



Roadkill in Tasmania

Driver Education Series Part 1.

Tasmania has the reputation of being the roadkill capital of the world, reference *Distribution and Abundance of Roadkill on Tasmanian Highways : human management options*, Dr Alistair J Hobday and Melinda L Minstrell.

An obvious sign of potential human impact on animal populations is roadkill. In Tasmania this impact is perceived as relatively greater than in other Australian states, and is often noted by visitors and locals alike, such that calls for management action are common in the popular press. The goal of this three year study was to assess the frequency and distribution of species killed on Tasmanian roads. Over 15,000 km of roads were surveyed and 5,691 individuals of 54 species were recorded for an average roadkill density of 0.372 km. Over 50% of roadkill could be identified to specific species with common brushtail possums and Tasmanian pademelons, the most common species identified. both in overall numbers and frequency of trips encountered. The 10 most common species accounted for 99% of the items observed. The seasonal occurrence, relationship with vehicle speed, and clustering in local hotspots for particular species all suggest that mitigation measures such as vehicle speed reduction in specific areas may be effective in reducing the number of animals killed. Mitigation measures however, will not apply equally to all species and in particular, success will depend on changing human behaviours.

Why So Much Roadkill.

Tasmania's rich, diverse environment supports an abundance of small to medium sized animals. Many of Tasmania, animals are active at night, often crossing or travelling along country roadsides, they can be difficult to see and also behave unpredictably. They can be dazzled by headlights and each species responds differently to threats.

Roadkill incidents are more common in the following situations:

- Between dusk and dawn. Tasmanian mammals are all nocturnal.
- During summer when pouch young are venturing away from parents.
- Roads that cross or run close to creeks where animals come to drink.
- Areas with attractive roadside vegetation such as mown/slashed grass.
- Roads with steep banks, ditches or other barriers, which trap wildlife on the road.
- The inside of corners, where animals will run away from the vehicle in a direct line. which takes them onto the road.

Roadsides make good territories due to plentiful resources (water in ditches, slashed vegetation, dead animals and food thrown from cars) so roads act as 'sinks: once one animal is killed another will move in immediately to take advantage of the good territory.

Over the last few decades, the number of roadkills in Tasmania has increased due to increases in traffic, faster roads, (straighter, wider and smoother surfaces) lower cars, and more new roads being constructed in country and wilderness areas.

Reducing the toll.

There are a number of methods available to reduce roadkill, some of which have been implemented in Tasmania. These include:

- Reflectors attached to guideposts which reflect headlights into the bush to deter animals from the road.
- Shelters on the roads for animals for animals to hide in.

- Underpasses with ‘funnel’ fencing to encourage animals to cross underneath the road surface.
- Rope overpasses or even solid, vegetated overpasses.
- Escape routes that assist animals to cross barriers such as steep roadside banks so that they can get off the road when a vehicle approaches.
- Signage and rumble strips to alert drivers to wildlife.
- Reduction of vegetation and water to discourage them from roadsides.
- Traffic slow points.
- Removal of carcasses from the roadsides to reduce deaths of scavengers.

How can we help?

The best way to reduce roadkill is for people to take responsibility for their own driving habits. You can do the following things to reduce your chance of hitting an animal

Watch out for wildlife. There are more animals on the roads in the summer months when emerged pouch young are venturing away from their parents, and some animals are basking on the warm road surface. Roadkill occurs most often between dusk and dawn when nocturnal animals are on the move.

Identify roadkill hotspots.

If you drive a particular route regularly, you will become familiar with the places you normally see wild life on the roads. When driving in unfamiliar territory keep an eye out for the conditions listed previously where roadkill is likely to occur.

- **Slow Down.** If you can't avoid driving at night, make sure that you leave enough time to drive slowly. Slowing down by at least 10 km per hour will mean that you are more in control when you come across an animal. This will also give the animal more time to respond.
- **Honk your horn.** This will scare animals off the road. Make sure the animal is well off the road before you pass it.
- If it is absolutely safe to do so, move the dead animals off the road this will reduce the attraction of scavengers, quolls, Tasmanian devils, birds of prey. Do not stop unless your car is clearly visible to traffic in both directions.
- If you hit an animal or encounter an injured animal, please stop if it is safe for you to do so. Wildlife can be aggressive when scared or injured. If this is the case mark the spot and contact Bonorong Animal Sanctuary Phone 0447 264 625. If you don't get through immediately just leave your contact number they will get back to **you**.

Remember as drivers you are the ones that can contribute most to stop the carnage on our roads.

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