

WILDLIFE USE OF TWO EXISTING BRIDGES AND CITIZEN DOCUMENTATION OF WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS ALONG STATE HIGHWAY 75, BLAINE COUNTY, IDAHO

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A 26-mi section of State Highway 75 between Timmerman Junction (Jct. with Hwy 20) and the Trail Creek Bridge in Ketchum, Idaho, is likely to be widened because of an increase in traffic volume and traffic safety concerns. The increase in traffic is associated with human population, and job growth. Currently, about 30-50 wildlife-vehicle collisions per year occur on this road section, mostly with mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and elk (*Cervus elaphus*). We monitored wildlife passages under two existing bridges across the Big Wood River with photo cameras between 15 April and 11 September 2007. During the same time period, wildlife sightings (dead and alive) were recorded by citizens who traveled the 26-mi road section. Species that passed under the two existing bridges included mule deer ($n = 129$), red fox ($n = 44$), mice ($n = 35$), ground squirrels ($n = 21$), raccoon ($n = 15$), weasel ($n = 14$), red squirrel ($n = 10$), skunk ($n = 5$), pine marten ($n = 3$), black bear ($n = 2$), and mountain lion ($n = 1$). Sightings of wildlife (dead and alive) along the entire 26-mi corridor included elk ($n = 207$), mule deer ($n = 117$), red fox ($n = 24$), moose ($n = 3$), black bear ($n = 3$), and wolf ($n = 2$). We conclude that, at least during summer, the two existing bridges were not used by elk, whereas elk did cross the road elsewhere, apparently in large numbers. In addition, there were a minimum of 18 deer- and three elk-vehicle collisions during this time period, indicating that animal-vehicle collisions were substantial, and that mitigation measures may be warranted, both because of human safety and habitat connectivity concerns.
