Every year it is estimated that more than 500,000 marsupials, birds and reptiles are killed on Tasmania’s roads. This figure is only an estimate as many injured animals leave the roads to die, and dead animals are removed by carrion eating species, so the actual number could be much higher, closer to 1,000,000! The rate of roadkill in Tasmania is the highest in Australia and equates to one dead animal visible on the road or road verge every two-four kilometres at any given point in time. In some areas, termed ‘hotspots’, the number of animals killed per kilometre is much higher.

**Which species are affected?**

A large number of species are killed on the roads. Those most commonly killed are:

- Brushtail Possum
- Tasmanian Pademelon
- Bennett’s Wallaby
- Eastern Quoll
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot (listed as vulnerable to extinction)
- Tasmanian Devil (endangered)
- Native-hens and Masked Lapwings (Plovers)

Other species found dead on our roads include:

- Echidnas, Wombats and Bettongs
- Tiger Quoll (listed as vulnerable to extinction)
- Southern Brown Bandicoot
- Long-nosed Southern Potoroo
- Ring Tail Possum
- Forester Kangaroo
- Even the Platypus! (especially after flooding rains)
- Numerous species of birds, large and small, including birds of prey such as the Brown Falcon and the Brown Goshawk, and Owls, that come down to feed on the dead animals and are then killed themselves. Even Wedge-tailed Eagles can be found feeding on dead animals on the roadside
- Frogs (too small to be included in roadkill surveys)
- Blue Tongue Lizards
- Tiger Snakes

The roadkill issue is so serious, that in some cases it has caused local extinctions of particularly vulnerable species such as the Eastern Quoll and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot—this means that every member of a family group in that location has been killed on the road.

**Why does wildlife use our roads?**

It is not only the human animal that uses human roads! Native animals find them very attractive for a number of reasons. Some species like the roads because they are warm - this includes reptiles - but species attracted to the warmth a bitumen road can hold in the evening include wombats and quolls. Insects are also attracted to the warm road surface, and this in turn attracts insect-eating species such as quolls.

Our roads cross through the habitat and territories of native animals. Animals such as wallabies and pademelons cross roads where they bisect their habitat. Some species also enjoy grazing on roadside verges and devils scout along roads for fresh roadkill to eat.

Other species such as quolls and devils use roads for long distance travel as they provide an easier travelling surface than travelling through the bush. Animals are often killed crossing the road to drink at creeks, rivers or dams; especially in the drier months and during extended drought periods.

**Why does road kill happen?**

The reason why roadkill is so high in Tasmania compared with other states is not clear. Some people believe that we have larger populations of wild animals in Tasmania than elsewhere in Australia, others believe the reason is the type of species that are most prevalent here, and make up the bulk of those killed on the roads. Spring and summer is the worst time of year, as young begin to leave pouches, and move about on their own.
Marsupials are mainly killed between dusk and 11pm, or around dawn. These are the times when the animals are most active and are crossing roads moving to and from their feeding areas coinciding with the period of high vehicle traffic. Animals are dazzled by car headlights and don’t know how to escape. Some, such as devils and possums, have dark fur and are not very visible to an inattentive driver against the black bitumen of the road.

Birds (other than owls) and reptiles are mostly killed during daylight hours. Small birds, such as silvereyes and parrots, swoop low over the road, making them vulnerable to collision with vehicles. Reptiles use the road to warm themselves and their colour makes them hard to see on the road.

A large percentage of animal deaths could be avoided. Speed and inattention from drivers is the main cause. Another cause is bad road design. Many roads are bounded by steep banks, ditches, culverts and centre barriers that bar escape routes for trapped animals. Regrettably (or sadly) many motorists don’t adjust their driving when passing through areas where wildlife commonly cross the roads, and especially when wildlife is most active.

How can we stop it happening?
Educating drivers on how to drive safely for themselves, and the other species with which we share our roads, is the main way roadkill can be reduced in the near future. When new roads are being designed we can ensure that escape routes are planned, and we can ask for changes to existing roads where there are wildlife roadkill blackspots, and erection of speed reduction signage for the dusk to dawn period in blackspot areas.

If you find injured, sick or orphaned wildlife:
Call a rescue service for advice. Be safe on roads and with stressed injured animals. Keep the animal warm, especially orphans and animals in shock. A pillow case kept in the glovebox is good for transporting many species, and a sturdy pair of gloves is handy. Keep the animal as quiet and dark as possible and get it to help as soon as you can.

If you live in a country area, do your own survey of roadkill as you travel between home and your nearest town. Your local council may be interested in the data you collect.

Some Councils have a Roadkill Mitigation Strategy. Ask your council to become involved in solving the roadkill problem.