

News From  
**The Colorado Department  
of Transportation**



Wildlife photos, data: <http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/environmental/wildlife/wildlifeonthemove>

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## ***WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE!***

***As I-70 mitigation efforts continue, agencies remind motorists to slow down, watch for wildlife near roadways***



STATEWIDE – The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are reminding drivers throughout the state to be extra cautious right now and especially watchful of moose, elk, deer, pronghorn and even bears wandering on roads and highways. Because wildlife is more active this time of the year, as they are mating and preparing for winter, the potential for wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs) increases.

A woman from New Castle was killed earlier this month after the vehicle she was in struck a cow moose that ran onto I-70 near Frisco. Because there was a bull moose nearby, wildlife managers believe that rutting behavior may have caused the cow to run onto the interstate.

"There are roadside signs in the area, and across the state warning drivers of these wildlife crossing areas," CPW Breckenridge District Wildlife Manager Sean Shepherd said. "A tragedy like this is an unfortunate

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reminder of how serious collisions with animals can be."

Although severe damage to vehicles from collisions with deer or elk is a common occurrence throughout Colorado, wildlife managers warn that hitting a moose can be especially dangerous.

"Because they are so tall and heavy, most cars that collide with a moose are totaled and the animal often lands on the passenger compartments," Shepherd said. "We caution drivers to do all they can to avoid hitting any animal, especially a moose."

In Summit County alone, vehicles have collided with at least six moose this year, including a young bull moose killed in the same area of I-70 the week before the recent fatality. According to Shepherd, all of the vehicles that collided with the moose were severely damaged.

Wildlife mitigation efforts on I-70, however, have increased in recent years. CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, working in collaboration with Rocky Mountain Wild, ECO-resolutions, LLC, and other partners, recently completed the I-70 Eco-Logical Project, a comprehensive analysis of wildlife mitigation opportunities for the I-70 Mountain Corridor from Golden to Glenwood Springs ([link](#), below). Researchers on the project have developed recommendations on the best places to install new crossing opportunities for wildlife as well as several locations where existing bridges and culverts may be modified to function for wildlife passage.

"Across the country, departments of transportation are recognizing that transportation planning cannot operate in a vacuum, and must incorporate the total landscape context, including historical, community and environmental values, and, specifically, wildlife corridors," said Julia Kintsch, owner and conservation ecologist with ECO-resolutions, LLC. "This project lays the groundwork not just for protecting remaining habitat, but actually improving safe passages across I-70 so that wildlife can freely move to access seasonal ranges or disperse to new areas."

CDOT recently completed a project that installed nearly 100,000 linear feet of wildlife fencing along a 33-mile stretch of I-70, from Gypsum to Dowd Junction (at SH 24). The project consisted of removing existing state right of way fence where necessary, installing new wildlife fence along I-70 and wildlife signs along US 6. Crews also constructed median crossovers on I-70 east of US 24, which involved removal of 12 feet of concrete safety barrier in two separate sections and installation of guardrail in these areas to allow animals both large and small to cross the interstate. Finally, a total of 58 wildlife escape ramps were constructed—four of which were funded by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. These one-way earthen ramps are constructed six feet high (where a notch in the eight-foot high fence has been cut), allowing animals to escape the highway right of way and jump back to safety on the other side.

"CDOT remains committed to the safety of wildlife and travelers on the I-70 Mountain Corridor, and all of our corridor projects address this issue," said Jim Bemelen, CDOT's I-70 Mountain Corridor manager. "In addition to the I-70 Eco-Logical Project, there is also a Memorandum of Agreement ([link](#), below) between CDOT, FHWA and other agencies that documents a process to identify, design and manage landscape elements in the corridor to enhance wildlife crossings of I-70."

In addition, wildlife observations recorded online by the driving public at [www.I-70wildlifewatch.org](http://www.I-70wildlifewatch.org) have helped in identifying important crossing areas for wildlife. Between the fall of 2009 and the spring 2011, over 1,300 animal observations were recorded along the I-70 Mountain Corridor using this website.

"The sightings reported by motorists in the I-70 Mountain Corridor has greatly expanded our knowledge of where animals—especially live animals—are most frequently seen along the roadway, information that cannot be determined with just road-kill counts and accident reports," said Paige Singer, conservation biologist with Rocky Mountain Wild. "Overall, I-70 Wildlife Watch has proven to be a powerful data collection tool for the I-70 Mountain Corridor, and we continue to encourage the driving public to log on."

Officials also remind drivers that it will soon get dark earlier when daylight savings time ends in November, resulting in more commuters on the roads when wildlife is most active.

"This is the time of year when it is especially important for drivers to be cautious by obeying speed limits, being aware of their surroundings, and observing signs warning of wildlife activity," said CPW Northwest Regional Manager Ron Velarde. "For their own safety, people need to stay alert and watch the roads carefully."

During wildlife migration season, motorists are urged to follow these important safety tips:

1. Slow down and stay alert, especially through these and other signed wildlife crossing areas;
2. Scan the roadway and roadsides ahead for signs of movement; watch for shining eyes of animals that reflect car headlights at night;
3. Do not swerve but rather brake gradually, maintaining control of the vehicle.

#### **WEB LINKS:**

The final Eco-Logical report is available at: [http://www.i70mtncorridorcss.com/docs/core-values/healthy-environment/I-70 Eco-Logical Project Final Report Sept2011.pdf/](http://www.i70mtncorridorcss.com/docs/core-values/healthy-environment/I-70_Eco-Logical_Project_Final_Report_Sept2011.pdf/)

The Memorandum of Agreement is available here:  
<http://www.i70mtncorridorcss.com/docs/plans/AliveMOU.pdf/>

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