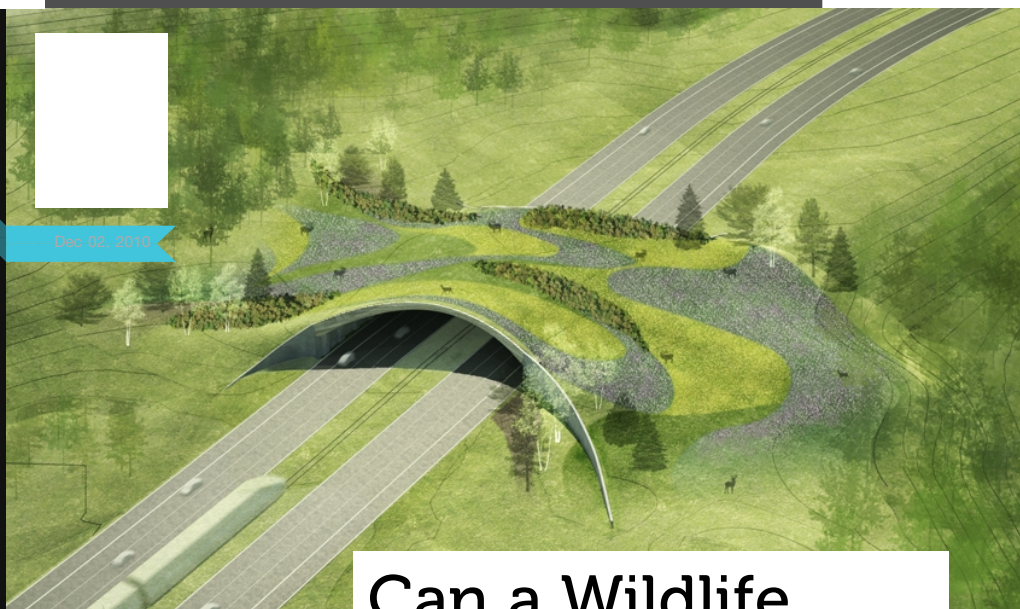


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Dec 02, 2010



Can a Wildlife Bridge Fix America's \$8 Billion Roadkill Problem?

Balmori Associates' proposal to build cheap animal-crossing structures over highways could relieve some of the burden.

We all know that roadkill is a tragic corollary of car culture. What you might not know is that it's also mega-expensive. Vehicle-animal collisions cost Americans a whopping \$8 billion a year (download a PDF [here](#)).



Design can help. [Balmori Associates](#), a New York City landscape design firm, proposes building simple, inexpensive wooden bridges over highways, then covering them in native vegetation to



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Alan Kimpell

12/07/2010 03:19 PM

A similar bridge was built a few years ago north of Missoula, MT on highway 93 south of Arlee, MT - it would be of interest if some one could find what if any effect it has had on roadkill in the area.



Suzanne LaBarre

12/03/2010 01:49 PM

Steven, the innovation here is doing it on the cheap with minimal environmental disruption -- not easy.

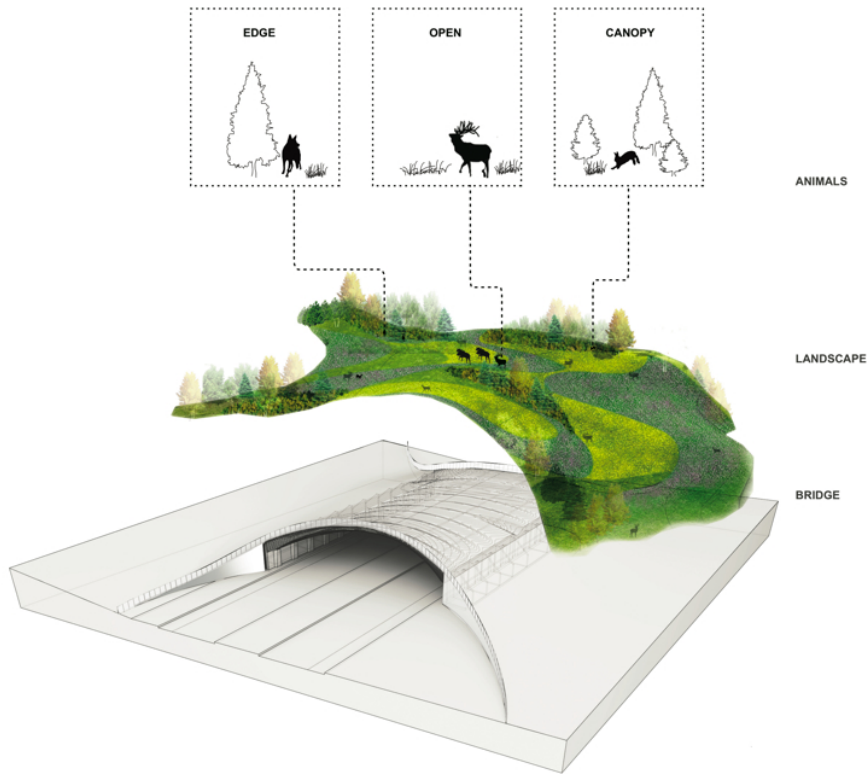
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create a sort of wildlife crosswalk. Each bridge would be so wide and the greenery so diverse, it'd appear like an extension of the forest, and animals, the thinking goes, would be less inclined to go galloping across roads helter skelter, resulting in fewer accidents (and a slimmer cleaning bill).

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Balmori came up with the idea for the [ARC International Wildlife Crossing Infrastructure Design Competition](#), which bills itself as the “first-ever international design competition... intended to solve the problem of ensuring safe travel for humans and wildlife.” The contest ends in January, when one of five design teams is selected to build a bridge over West Vail Pass in Colorado.

ARC expects the winning design to serve as a model for other parts of the country (clearly, the only way to make a dent in that \$8 billion figure is to repeat the idea elsewhere). To that end, Balmori’s bridge isn’t specific to Vail. “It is a kit of parts,” the press materials say, “that can be applied and adapted to various conditions and sites.”



The main thrust is to keep the bridge as low-tech as possible so it can be constructed easily anywhere in the United States without disrupting the road or the natural environment. By using cheap native wood -- beetle-killed blue pine, in the case of Colorado -- you can create a simple structure that actually stores more CO₂ than it needs for production; no heavy machinery required. What’s more, much of the bridge can be prefabricated, then assembled on site, cutting back on the hours construction interferes with traffic.

Balmori is up against some pretty stiff competition, including [Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates](#), which recently [nabbed a commission to spruce up the area around the St. Louis Arch](#), and [Olin Studio](#), the Philadelphia firm charged with [redesigning the courtyard of the Metropolitan Museum](#). Check back on Co. in January for the winner.

[Images courtesy of [Balmori Associates](#)]



SUZANNE LABARRE

Suzanne is a senior editor at Co.Design. ... [Read more](#)

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