

Many wildlife-vehicle collisions preventable

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A new study from the University of Waterloo has found that Ontario could save millions by implementing simple measures to help prevent vehicle accidents involving wildlife.

The Waterloo study focused on Ontario. It concluded that many of the thousands of wildlife-vehicle collisions—some fatal—occurring each year could be prevented if authorities implemented a few, cost-effective strategies to minimize the occurrences.

Implementing strategies such as better signage, wildlife detection systems, fencing and wildlife crossings could help reduce financial and health-related impacts for people, emergency services and the insurance industry. The measures could also help prevent unnecessary loss in the wildlife populations.

"These collisions cost Canadians hundreds of millions a year in vehicle damage and medical costs, as well as traffic delays, [emergency services](#) use and increases in insurance premiums," said Waterloo's Associate Professor Michael Drescher, who co-authored the study with graduate student Kristin Elton. "Ontario is missing an opportunity here. The most efficient way to prevent these accidents is to integrate effective measures in wildlife conflict zones every time major road work is undertaken."

The study looked specifically at Southern Ontario, which has the highest concentration of roads in Canada. With ever-expanding infrastructure having a significant impact on wildlife and their habitat, many of the

cost-effective measures that could help reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions are underdeveloped in Ontario.

"Within Canada, the Rocky Mountain region is renowned as a leader in the management of wildlife-road conflicts, said Drescher, who estimates five to 10 per cent of car insurance premiums go to animal-related incidents. "They've realized the economics are simple. Adding measures to road construction projects only marginally impacts the overall budget, while saving millions in taxpayer money, insurance costs, and potentially lives.

"Governments have to balance many competing factors next with the technical elements of this problem, such as perceived financial constraints, public opinion and political motivations," added Drescher. "When these factors are not managed right, wildlife management measures are delayed or never started."

The study, Implementing [wildlife](#)-management strategies into road infrastructure in southern Ontario: a critical success factors approach, was published recently in the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*.

Provided by University of Waterloo

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