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ICBC and partners work to prevent wildlife collisions

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. – With the arrival of spring comes a noticeable increase in wildlife and vehicle traffic on British Columbia’s highways. And, often, when both converge, the consequences are deadly.

Crashes with wildlife are a serious issue in Northern BC. ICBC data shows that there are an average of 3,200 crashes with wildlife annually in Northern B.C., with a distinct peak in October through December, and a smaller increase in May through July.

For this reason, ICBC and partners from the Ministry of Transportation (MoT), RCMP, Conservation Officer Service, UNBC, and the BC Conservation Foundation have formed the *Wildlife Collision Working Group* and are collaborating on two projects aimed at reducing the number of crashes with wildlife in Northern B.C.

Armed with a \$10,000 grant from the *RoadHealth* Regional Task Force, the group plans to address two specific areas of concern between now and December 2007.

The first is a research project, commencing this summer. Researchers from UNBC will take ICBC and MoT data on wildlife crashes and locate the highest risk areas and times of day and year for North Central stretches of road. They will then identify environmental and/or engineering site factors that may be contributing to the high rate of vehicle collisions. Finally, implementation of suitable mitigation techniques for high risk stretches of road will begin in 2007.

“This project will offer us invaluable information for reducing carnage on Northern B.C.’s highways,” said David Dickson, Regional Manager of Loss Prevention. “We are extremely fortunate to have research professionals help us identify the danger zones. Then we can use that information to make highways safe for both drivers and animals.”

A public awareness campaign including advertising in regional magazines, educational brochures, a fall radio campaign and seven new rest stop signs will accompany the research.

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Wildlife Collision Prevention Program Coordinator, Gayle Hesse explains the value of the signs for drivers, “The signs provide information on wildlife behaviour, driving hints, and when and where

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crashes are most likely to happen. This helps motorists anticipate and avoid wildlife hazards on the road.”

Safety tips for highway driving this spring:

- Slow down - Respect all posted signs. Don't disregard signs even if you have seen them before.
- Drive defensively - Actively watch for animals, particularly between 7:00 pm and dawn.
- Be alert - Animals are unpredictable, often travel in groups, and may bolt unexpectedly.
- Use your vehicle - Clean your headlights, use your high beams when safe, wear your seatbelt.

For more information on wildlife crash safety visit www.icbc.com/road_safety and www.wildlifecollisions.ca.

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