



Rainforest fauna major victims on roads: study

By Rosslyn Beeby
Research Conservation
and Science Reporter

Australia's rainforest frogs could be the nation's highest wildlife roadkill casualties, followed by lizards and small marsupials, say new research findings.

A three-year study by scientists from the Cooperative Research Centre for Rainforest Ecology in Cairns discovered more than 4000 animals were killed along a 2km stretch of road in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area near Cairns.

"Roughly 3000 of the animals killed were frogs, and only about one-third of those were cane toads," James Cook University ecologist Dr Miriam Goosem said.

Other high-volume casualties included bandicoots, pademelons, pygmy possums, native bush rats, skinks and lizards. Dr Goosem said that for larger species, like the endangered cassowary or Lumholtz's tree kangaroo, road deaths were so frequent that they

were "a real threat to species survival".

Dr Goosem said she believed her survey's roadkill figures — which translated to more than 1300 animals in one year — were likely to be an under-estimate of the problem.

Some frog species bred in water in roadside drains and culverts. They were killed while hunting for insects at night.

"The problem is they're so small, and it takes them a long time to hop across. If it's a busy road at night, then they don't have much of a chance."

University of Canberra amphibian ecologist Dr Will Osborne said frog fatalities — including the rare green and golden bellfrog — were relatively common on busy tourist roads on the south coast of NSW, where coastal wetlands were close to highways.

"I think there's a case for not locating roads within 100m of wetlands that contain large populations of frogs." — **By Rosslyn Beeby**