

# Highway gets more wildlife warnings

By Richard Cuthbertson, Canwest News Service April 10, 2010

As the twinning of the TransCanada through Banff National park continues, the massive project will bring with it 20 new wildlife crossings meant to protect animals from being hit by vehicles.

On Friday, the federal government announced it will hand over \$1 million over the next five years to a coalition of groups to research how well various measures work to keep wildlife off the busy highway once the twinning is extended.

Wildlife crossings have long been a staple along the Trans-Canada in the eastern part of the park with 24 wildlife crossings stretching from the national park's eastern gates near Canmore, Alta., to Castle Junction. They appear to be working.

Since 1996, more than 200,000 animals have used the structures and during that time there has been an 80 per cent drop in animal versus vehicle collisions, according to Parks Canada.

The new research will look at how measures work for species more common at the higher altitudes where the roadway is being expanded.

Two species more common in the areas being twinned are the wolverine and the Canadian lynx, according to Tony Clevenger, a wildlife biologist with the Western Transportation Institute who has been studying wildlife vehicle collision in the park for 14 years.

"It's really unprecedented what they're doing in terms of the mitigation," Clevenger said of the wildlife crossings and other measures to be deployed along the twinning project.

During the last two years, the federal government has announced \$230 million in funding to complete the twinning of the Trans-Canada through Banff park.

Measures to mitigate collisions with wildlife make for a significant chunk of the budget, with MP Blake Richards estimating they take up one third of the project cost.

But it's a worthwhile investment, he says, saving the lives of motorists along a heavily travelled highway in an area with a high population of wildlife.

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