

MEDIA RELEASE
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Motorists need to be wildlife alert and take caution as restrictions ease.

The COVID-19 state-wide lock-down restrictions has led to Wildlife Victoria recording a 40% decline in reports for wildlife affected by road trauma, compared to the same time last year.

In March and April 2020, Wildlife Victoria received 714 reports of animals hit by vehicles. This is substantially fewer than the near 1,200 reports received for the same period in 2019.

Wildlife Victoria CEO, Dr Megan Davidson said, “Compared to the previous year, the overall number of cases for sick, injured or orphaned wildlife has remained relatively consistent. The changes we have seen are a decline in reports for injured or deceased wildlife as a result of road trauma. While on the other hand, there has been an increase in reports from people noticing wildlife in need while walking or exercising in nature or parklands, or even spending more time in their own backyard.”

Every year thousands of native animals are killed on Victorian roads. Between 2017 and 2019, over 17,300 animals were reported to Wildlife Victoria as a result of vehicle collisions, with more than 6,200 cases reported in 2019. In most cases the animal sadly does not survive the collision, or is so severely injured it must be euthanised.

As restrictions start to ease and more people return to the roads, Dr Megan Davidson urged Victorian motorists to be wildlife alert and reduce their speed.

“Reducing speed reduces the risk of all types of collisions, including hitting animals on the road. Please slow down in areas where wildlife is active, such as on country roads and in the outer, newer suburbs of cities and towns, especially between dusk and dawn when wildlife is on the move.”

“Hitting a kangaroo or wombat can be very traumatic as the animal may be horribly injured. With some animals being quite large, the collision can cause damage to the vehicle, and injury to the driver and passengers is very likely.”

It’s important to remember; even if the animal is deceased it may have a joey in its pouch that has survived the impact, which is why a life saving pouch check is so important. A joey can survive in a pouch for several days after their mother has died.

While in many cases an accidental collision may be unavoidable, there are many things drivers can do to keep themselves and our native-wildlife safe, and reduce the risk of collision:

- Reduce your speed at dusk and dawn. Much of Australia’s wildlife is nocturnal and will begin to venture out at these times in search of food.
- Be alert while driving. If you know you are in an area where there is wildlife, stay focused on the road. Be aware that wildlife may be grazing on the roadside.
- Pay attention to yellow road signs that indicate wildlife in the area.
- If you see an animal near the road, slow down, and prepare to brake if needed.
- If you are driving at night in rural areas, use your high beam headlights for better sight, and watch for reflecting eyes.
- Be aware of smaller animals such as birds, echidnas, possums and reptiles.

If you do accidentally hit an animal while driving, or encounter wildlife that is injured or deceased, pull over if it is safe to do so and turn on your hazard lights. Take note of your location and call the Wildlife Victoria Emergency Response Service for assistance (03) 8400 7300.

If you see an animal on the roadside with a cross or an 'X' spray painted across it, this indicates the animal's pouch has already been checked for young.

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About Wildlife Victoria

- Wildlife Victoria has been operating for more than 30 years as an independent, not-for-profit organisation focussed on the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife.
- Annually, Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Rescue Service receives more than 88,000 requests for assistance and helps to rescue over 50,000 sick, injured or orphaned animals.
- Wildlife Victoria educates the community about wildlife, and helps the community manage wildlife incidents.
- Wildlife Victoria advocates for wildlife whenever their welfare is under threat or compromised.
- More than 10,000 people and 153 organisations in the past four years have accessed outreach education activities run by Wildlife Victoria volunteers.