

### CROSSINGS: Priority list of wildlife crossings across Oregon released

Continued from page 1

“While the reality of human development, habitat loss, and poaching negatively impacts deer populations, Oregonians can have a proven and measurable impact in reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions by installing wildlife safe passage crossings on our highways.”

Between a five-year span through 2017 and 2021, the Oregon Department of Transportation recorded 30,951 wildlife-vehicle collisions, resulting in damage, injury, and fatalities to motorists and significantly impacting the state’s iconic wildlife, such as mule deer, elk, and pronghorn. In 2021, the average cost of a vehicle collision with a mule deer — the most common collision type — was \$9,086 and collisions with elk cost \$24,006, totaling \$56.9 million in 2020 alone. This includes vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting value.

Between 2015 and 2020, Deschutes County averaged 533.83 wildlife crashes per year. Most of those involve deer. More cars on the highways obviously increases the odds of collisions that don’t end well for deer.

Late last year, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) told *The Nugget* that mule deer populations across the Deschutes National Forest as a whole have declined 56 percent from 2004 to 2021. In the Metolius Basin, the surveyed population of 3,359 mule deer is 46 percent short of the objective of 6,200; in the Upper Deschutes range, the population of 800 is 60 percent below the desired threshold of 2,000.

The report, which can be viewed at [https://oregonhunters.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/OAT-Wildlife-Crossings-Prioritization\\_FINAL\\_02-01-2022.pdf](https://oregonhunters.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/OAT-Wildlife-Crossings-Prioritization_FINAL_02-01-2022.pdf) calls for a full planning process to determine project design — including an underpass, overpass, or other measures along Highway 20 near ODFW-designated Metolius Deer Winter range. Project planning is estimated at \$66,330, with design, feasibility, and construction currently not estimated. The project would be expected to include fencing, a crossing structure, deer guards, and would require potential easements.

About a dozen wildlife-vehicle hotspots across the state have been identified for wildlife crossing projects. In addition to Highway 20 in the Sisters area, the report calls out Highway 20 near Juntura;

I-5 between Ashland and the Oregon-California border; on I-84 near Meacham; and several places on Highway 97 in Central Oregon. Funding needs are estimated to be between \$22 million and \$36 million to address these known hotspots.

The Wildlife Crossings Investment Act was introduced by Rep. Ken Helm (D-34, Washington County) and has 33 sponsors so far. The bill would invest at least \$7 million in targeted projects that will reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions to make roads safer for people and wildlife. These dollars can also be used for federal grant match requirements, allowing Oregon taxpayers’ dollars to be leveraged for a greater return on this initial investment. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provides \$350 million over five years in the form of competitive grants to states, Tribes, and municipalities to create wildlife crossing solutions, and the monies from HB 4130-01 could be harnessed in this way.

To date, Oregon has only five wildlife crossings, considerably fewer than other western states — Colorado has 69, Utah and California both enjoy 50, and Nevada has 23 for large mammals alone. Yet, a recent State Farm insurance analysis found that Oregon has the highest likelihood of wildlife crashes among West Coast states.

“The OAT (Oregon Action Team) priority list is a well-thought-out and analyzed list providing a great look at the on-the-ground opportunities to improve wildlife movement that HB 4130-01 could help bring to fruition to put Oregon on a path toward leadership in wildlife crossing infrastructure,” said Zach Schwartz, Oregon program manager for the Wildlands Network.

The Lava Butte underpass near Bend reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions by more than 85 percent, and Utah saw a 98.5 percent reduction in deer mortalities when it built two animal underpasses on a stretch of highway that blocked traditional migratory routes.

Because so many Oregonians are impacted by wildlife-vehicle collisions, there is broad bipartisan support for wildlife crossings from voters across Oregon. A 2020 poll commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts and conducted by the firm GBAO found that 86 percent of Oregonians favor constructing more wildlife crossings on roads and highways and 75 percent of voters from across the political and geographic spectrum support increased funding to build more wildlife crossings on roads and highways.

