BRITISH COLUMBIA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

British Columbia Conservation Foundation
Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program
Suite 200A 1383 McGill Road
Kamloops, B.C V2C 6K7
Phone: 250.828.2551 Fax: 250.828.2597
Web: www.bccf.com/wvap

NEWS RELEASE

VEHICLES CAN STOP WILDLIFE DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS; BUT WILDLIFE PROTECTION SYSTEM HELPS MOTORISTS TO AVOID ANIMALS

KAMLOOPS, B.C. (July 14, 2003) – The Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program is a proud supporter of the Wildlife Protection System, currently undergoing accuracy testing in Kootenay National Park. The Wildlife Protection System (WPS) is the innovative use of infrared camera technology to detect the presence of wildlife on the road, and then provide a "real time" warning to drivers when the camera system activates flashing warning lights. The system is expected to become operational later this summer, and motorists are reminded that the flashing lights mean "**slow down to the posted speed**" as wildlife will be present on or near the road.

Due to an increasing number of wildlife-vehicle accident claims, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia initiated and provided funding for testing of the Wildlife Protection System. The WPS was first tested in the summer of 2002 near the Dolly Varden Picnic Site, north of Radium Hot Springs. This site was chosen because, historically, it has higher wildlife-vehicle accident rates than other roads within the park. Biologist Nancy Newhouse says, "The first year of WPS testing allowed researchers to document and analyze deer behaviour on a 24-hour basis, and enabled them to identify specific deer behaviours that put the deer and motorists at risk."

"Testing this summer will demonstrate the ability of the Wildlife Protection System to alter motorists' behaviour and reduce speed when the warning signs are activated, "says Dale Keep, speaking for InTransTech Corp., part of the Rainbow Group of Companies, the companies responsible for the development of the WPS. "Warning motorists of potential hazards and reducing their speed are two key factors in the avoidance of wildlife-vehicle accidents."

"The Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program (WVAPP) approaches the challenge of reducing the number of wildlife-accidents with a variety of methods," says Gayle Hesse, WVAPP Coordinator. "Providing funding and support for WPS testing, drawing public attention to the issue of wildlife-vehicle accidents by presenting safe driving hints to motorists, and raising money to support a WVAPP Trust Fund for further research and public education are our three main initiatives."

According to past wildlife-vehicle accident records from the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia and the B.C. Ministry of Transportation, wildlife-vehicle accidents are a serious problem. In a typical year in B.C. it is estimated that the human cost will be 2 or 3 human fatalities, plus 240 injuries. $20 million will be spent by ICBC on property damage claims, and fatality, personal injury, and "swerve to miss" claim costs will be over and above this amount. The Ministry of Transportation will spend $630,000 on highway clean up after 4,300 animals are killed and 12,000 animals or more will crawl off the road and die unrecorded by official statistics.

The Wildlife Accident Reporting System used by the B.C. Ministry of Transportation contains careful records of animals killed on the roads. Provincial data collected between 1991 and 2000 shows that:

- Highway 3, between Osoyoos and Cascade, has the highest number of deer-vehicle collisions in B.C. This 147 kilometre stretch of road has an accident rate of 1.6 accidents per kilometre every year. In 2000, the Kootenay Highway region had 1252 deer-vehicle accidents, almost one third of the provincial total.
- Highway 16, from Hazelton to Houston, has the highest rate of moose-vehicle accidents in B.C., almost 1 accident per kilometre per year, closely followed by the Parsnip River to Chetwynd section of Highway 97.
- Elk are at risk on Highways 3, 93, and 95 in the Cranbrook, Elko, Wasa, and Radium areas.
- The highest rate of bear-vehicle accidents in B.C. occurs on a 2.2 kilometre stretch of Highway 1 near Mt. Lehman/Peardonville. There are an average of 0.9 bear-vehicle collisions per kilometre per year on this short piece of road.

The Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program wishes to spread the message about the dangers of wildlife-vehicle accidents, and what the driving public can do to avoid them, in as many B.C. communities as possible. WVAPP "Hints for the Highway" while driving this summer are:

- Slow Down and obey all posted signs – collision avoidance is improved at lower speeds.
- Drive Defensively – watch out between dusk 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, and wear your seatbelt.

-30-

For more information, please contact:
Darren Bennett,
Program Manager, WVAPP
250.828.2551 (ext. 301)
WVAPP website: www.bccf.com/wvap