

Why America Needs Wildlife Crossings

When wildlife crossings are built, they prevent motorist crashes involving wildlife, benefiting people, wildlife, and the economy.

- Dedicating federal funding to infrastructure projects that at the same time reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs) and maintain or improve ecological connectivity provide benefits in the form of job creation, infrastructure resiliency, and sustainable natural resources.¹
- Reported collisions between motorists and wildlife cause more than 200 human fatalities and over 26,000 injuries each year, at an annual cost to Americans of more than \$8 billion.²
- In addition to the human toll, an estimated 1-2 million large animals are killed by motorists every year, or roughly one animal every 26 seconds.²
- Numerous research studies show that wildlife crossings that guide animals over or under our nation’s highways reduce WVCs by up to 97%, when placed in areas of known wildlife movement and combined with associated fencing and jump-out structures that allow wildlife caught on the highway to exit.
- All 11 states included in the U.S. Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362, *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*, concluded that roads were an impediment to the migration and movement of iconic western big game species such as elk, pronghorn, and mule deer.
- In cases in which the total economic costs associated with WVCs along a given highway segment exceed the expense of building a structure that allows animals to safely cross the road, **it actually costs society less to solve the problem of wildlife-vehicle collisions than it costs to do nothing.**³

Wildlife crossings are effective at making roads safer for people and wildlife. The table below summarizes the percentage reduction in motorist crashes involving wildlife for the noted projects.

State and Project	% Reduction in WVCs for Target Species
Wyoming – Hwy 191	100%
Arizona – Hwy 260	87%
Colorado – Hwy 9	86%
Virginia – Interstate 64	92%

Sources: Arizona: Dodd, N. L., Gagnon, J. W., Boe, S., & Schweinsburg, R. E. (2007). Colorado: Kintsch, J., Cramer, P., Singer, P., Cowardin, M., & Phelan, J. (2018). Wyoming: Sawyer, H., Lebeau, C., & Hart, T. (2012). Virginia: Donaldson, B. (forthcoming 2020).

¹ Brewer, A. 2019. *Lessons Learned from America’s Last Great Investment in Infrastructure: The Value of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the Economy, Jobs, Roads and other Transportation Infrastructure*. Center for Large Landscape Conservation, Bozeman, MT. https://largelandscapes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Lessons-Learned_Value-of-the-ARRA-of-2009_Nov-2019_formatted.pdf.

² Huijser, M. P., P. T. McGowen, J. Fuller, A. Hardy, A. Kociolek, A. P. Clevenger, D. Smith, and R. Ament. 2007. *Wildlife-vehicle collision reduction study. Report to U.S. Congress*. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Washington DC.

³ Huijser, M. P., J. W. Duffield, A. P. Clevenger, R. J. Ament, and P. T. McGowen. 2009b. *Cost-benefit analyses of mitigation measures aimed at reducing collisions with large ungulates in the United States and Canada: A decision support tool*. Ecology and Society 14(2): 15.