



Wildlife Warning Signs Survey

This May, with the help of the RACT, we conducted a survey as part of a project to test the effectiveness of wildlife warning signs on Tasmanian roads. We asked readers of the RACT magazine Motor News Journeys to respond to a survey to help improve the design of wildlife warning signs and find out about drivers' perceptions of roadkill in Tasmania. The Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources will be surveying levels of roadkill at several unmarked 'roadkill black spots' over the next few months. Once this baseline information has been recorded, new Roadkill Black Spot signs will be trialled at some of these sites, to determine whether the signs are effective at reducing roadkill.

88 people responded to the survey, which yielded some interesting results. The survey participants indicated that roadkill was an important issue in Tasmania, and 90 per cent of respondents rated Tasmania's wildlife as extremely important. 75 per cent of respondents thought that slowing down at roadkill black spots would be effective in reducing roadkill.

Participants were asked to compare four different wildlife warning signs. Two of these signs are currently in use on Tasmanian roads, and two were new designs. One of the existing signs used in the survey showed a kangaroo colliding with a car, and the other a profile of a Tasmanian Devil. The new designs were of a rather friendlier Devil, face-on, and a wallaby with a joey in its pouch.



Clockwise from top left – new face-on Tasmanian Devil sign design, new wallaby with joey sign design, current kangaroo colliding with car sign, current Tasmanian Devil sign.

Respondents rated the likely effectiveness of the two new designs higher than the effectiveness of the two designs currently used in Tasmania. The kangaroo hitting a car sign provoked the most comment, many people describing it as the 'weight-lifting kangaroo'. This sign is clearly well-recognised, and some drivers noted that showing the impact of an animal hitting a car was effective. However, the majority of those surveyed found it funny or silly, and rated it lower than all the other signs for meaningfulness, recognisability, emotional response and the likelihood that it would encourage them to slow down.

Of the other sign designs, Tasmanian Devils were thought to be a good choice to encourage drivers to slow down, one respondent commenting that 'the Devil has a particular place in our psyches now', and many noting its iconic and endangered status. But most of those surveyed preferred the cuter, face-on devil design, commenting that the current profile design makes the devil look too aggressive – 'makes it look mean rather than cute and cuddly and in need of protection', as one respondent put it. The wallaby and joey sign scored highly particularly for recognisability and emotional response, but many of those surveyed commented that 'sadly, many people do not see wallabies/kangaroos as worth saving'. Overall, the face-on image of the Tasmanian Devil was thought to be the most effective of the signs in the survey.

Many respondents thought that while signs might be effective for them, as people who care about wildlife, they would be less effective for other drivers, specifically local drivers who know the roads well, foreign tourists, truck drivers, and of course, hooners. Some suggested other mechanisms for reducing roadkill, including the use of whistles or reflectors.

Several people suggested that there are currently so many wildlife warning signs that people learn to ignore them. Some suggested making the new signs stand out by using flashing lights, or making the speed limit mandatory, rather than suggested.

Television advertisements and stories in the media were indicated as the best ways to communicate with the public about preventing roadkill, and several respondents commented that a public information campaign would be needed to back up the new roadkill black spot signage.

To find out more about reducing roadkill and to download GPS co-ordinates of roadkill black spots for your SatNav, visit roadkilltas.com

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