



COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA

WildPaths project hits midway point

Data show birds also at risk for collisions

By BRIDGET BUTLER
Cold Hollow to Canada

ST. ALBANS — We're at the half-way point of our field season for collecting data on animals crossing roadways both with and without success. The WildPaths project officially runs April through September because that's when animals are most likely to move across the landscape, and therefore be crossing roadways.

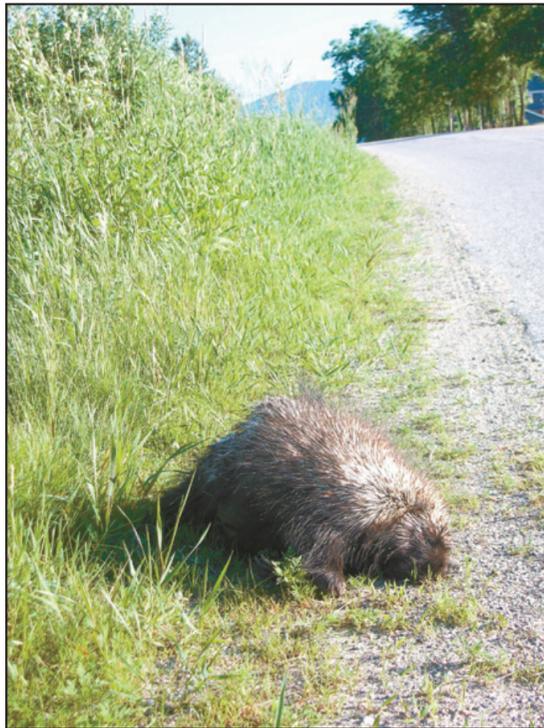
The two key seasons for migration are spring and fall. And, migration isn't just for birds. Migration is the act of moving from one place to another to find food, to breed or to find more favorable living conditions. Mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds and even insects are known to migrate. For animals moving across the landscape, roadways present a challenge to meeting their basic needs to survive and breed.

There are a number of animals that have a familiar migration calendar, like

the red-winged blackbird that returns each spring. As the snow melts we look for amphibians like spring peepers and wood frogs, moving to ponds and wetlands to breed. Later in June, we're on the lookout for snapping turtles in the road as they make the move to find a suitable place to lay eggs. In a previous column, I shared the story of the fisher and their movements to find a mate in the spring.

What I'm enjoying about the WildPaths data is that we're already seeing movement trends with different animal species. But let's take a look at the overall data first.

So far, volunteers have found evidence of 56 animal crossings. Live animals reported by volunteers include actual sightings of animals in roadways and signs of animals in or within 25 feet of the road. Signs can include tracks or scat (animal feces). We've received a total of 94 observations, six of which



Annette Goyne took this photo of a porcupine on South Richford Road.

reported no animal observations for a site that's monitored monthly. Volunteers submitted their observations to the WildPaths webpage at <http://bit.ly/CHCWildPaths> or uploaded pictures and data to our iNaturalist project page using their smartphone at <http://bit.ly/iNatWildPaths>.

Our volunteers are driving, walking or biking and they can submit a random observation or a monthly observation of a road that they've adopted to survey. We're only halfway through our first season so there's still plenty of time to

become one of our citizen scientists! All the information you need is at our website. We hope you'll join us in reporting observations of animals crossing our roads and highways July through September.

But onto the data. Birds were the most spotted animal, with 17 live crossings, and six animals found deceased while trying to cross. What can't be seen in the graph is that the majority of live bird sightings are wild turkeys. There were 13 live turkey sightings out of 17, next were ruffed grouse at two, and then at one each were American robin



A snapping turtle crosses the road.

and Canada goose. Dead birds included a blue jay, a chickadee, an American Woodcock and a broad-winged hawk. From looking at the data, we've found our time of year for wild turkey movement seems to be in April as all of our reports on turkeys came in that month.

