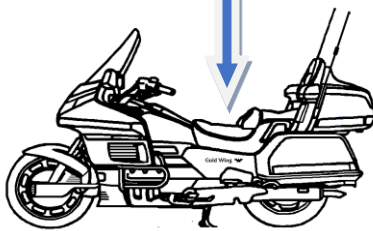


From the Director's Chair



July, 2019

Not Tonight, Deer!!

Well, here we are – at last – in the middle of the cycling and travel season. We, along with a few million other people, finally have the opportunity to hit the open road! OK, so much of it isn't so open, due to road construction, but we still find lots of ways to get out there on two, three and four wheels.

While we are out there, trying to dodge all those other “open roaders”, however, it's also important to keep in mind that other drivers aren't the only dangers on the road. A short cruise down any portion of an interstate highway will reveal multiple reminders that we also share the road with deer and a variety of other animals. Just a few statistics to drive home that point:

- There is a deer/vehicle crash approximately every eight minutes in Michigan.
- While motorcycles also collide with moose, bison, cattle, dogs and other animals, deer are the most common impact points, and in a few areas, deer collisions outnumber all other accidents.
- As many as 150 Americans die every year as a result of the over 700,000 collisions with deer. A disproportionate number of those fatalities are motorcyclists.
- The Wisconsin DOT website says that while only 2% of car-deer collisions are fatal to humans, 84.9% of motorcycle-deer crashes involved human fatalities. While the deer always do even worse, that number certainly gets one's attention.

Of even more concern, these days you don't necessarily have to be out in the country to hit a deer. In our neighborhood they like to hang out on 132nd Street, just on the other side of the fence from Cedar Avenue.

So, what's to be done? While there is no perfect solution, short of staying home or not driving faster than 30 miles per hour, there are a few things we can all do to stay just a bit safer, especially when we are on two or three wheels.

1. Remember that deer travel in groups. One deer means there are often more – if you see one off the road or moving away, slow down immediately; as there are probably more a few feet away.
2. The Wisconsin DOT says deer collisions peak in October and November, with a smaller peak in May and June. Between April and August most collisions occur between 8:00 p.m. and midnight, but CAN occur at any time of the day.

3. On a multi-lane road, the center lane is the safest bet, since it gives a startled animal more space and also gives you more time to react.
4. If you spot a deer, slow down immediately and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten them away.
5. Keep in mind that deer often tend to zig-zag and change course after an initial startled leap. If you see one crossing in the road, don't assume you can adjust your line to pass behind it. If you scare it, it may well reverse course and cross your path again.
6. Don't over-ride your headlights and remember that your bike's headlights may not be as good as those on the average car.
7. If riding in a group, spread out to prevent one rider who hits a deer from taking other riders down as well.
8. Be especially alert for dips in the road where the surrounding land is swampy or a brook crosses under the road. These may be signals to trails used regularly by animals.

Interestingly, according to research conducted by Clarkson University Biology Chair Tom Langen, moon phases may be a contributing factor in determining when deer are most likely to be on the road. Research indicates that you are more likely to hit a deer during a full moon. Langen believes deer might be more comfortable moving from cover during the full moon.

While there's a LOT to keep in mind while out on that relaxing early evening summer ride, doing so may help to ensure that the ride is, in fact, relaxing rather than colored by a bad accident or near miss, do that "not tonight deer" isn't such a bummer after all!



"I'M SO PROUD OF MY COUSIN BARRY! HALF MY FAMILY GOT RAN OVER BY ORDINARY CLUNKERS BUT HE GOT RAN OVER BY A REALLY EXPENSIVE ITALIAN SPORTS CAR!"

Bruce and Joanne Carlson
Directors – Minnesota Chapter