



## Lynx image captures world's imagination

Apr 19, 2012 06:00 am | Cathy Ellis

0 tweets

tweeted

Share

A rare photo of a lynx crossing a wildlife overpass on the Trans-Canada Highway in Banff National Park has captured the imagination of people around the world.

The high quality image of the lynx from a motion-sensitive camera has garnered media attention from across Canada, the United States and England, including a feature piece on the Discovery Channel earlier this week.

Tony Clevenger, lead scientist on crossing structure research, said the photo highlights the importance of these structures for wildlife conservation, but the real story lies in the impact of this photo.

“I think it demonstrates the power of compelling photos in telling the story and educating the public about the importance of crossing structures as a form of highway mitigation,” he said.

“If we can educate people about these safe passage measures and the importance of them, we’ll get better traction when we try to mitigate highways elsewhere.”

The rare image of the lynx was captured by remote camera on March 28 at 8:34 a.m. It’s the sixth lynx recorded using either the underpasses or overpasses since monitoring began in 1996.

This was the second lynx crossing at the Redearth Creek overpass this year.

Locally, the photo illustrates the important role wildlife structures play in helping prevent animal deaths on roads, as well as providing lynx with access to diverse habitats on both sides on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Internationally, it is hoped this news will be a boost to wildlife managers with sensitive lynx populations, like in Colorado, where plans are in the works to build highway crossing structures.

A lot like wolverines, Clevenger said lynx are also averse to highways and development.

“They are a rare occurring species in the Bow Valley and any time we get them using these structures, it’s significant in terms of conservation of the species over the long term,” said Clevenger, a wildlife biologist with Montana State University’s Western Transportation Institute.

“I also think this bodes well for other places in North America where the species range, where there are efforts to mitigate highways for lynx.”



Highwaywilding.org PHOTO

A Canada lynx uses the Redearth Creek wildlife overpass to cross the Trans-Canada Highway in Banff National Park at 8:34 a.m. on March 28. Since 1996, over 200,000 animals, including grizzlies, wolves and cougars, have safely crossed the highway using wildlife overpasses and underpasses.

[view all photos \(1\)](#)

Specifically, Clevenger points to plans to build a crossing structure along Interstate 70 in Colorado.

“They are a threatened species in the U.S., and highways are getting expanded and there’s more traffic volume and there’s a need for mitigation,” he said.

“People in that area have looked to Banff for information and proof that these structures are effective and that lynx will use them. The two overpasses have been the poster child for getting that initiative going.”

Lynx live in Banff, Yoho and Kootenay national parks, but not just anywhere in these parks. They establish home ranges in high evergreen forests occupied by snowshoe hare.

Further north, in the boreal forest, hare populations rise and fall dramatically every 10 years, which is shadowed very closely by lynx populations. This drama of life and death is less evident in the south, but does occur here.

The Lake Louise area appears to hold important nodes of habitat for lynx; research from 1996 to 2000 found the home ranges of three lynx overlapped here.

Home ranges for resident adults averaged about 220 square kilometres in the southern study area, which included Banff, Yoho and Kootenay and provincial lands.

Researchers found that lynx averaged at least 3.5 kilometres of daily travel, but ranged up to 32 km. However, when hare numbers drop, many resident lynx abandon their home ranges and become transient.

A male lynx with a home range in Yoho National Park was later trapped and killed north of Swan Hills, Alta. – almost 500 km away.

Parks Canada officials say this awesome image of the lynx has captured the imagination of many people, offering an extraordinary glimpse of an animal that most Canadians will never see.

Trevor Kinley, a Parks Canada road ecologist in Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay, said lynx are usually active at night, so it was unusual to capture a photo in daylight hours.

“What stood out for me as characteristic of the lynx was you could see the huge feet, just completely floating on top on the snowpack,” he said. “It has huge snowshoe feet.”

Since the wildlife crossing structures were built, more than 200,000 wildlife crossings have been recorded.

Eleven species of large mammals have used the crossing structures, including grizzly and black bears, wolves, coyotes, cougars, moose, elk, deer, bighorn sheep, and more recently, wolverine and lynx.

## Comments

Be the FIRST to comment!

## Got something to say?

### Post Comment

You haven't entered any comments to post!

Post comment

***The Rocky Mountain Outlook welcomes your opinions and comments. We reserve the right to edit comments for length, style, legality and taste and reproduce them in print, electronic or otherwise. For further information, please contact the editor or publisher.***

In order to post comments on our web site, you must validate your email address. An email was sent to you when you registered that included an activation link. If you have not yet done so, please click on the link to activate your account.

If you did not receive your activation email, please click [here](#) to have it resent.

In order to post comments, you must be logged in.