

Watch Out For Wildlife Tips



DRIVER TIP SHEET

1. Be particularly alert when driving in wildlife areas

- § Drive with increased awareness when traveling in signed wildlife areas. Crossing signs are generally placed in known wildlife movement areas and wildlife-vehicle collision hot spots. Take notice of crossing signs along your regularly traveled routes and avoid getting habituated to them.
- § Wildlife are more likely to be found near wooded, wetland or agricultural areas, and wherever roads cross streams.
- § Pay attention to both sides of the road by scanning from side to side. If you have passengers, ask them to help you keep an eye out for animals.
- § Practice active driving. Distracted driving, such as driving while talking on your cell phone, text messaging or chatting with passengers is even more dangerous in wildlife areas.
- § As always, make sure you and your passengers wear seatbelts.

2. Slow down and increase the following distance between you and other cars

- § When traveling at a higher rate of speed, your ability to take evasive action is greatly reduced.
- § Reducing your speed will increase your response time to avoid colliding with a crossing animal.

3. Limit driving in wildlife areas at night

- § During dusk and dawn a driver's visibility is lowest and wildlife traffic is highest.
- § Except in foggy or snowy conditions, use your high beams to illuminate more of the road and the roadsides.
- § Avoid overdriving your headlights. At speeds above 45 mph, your headlamps can't sufficiently illuminate objects and terrain at the end of the beam for you to take evasive action. When nighttime speed limits exceed 45 mph, it is easy for a motorist to be comfortable with a familiar

route and drive too fast for conditions. Better that you arrive at your destination a few minutes late than to arrive very late and with an insurance claim.

- § Look for animals' reflective eyes, often visible from a distance. Note that the eyes of a moose do not reflect light like a deer's eyes.
- § Keep your dashboard lights on low and don't use internal lights that can cause a glare on the inside of the windshield and reduce visibility.

4. Be especially careful if you are on a motorcycle

- § Motorcyclists are particularly at risk. While only 2% of deer-car collisions result in human fatalities, 85% of deer-motorcycle collisions involve human fatalities.
- § Drive with caution, particularly at night.

5. Keep up with regular auto maintenance

- § Make sure your windshield is clean and your dashboard is clear of objects that would obscure your ability to see animals on the road.
- § If you regularly drive in wildlife areas, invest in bright headlights.

6. Think like an animal - be familiar with wildlife behavior

- § You can't always anticipate the unpredictable actions of wildlife traveling across roads, but you can better prepare yourself by learning about wildlife behavior.
- § Wildlife move across the landscape for a wide variety of reasons and at different times of the year, such as mating and hunting seasons. Also be more vigilant of wildlife moving if there are active wildfires in the area.
- § Many wildlife species travel in large groups or herds. Where you see one, many more may be nearby. Watch for mother and offspring groups.

- § Your car is not a natural predator and the animal does not know to get out of your way. Even if an animal sees you, it may still jump in front of your car.
- § If an animal crosses safely in front of your car, proceed with caution because it may turn and try to cross back.

7. Don't litter

- § Some species enjoy "human" food just as much as we do and will be attracted to roadsides if they smell fast food containers, apple cores, candy wrappers, soda bottles, etc.

8. Don't rely on "deer whistles" or other gadgets

- § Car-mounted, air-activated or ultrasonic deer whistles have been sold to the general public since the 1970s, claiming to alert deer to the approach of a vehicle and scare them away from roads.
- § The effectiveness of deer whistles has not been proven. Most studies are based on non-scientific anecdotal evidence.
<http://deercrash.com/toolbox/CMToolboxWhistles.pdf>

9. What to do if you see wildlife on or near the road

- § Brake firmly but try not to lock your brakes.
- § Do not swerve and leave your lane. Many accidents occur when drivers swerve to miss an animal and collide with cars in oncoming lanes or fixed objects such as trees on the roadside.
- § If you encounter a group of animals blocking the road, don't try to drive through the group or get out of your car. Try flashing your lights and honking your horn to encourage them to move along.
- § Once the animals have moved out of the roadway, proceed with caution until you are out of the area.

10. What to do if you hit an animal

- § Pull off to the side of the road and put on your flashers. Use flares or reflective triangles if you have them to warn other drivers.
- § Don't approach a wounded animal; it may kick, bite or gore you.
- § Report it to the state wildlife and transportation agencies, as well as your local police and insurance company. Wildlife and transportation agencies need to keep data on where wildlife-vehicle collisions occur.
- § Once alerted, wildlife agents can treat injured animals, examine dead ones, and search for any young left behind.
- § If you hit what you believe to be an endangered or threatened species, immediately report it to the state department of natural resources and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

WHAT MORE YOU CAN DO

Get involved in your local government

- § Attend county commission, zoning or metropolitan planning organization meetings.
- § Vocalize your concern about loss of wildlife habitat to new road construction and urban expansion.

Write to your state transportation agency

- § Express your concern about the rapid loss of wildlife habitat to new road construction and expansion.
- § Encourage them to incorporate wildlife considerations into future transportation planning and the renovation of existing infrastructure.
- § Inquire about their current efforts to reduce the impacts of transportation on wildlife.

HELPFUL LINKS

Dangerous States for Deer-Vehicle Collisions

http://www.statefarm.com/about/media/media_archive/deer.asp

Humane Society of the United States – Don't Be a Road Hog

http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/issues_facing_wildlife/wildlife_crossings_wild_animals_and_roads/a_taxing_situation_highways_and_wildlife_during_springtime.html

Responsible Driver Tips – Orwell, Ohio Police Department

http://www.orwellpolice.com/responsible_driver.htm

How to Avoid a Moose or Deer Collision

<http://www.wikihow.com/Avoid-a-Moose-or-Deer-Collision>

Deer-Vehicle Crash Countermeasure Toolbox

<http://deercrash.com/Toolbox/index.htm>

Hints for the Highway – What Can Drivers Do

<http://www.wildlifeaccidents.ca/hints.htm>

"Don't Veer For Deer" Safety Campaign

http://www.dps.state.ia.us/commis/pib/Releases/2006/10-05-2006_Deer.htm