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# MDC Asks Motorists to Watch Out for Turtles on Roadways

APRIL 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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MDC asks motorists to watch out for turtles as they become active

Thousands of turtles are killed each year on roadways, others are taken captive by well-meaning people.

Missouri - As turtles become active in late March, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) asks people to watch out for them; don't hit them on the roadways and certainly leave them where you find them.

Spring rains and warmer weather encourage turtles to emerge from their burrows and begin to search for food and mates, which sometimes leads them across roadways.

“While we don't advise risking a wreck to avoid hitting a turtle, we do hope motorists will drive cautiously and avoid hitting a turtle if it's safe to do so,” said Jamie Koehler, assistant manager at MDC's Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center.

Koehler said turtles spend their lives on a very small portion of ground, but sometimes they'll wander bigger distances, as much as six miles. While most Missouri turtles live 15 to 30 years, box turtles can live 50 to 80 years, occasionally more than 100 years. They spend their quiet lives eating plants, earthworms and insects. Their shell provides a bony shield to protect them from most natural enemies.

Unfortunately, thousands of turtles are killed each year by cars, which is why MDC urges drivers to watch out for them. MDC also advises people to leave turtles wild. As people encounter turtles while outdoors, sometimes people pick them up and take them home, thinking they have a new pet. However, this usually ends in a slow death for the captive turtle.

“Turtles depend on knowing their surroundings,” Koehler said. “People may think they can keep a wild turtle alive, but a captive life is not best for any kind of wildlife.”

Koehler recommends leaving turtles where you find them when hiking, as well as following the speed limit and keeping a watchful eye on the road.

“Helping turtles is easy, if you follow those simple steps,” she said.

Pictured is Elvis, a blind box turtle owned by Jessica Loflin.

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