# The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

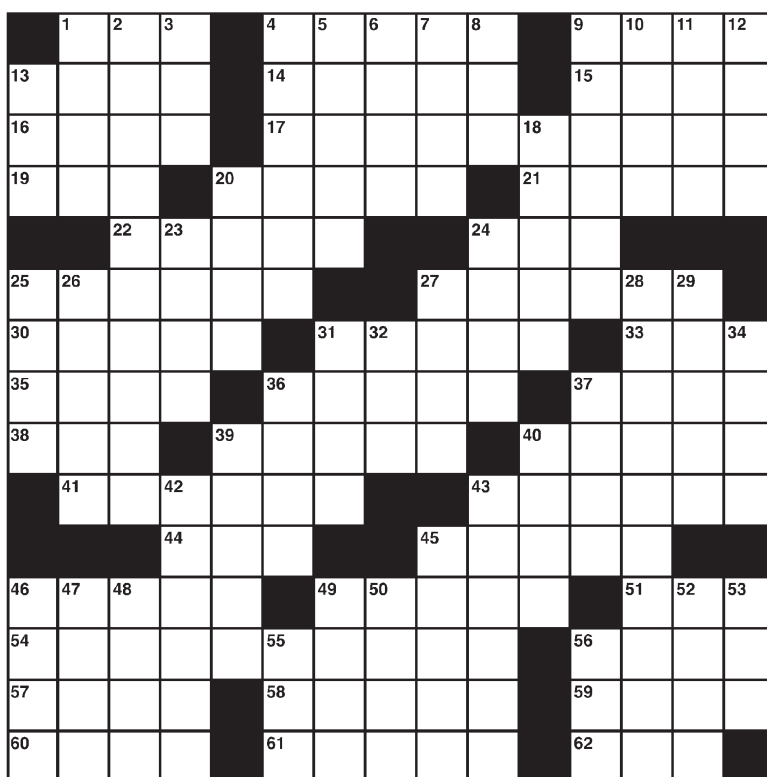
### ACROSS

- 1 Period of time
- 4 Small nails
- 9 Tearful request
- 13 Berry plant
- 14 Look for expectantly
- 15 Lion’s cry
- 16 White \_\_\_; termites
- 17 Wimp
- 19 Maui garland
- 20 Brief & to the point
- 21 Helpful prompts
- 22 Ironing or dusting, e.g.
- 24 “For \_\_\_ a jolly good fellow...”
- 25 Loathsome
- 27 \_\_\_ of; lacking
- 30 Bus station
- 31 Angry look
- 33 Elmo the Muppet’s color
- 35 “Doggone it!”
- 36 Prepare coffee beans

- 37 Trick
- 38 “Ready, \_\_, go!”
- 39 Water park attraction
- 40 Sample
- 41 Michael or Diane
- 43 Colosseum victim
- 44 Noticed
- 45 Not smashed
- 46 In need of tidying
- 49 Dirties
- 51 Opening trio
- 54 Not \_\_\_ to; unfamiliar with
- 56 Wound with a dagger
- 57 Pal
- 58 Kicking’s partner, in phrase
- 59 Egg producers
- 60 Partial amount
- 61 Famous
- 62 Linear measures: abbr.

### DOWN

- 1 Have supper
- 2 Look forward to
- 3 Positive reply



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

- 4 Narrow candles
- 5 Informed; cognizant
- 6 Trash barrels
- 7 Flying toy
- 8 Pigpen
- 9 Glorify
- 10 \_\_\_ of pork; entrée choice
- 11 Far \_\_\_; China’s location
- 12 \_\_\_ and crafts
- 13 Kilmer of “Top Gun”
- 18 Invitation info
- 20 Make much of; promote
- 23 Give a \_\_\_; care
- 24 Round up cattle
- 25 Bookie’s concern
- 26 Bo, for one
- 27 Cause of distress
- 28 Ready to say “I’ve had it!”
- 29 In a bad mood
- 31 Happy expression
- 32 “Put a \_\_\_ on it!”; cry to a windbag

### — Last Week’s Puzzle Solved —

A	P	S	E	A	S	T	E	R	A	D	A	M		
C	O	H	O	W	O	O	D	Y	T	O	G	O		
R	O	A	N	H	O	R	S	E	S	H	O	E	S	
E	L	M	K	I	T	E	H	E	R	D	S			
			E	M	I	L	Y	B	E	N				
D	E	F	U	S	E	C	O	A	S	T	S			
R	E	A	M	S	C	A	L	I	F	U	P	S		
A	R	C	S	L	O	C	A	L	T	R	E	E		
T	I	E	P	A	R	T	Y	M	A	N	N	A		
			E	D	W	A	R	D	S	A	L	A	D	S
						A	R	K	R	A	C	E	R	
S	T	O	R	K	H	O	S	S	O	F	F			
C	O	U	R	A	G	E	O	U	S	Z	U	L	U	
A	D	Z	E	W	A	S	T	E	O	N	E	S		
M	O	O	N	B	R	E	E	D	O	D	D	S		

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- 34 Forest animal
- 36 Shine
- 37 Unusual
- 39 Sticks around
- 40 Keep \_\_\_ on; watch carefully
- 42 Take for granted
- 43 Shaped
- 45 Sifting device
- 46 Apple computers
- 47 Canyon sound
- 48 Bathtub ring, e.g.
- 49 Sing alone
- 50 Fail to include
- 52 Forbids
- 53 NBC competitor
- 55 Sunbather’s goal
- 56 Introverted

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