Federal Highway Administration.