

Wildlife Road Crossings

Wildlife Road Crossings are locations where wildlife are likely to cross over roads where there is forest shrubland and/or wetland on both sides. Wildlife road crossings identify road segments with a high percentage of Habitat Block on both sides of the road.

Why is it Important?

Wildlife road crossings are a critical and vulnerable component of the network of connected lands and waters across Vermont. Movement of animals from one habitat patch is particularly important for wide-ranging animals, such as bobcats, fisher, and black bears, or for animals that require a great deal of space to meet their daily life needs, such as barred owls or otter. It is equally important for animals with relatively small ranges. Spotted salamanders, for example, often cross roads in spring to move from hibernation sites to breeding pools. Linking small or otherwise isolated habitat patches may reduce the risk of local population extinctions by ensuring immigration, recolonization, reproduction, and exchange of genes for some plant and animal species. While protecting road crossings is important at pinch points where human and wildlife movement overlaps, it is necessary to address the areas and habitats surrounding the actual road crossings and conserve the core habitats on either side. Only in conjunction with the conservation of large areas of undeveloped land with diverse habitat conditions will wildlife road crossings assist in supporting ecosystem functions. In addition to the ecological importance of road crossings, there is a strong public-safety incentive to consider wildlife road crossings and the risks of wildlife-vehicle collisions and the cost to human health and property.

How was it made?

All roadsides were divided into plots of 60 meters parallel to the road and 75 meters perpendicular to the road. For each plot, the percent Habitat Block within each 60x75 meter areas was calculated. Where both sides of the road included a target amount of cover, that road segment was flagged as Highest Priority or Priority. *Highest Priority* Wildlife Road Crossings are those with greater than 75% of the land on both sides of the road in natural cover. *Priority* Wildlife Road Crossings are those with greater than 50% of the land on both sides of the road in natural cover. These target thresholds were established using professional judgement.

To get more technical information about the Wildlife Road Crossings Component, see the [2023 Technical Abstract](#)