

Bigger Than You Think! – Wildlife in British Columbia

Submitted by Leonard Sielecki, Environmental Issues Analyst

British Columbia is home to many of the largest wild animals in North America. Stories of majestic moose and gigantic grizzlies are an integral part of our province's history. Although the folklore surrounding these creatures may make them sound larger than life, many of the species of wildlife in British Columbia are actually much bigger than many people can imagine.

Although the ministry has developed one of the most comprehensive inventories of species-specific wildlife warning signs in the world, communicating the size of the ungulates (deer, bison, moose and elk) and the carnivores (black bears and grizzlies) to motorists hasn't been easy. It can be hard to appreciate just how big a moose, grizzly or bison can be, especially if you've never seen one in real life.

For challenges like this, the ministry has a wealth of talent and imagination. Using her artistic wizardry, Beverly van Druten-Blais, Graphics Design Specialist, MoT Headquarters, developed a relatively simple, yet incredibly effective collection of wild animal silhouettes to illustrate the sizes of ungulates and carnivores, in relation to the sizes of a typical man and typical automobile.

Beverly's silhouette graphic was so impressive, that it lent itself perfectly to becoming a T-shirt logo. Even by itself, the graphic made a strong statement, but the staff of the Engineering Branch at MoT Headquarters were canvassed for an equally compelling caption. Straight to the point, was "Bigger than you think", coined by Jerry Froese, Senior Traffic Engineer.

The graphic and caption made their grand debut in a ministry presentation I gave at the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation in Little Rock, Arkansas, in April 2007. The perfect combination of Beverly's graphics magic and Jerry's literary knack has resulted in international attention being drawn to the ministry's wildlife accident reduction initiatives.

Interest in the ministry's "Bigger than you think!" concept has been expressed by the Defenders of Wildlife, an internationally prominent wildlife advocacy organization based in Washington, DC., the Western Transportation Institute, a recognized American centre of excellence in rural transportation research and education, and the Hungarian Institute of Ecology and Botany, a European leader in applied environmental research. ♦



The above chart shows how automobiles and people measure up to wildlife. Slogan creator Jerry Froese with Graphic Artist Beverly van Druten-Blais.