Our data shows that birds are just as susceptible to road collisions as other animals. In a 2014 study by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and US Fish & Wildlife Service, it was estimated that between 89 and 340 million birds die annually from vehicle collisions on U.S. roads. It's such a broad estimate due to the incredible challenge of collecting data on bird carcasses and the presence of scavengers effectively "cleaning up" carcasses as well. Hopefully, the WildPaths project can shed a little light on bird collisions and we can look at ways to raise awareness on game species movements like wild turkeys and American woodcock.

The next stand-out would be the set of creatures who

are most active at dusk or dawn, also known as crepuscular animals. This would include the raccoons, porcupines, skunks, beavers, fishers and moose. According to our preliminary data, they're not doing too well in terms of successfully crossing our roads, with moose the animal spotted alive. Of course, they're hard to miss and as long as you hit the brakes soon enough, both you and the moose can breathe a sigh of relief.

Frogs and snakes are on the low end of reports at this point in time, but snake sightings are likely to creep up as we enter the fall when snakes will be migrating to their wintering grounds. Great to know we haven't had any unsuccessful reports for black bear and bobcat, two more of our larger mammal target species. But their time may be coming as well, let's just hope they'll be live sightings.

If you have any sightings you'd like to add to our project, please reach out to us at wildpaths@coldhollowtocanada.org. We can Adopt-A-Roadway, grab some forms for random sighting reports or learn how to use the iNaturalist smartphone app to submit your roadkill or near miss reports.

The WildPaths Project is a program of Cold Hollow to Canada which uses volunteers to gather observations about wildlife crossing roadways in the Northern Green Mountains. Learn more at www.coldhollowtocanada.org.

Kirin Waqar, Lena Ginawi and Hawa Adam, members of Muslim Girls Making Change, pose for a photo in South Burlington. They are among four teens who will participate in an international youth poetry competition this week in Washington.



LISA RATHKE, AP photo

Muslim Girls Making Change spread messages through poetry

By LISA RATHKE,
Associated Press

SOUTH BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — Four girls from Vermont are using their voices and powerful performance poetry to get their message out about being Muslim in America, stereotypes, and other issues near to them.

Five months after forming their slam poetry group, Muslim Girls Making Change is competing this week in the Brave

New Voices international youth poetry slam competition in Washington, DC.

"We write poems about things that we can't keep inside of us anymore, so things that we care so much about," said Kirin Waqar, 16, of South Burlington, whose parents are from Pakistan.

With titles like "American Dream," "Welcome" and "Chameleon" the girls address their parents' expectations coming to this country, the Syrian refugees and their own challenges balancing their American identity with where their family is from.

Like in the poem "Chameleon":

"We will never be white only pretend to be. We hide behind big mirrors and lies unsure of who we really are. African American or the other way around? Pakistani first, American?" they say. "Tears roll off our face. The droplets form a perfectly curved rainbow. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, which one am I?" they say voices rising. "Which one are we. Maybe we're a mix. Maybe we are many. A combination of colors... Maybe we are one."

Through the poetry, 15-year-old Lena Ginawi, whose father is from Egypt and mother is from Yemen, wants people to know that "whenever you hear the word terrorism I don't want the first thing you think about is Islam, because Islam to me is a religion of peace. Anything that these terrorists do has nothing to do with Islam," she said.

The group won a tryout in Vermont to compete in the

Brave New Voices festival.

They not only have a powerful message and stage presence, but they are willing to discuss the issues they talk about in their poetry, answer questions and use that as platform for good and creating change, said Sarah Glied of the Young Writers Project, which helped raise funds for the group's trip to Washington.

In middle school, Waqar said she tried to assimilate wearing American clothing.

Then at 15, she decided her religion was more important and started wearing a hijab.

Her attire eventually prompted questions and started conversations, "which was really, really amazing," she said.

"We'd talk about common stereotypes and like Muslim countries and culture versus religion, almost anything; it was wide range," she said.

She says she still gets stares sometimes when she's out in public and sometimes feels afraid if someone gives her a weird look.

Hawa Adam, who got the idea to start the slam poetry group, said a bigger challenge for her growing up was being black in a largely white school in South Burlington, where she said she felt some students made fun of her. She also was the only one wearing hijab at the school at the time. She now attends Burlington High School, which is more diverse. But, she says she feels segregated because most of her friends are either Muslim or black.

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