

Road Watch Coordinator attends Highway Workshop in Arizona May 1, 2005

Safe highways and healthy habitats were on the agenda in Payson, Arizona. Janet Quinn, local project coordinator of Road Watch in the Pass, recently attended the Rockies Wildlife Crossing Field course in Payson. The purpose of this 3 day course was to share successes and challenges of incorporating effective wildlife mitigation measures into transportation planning and highway construction. Janet participated in workshop topics on integrating fish and wildlife data into transportation planning, monitoring crossings, and engineering considerations with wildlife crossings, as well as mitigation and collaboration.

One full day of the course was spent in the field looking at wildlife underpasses constructed mainly for elk in the area, along the Arizona State 260 highway-twinning project. Quinn notes, "It was very interesting to see first-hand the crossing structures and to hear the steps involved in getting the underpasses constructed, and what is working most successfully." Effective crossing structures such as overpasses, underpasses and culverts, allow wildlife to cross fenced and unfenced highways. Different species require different types of crossing environments, so a variety of crossing structures are necessary. The location of crossing structures is as important as what types are built. Crossing structures must be built in places where animals are likely to cross. This is where Road Watch in the Pass can have an important local impact.

"This was an excellent opportunity to see what is happening regarding wildlife crossings in other areas of Western Canada and the U.S., and to share successes and challenges," says Quinn. "Creative solutions are being developed to minimize collisions and maintain habitat connectivity. It was engaging to hear how many different groups in Arizona, such as conservationists, engineers, state agencies (transportation and Fish and Game), and policy makers are coming together to share their expertise and resources to deal with human and wildlife safety issues. This definitely creates a win-win situation. We have such an advantage here to be able to collect information about **live** wildlife on or near the road around our community. Road Watch is a very exciting and innovative project that is not happening anywhere else right now."

Road Watch in the Pass continues to gain momentum and new users. To date, there have been ----- wildlife observation reports. New participants are always welcome. You can call 564-4833 for more information or to enter your wildlife observations along Highway 3 from Lundbreck to the AB/BC border go to www.rockies.ca/roadwatch.



A day in the field near Payson, Arizona learning about wildlife crossing structures. Janet, the local project coordinator is standing on the right in a green shirt.



A recently built underpass designed to assist elk in moving back and forth between a riparian area at night and a pine forest in the day. Note the gentle slopes along the side of the structure and open line of sight.



Video equipment is powered using solar panels to monitor species using the underpass.