

The Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) launches new Wildlife Roadsharing Resource Centre to help prevent vehicle collisions with wildlife.

First of its kind resource centre in Canada designed to educate and help prevent the estimated 45,000 collisions that occur with wildlife every year.

OTTAWA, September 15, 2015 /CNW/ – Vehicle collisions with animals on and near roadways often result in death and serious injuries for road users and wildlife alike. Between 2001 and 2010, 296 people were killed due to vehicle collisions with animals in Canada and the financial costs associated with these collisions are estimated to be \$200 million annually.

TIRF, in partnership with State Farm Canada, has taken steps to increase knowledge and awareness about this important road safety issue by creating the Wildlife Roadsharing Resource Centre (WRRC). This web-based resource is easily accessible to both the public and researchers at: www.wildliferoadsharing.tirf.org.

Robyn Robertson, TIRF President & CEO explains: “The consequences of collisions involving vehicles and wildlife are under-estimated and profound. These collisions result in road user deaths and serious injuries as well as a loss of biodiversity. A better understanding of these collisions, and more importantly, partnerships to deliver effective mitigation strategies to prevent crashes, are much needed to help reduce the direct and indirect financial costs to Canadians.”

Saving Lives

Collisions between vehicles and animals on roadways are cross-cutting in nature, and span road safety, transportation, infrastructure, health, environment and ecology.

The need to do a better job protecting Canadians on the road, as well as Canada’s biodiversity is a point of consensus that researchers, advocacy organizations, emergency personnel, governments and industry share. In this regard, the latest addition to TIRF’s series of educational programs is designed to compile available knowledge and data, to highlight gaps in the field, and to facilitate linkages and partnerships that can provide direction to inform policy and practice.

“A dedicated resource that clearly informs and educates the public, industry, first responders and governments about encounters with vehicles and wildlife has been lacking in Canada,” said John Bordignon, Media Relations State Farm Canada. “I believe the WRRC will assist in saving the lives of people and wildlife and offers important short and long-term benefits. In the short-term, we are able to communicate to Canadians, easily accessible and practical strategies to help them stay safe wherever they drive. In the long-term, it creates a usable knowledge base that brings attention to the research being done on this issue and supports the development of effective solutions.”

The Wildlife Roadsharing Resource Centre is a hub of sound information that contains a mix of research, information and tools designed to increase knowledge and bridge gaps in the field, and create a common understanding of the problem to strengthen efforts to reduce it. Whether drivers are looking for ways to stay safe on the road and avoid wildlife collisions, or researchers are looking



for data sources, or governments are seeking information about ways to reduce these collisions, the WRRRC has something for everyone.

Fast Facts

In Canada

- > Between four and eight collisions occur every hour with large animals.
- > Vehicle collisions with wildlife continue to pose a risk as traffic volumes increase, in part because road networks and other transportation corridors (e.g., railways) act as barriers to wildlife and ecological systems.
- > There were 296 people killed due to vehicle collisions with animals between 2001 and 2010 (TIRF National Fatality Database).
- > The number of collisions with wildlife has been estimated at more than 45,000 collisions per year.

In the United States

- > The average cost per collision from 1996 to 2001 was \$3,470 USD and an average yearly cost of \$7,529,242 USD.
- > Property damage in 1993 caused by deer-vehicle collisions accounted for \$1.1 billion, USD.

The launch of this resource coincides with an important time of year for drivers and wildlife. Shawna Meister, Research Associate & Coordinator at TIRF, developer for the Wildlife Roadsharing Resource Centre states: "Fall can be an especially dangerous time for collisions with wildlife. Animals, particularly large animals such as moose and deer, are very active and move across larger areas due to winter migration, mating season, and to avoid hunters". She adds that, "Additionally, the visual field for drivers is reduced by decreasing hours of sunlight so drivers should be extra vigilant in watching for the sudden appearance of wildlife."

Road Safety Tips

- > Drivers should not swerve to avoid animals, with the potential exception of certain situations with moose, as swerving could cause you to lose control and hit another vehicle or road hazard.
- > Pay attention to your surroundings and continually scan the environment. Roads near wooded areas, rivers, lakes and streams pose a greater threat to animal/vehicle interaction.
- > Drive defensively. Other drivers may not know how to react properly to wildlife on the road and could swerve into you.
- > Watch for flickering lights from other vehicles, which may indicate an animal crossing the road between the other vehicle and you.
- > Ask passengers to watch for wildlife and give specific observations such as, "deer on left".
- > Do not rely on roadside fencing to protect you. Some animals can jump over or crawl under fences.

The online Wildlife Roadsharing Resource Centre will continue to be developed as new research becomes available.

About TIRF

Established in 1964, TIRF's mission is to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries. As a national, independent, charitable road safety institute, TIRF designs, promotes, and implements effective programs and policies, based on sound research. TIRF is a registered charity and depends on grants, contracts, and donations to provide services for the public. Visit us online at www.tirf.ca.

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