



Virtual Fences Saving our Wildlife

Tasmanian Devils are drawn to the roadkill on roadsides and will often end up roadkill themselves. Photo: Felicity Harvey.

THREATENED SPECIES

In 2015 FNPW granted \$15,000 to Wildlife Safety Solutions to trial a revolutionary new technology that could dramatically lower roadkill rates of the endangered Tasmanian Devil and many other native animals.

Written by Jack Swanepoel, Founder of Wildlife Safety Solutions.

Introduced to Australia by Sydney-based Wildlife Safety Solutions, "Virtual Fencing" is an active electronic protection system that prevents animals from crossing the road when a vehicle is approaching.

The Virtual Fencing device is activated by approaching headlights, which causes it to emit sound and light stimuli which alert, startle and prevent animals from entering the road. The audible alert and blue and yellow strobe-type LED lights are an innovative concept based on proven technologies. The devices are placed at 25 metre intervals along the road, forming a virtual fence.

The test site we were using in Arthur River, on Tasmania's north west coast was able to be extended thanks to the FNPW grant. This will make our results even more reliable and will further assist with reducing the amount of wildlife ending up as roadkill.

The trial, conducted in partnership with the Save The Devil Program and the Tasmanian Government, has been a great success. This trial, which has been running since February 2014, is the first time this technology has been officially tested on Australian wildlife, and the results are outstanding, and particularly significant for the Tasmanian Devil.



Virtual fences give off sound and light stimuli to warn animals of approaching vehicles.



FNPW is funding a trial of virtual fences which are already helping reduce roadkill numbers, especially Tassie Devils. Photo: William Burrard-Lucas.

While there is still room for improvement, 62% is an outstanding reduction in animal road deaths since Virtual Fencing was put in place. As well as reducing direct deaths of animals hit by vehicles, there is a clear reduction in Tasmanian Devils killed while scavenging on roadkill.

It is hoped that through further testing, tweaking, and by extending the fencing, which this grant is allowing, we can reach the 80% decline in roadkill numbers that some European countries have benefited from.

The results of the trial show there is huge potential for Virtual Fencing to protect native fauna in Tasmania. We would like to work with all levels of Government to roll out Virtual Fencing along more of Tasmania's roads and highways and reduce the unreasonably high number of roadkill in Tasmania. We have already had a lot of interest from various private companies and we are looking at another two sites to be up and running by the end of 2015.

A big thank you to FNPW for their support of this important game-changing project.