

Reducing the Wildlife Road Toll Community Forum

Nearly sixty people attended the Reducing the Wildlife Road Toll Community Forum on Friday February 23, 2024. Attendees included concerned residents and wildlife rehabilitators from as far away as Ballarat, and council representatives from City of Greater Bendigo and Hume City Council. We were also delighted to have Cr Pearce open the forum, and Cr Anderson in attendance.



Our first speaker was Lisa Palma, CEO of Wildlife Victoria who gave us an overview of the important work Wildlife Victoria does for our native wildlife. Lisa also presented some statistics related to the sheer volume of animals, mainly eastern grey kangaroos, affected by the road toll in our shire. In fact, according to Wildlife Victoria data, Macedon Ranges Shire represents nearly 5% of the total statewide rescue case volume and is 200% higher than the second highest wildlife rescue region.

Linda Healy from The Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network presented on their group's positive relationship with council, particularly in years past and during the Lancefield Cobaw Fires. Linda argued for greater driver awareness education, and perhaps reinstating WAM – Wildlife Awareness Month, during October.

Dr Kylie Soanes presented a fascinating overview of how the science of ecology can be used to assess the success or otherwise of road kill mitigation structures such as rope bridges and signs. Kylie's research finds that reducing the speed limit and using well placed fencing to guide animals away from roads are proven measures, and caution was needed for some strategies such as virtual fencing.

Eng Lim, Manager Engineering and Resource Recovery gave an entertaining overview of what council can and can't do in this space, particularly emphasising the role the Department of Transport has in final say of speed limits.

These talks are available for viewing on the council website here: <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/Live-Work/Environment/Animals-of-the-Macedon-Ranges/Living-With-Wildlife#section-2>

Feedback from participants on the day was very positive with the only criticism being we could have made the event longer!

The forum was organised by Macedon Ranges Shire Council Biodiversity Projects Officer Tanya Loos and Roadside Conservation Officer Joshua Gomez. The event was inspired by our participation in the Wildlife Victoria-led Wildlife Road Toll Reduction Project, with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Bass Coast Shire Council and City of Greater Bendigo. The project aim is the development of a toolkit for council across Victoria – which will be available soon!

Image: From L-R - Linda Healy, Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network. Lisa Palma, Wildlife Victoria. Eng Lim, Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Key takeaways

1. Ensure that addressing the wildlife road toll is included in Council's strategic documents

Biodiversity Project Officer Tanya Loos and Roadside Conservation Officer Joshua Gomez's work in this area is supported by two key strategic documents: The [Macedon Ranges Shire Council Biodiversity Strategy 2018](#), and the [Roadside Conservation Management Plan 2021](#).

The Engineering Team's involvement is thanks to the incorporation of wildlife into the [Mobility and Road Safety Strategy 2023](#), as Strategic Theme 5: Improving Wildlife Safety and Outcomes.

Community members are encouraged to write to their councillors and request similar for their local government area.

2. It is a collaborative effort

Councils are encouraged to work with Wildlife Victoria, including the incorporation of Wildlife Victoria road kill data into their GIS systems, and to make sure front desk staff and operations staff refer wildlife trauma cases to Wildlife Victoria.

3. October is the busiest month for wildlife trauma

Targeted wildlife awareness campaigns, delivered in conjunction with local rescue groups, could occur in October, which is now the busiest month for wildlife rescue. Other opportunities for driver awareness, and wildlife rescue education are during long weekends, and busy flagship events such as the Macedon Ranges Autumn Festival.

4. The work continues!

Wildlife Victoria is presently seeking funding to reinstate the Wildlife Road Toll Reduction Project, in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council and City of Greater Bendigo. The project aim is the adoption and trial of road kill mitigation solutions.

Breaking News – Notice of Motion from Cr Anderson

At the March 27, 2024, Scheduled meeting Cr Anderson made a Notice of Motion (NOM) to the Council meeting to ask federal and state politicians to include wildlife trauma and fatalities metrics in Federal road safety Black Spot funding models.

The motion can be found here: [Agendas and Minutes - Macedon Ranges Shire Council \(mrsc.vic.gov.au\)](#)

The Motion includes writing to a number of state and federal politicians and organisations with this request, and will be presented in Canberra at the National General Assembly meeting of local governments in July 2024. As Councillor Anderson says "A road that is safer for wildlife is also safer for humans." Thanks for your support Cr Anderson! 😊

To keep informed with events and initiatives as they unfold – make sure you subscribe to our [Environment Enews](#) or get in touch: Tanya Loos, Biodiversity Projects Officer: M 0456 390 591 | [E tloos@mrsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:tloos@mrsc.vic.gov.au)