COLORADO WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE: A WILDLY SUCCESSFUL ROAD
ECOLOGY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

In Fall 2003, the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project (SREP), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and Colorado State University, initiated Linking Colorado's Landscapes to identify and prioritize wildlife linkages in the state of Colorado. As the education and outreach component to Linking Colorado's Landscapes, SREP launched “Colorado Wildlife on the Move,” a driver-awareness campaign. The goal of the campaign was to educate the motoring public in Colorado about the hazard of wildlife moving across roads and to improve driver awareness, thereby reducing the number of collisions with animals.

To assess the magnitude of animal-vehicle collisions (AVCs) in the state of Colorado, SREP worked with CDOT to analyze data from 1993 to 2004, identifying where and when the most AVCs occurred. With the help of SREP, CDOT was also able to pull out species-specific AVC data. With this information, SREP designed a media campaign in partnership with CDOT, the Colorado State Patrol, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car. The campaign was based on data that identified November as the most dangerous month for drivers and wildlife due to the extremely high number of AVCs. A media event was then timed for the beginning of November to bring greater attention to this issue during this critical time. SREP developed two outreach tools for the event: a driver safety tip sheet and an awareness poster, featuring photographs from famed Colorado wildlife photographers.

The campaign was a wild success: all five Denver TV stations were present and the story was aired 12 times on local TV over the next 36 hours. In addition, both local and national papers covered the story. Over the next two months, articles featuring information from the “Colorado Wildlife on the Move” campaign reached over three million people. To date, 58,000 driver safety tip sheets and 500 posters have been distributed in welcome centers, national parks, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car offices in 85 cities and 175 locations. The tip sheets have already been reprinted three times to meet these needs.

Because of the great success of this campaign and the obvious interest and need for additional safety tip sheets, SREP intends to continue its media events and tip sheet distribution on an ongoing basis. Press events will be held in November and June, the two most dangerous months for drivers and wildlife.