

WILDLIFE ROAD KILLS

by JAMES DONOVAN*

In the past, I have often wondered how great was the loss of wildlife to collisions with automobiles. Finally in 1974 while living at Broadview and working in Whitewood I had the opportunity to make some observations on the extent of road kills. During the last half of June I observed an increased number of road killed animals, and decided for the month of July I would count and record the numbers and species of road killed animals. Table 1 represents observations from my twenty trips (28 miles each day) during July, 1974.

Of the Richardson's Ground squirrels hit by cars nearly all were young-of-the-year, and 18 of the 37 were killed on only two days (approximately 1 week apart). In both cases, there had been a light shower during the day or evening previous.

The two coyotes were found about 100 yards from each other but not on the same day. The two porcupines,

skunks, grackles and the three Crows seemed to suffer the same fate at certain places along the highway but on different days.

The unidentified birds and mammals were in most cases little more than blotches on the highway. They were difficult or impossible to identify more accurately than bird or mammal.

This list totals 112 individuals but there may have been a great many more that were hit and killed or injured but not observed. Many, no doubt, were knocked off the road and never counted; or disintegrated, were eaten before being observed; or were lodged in car grilles.

If one were to determine the number of miles of primary and secondary road in western Canada and use the table of road kills I have presented (some fraction of it), an estimate of highway mortality of wildlife would be in the millions for any one year.

Table 1. Road kills near Whitewood, Saskatchewan

Richardson's Ground Squirrel	37	Kingbird	2
Thirteen-lined Ground squirrel	2	House sparrow	8
Franklin's Ground squirrel	1	Canary?	1
Fox	1	Small unidentified mammals	
Coyote	2	(mouse size)	7
Porcupine	2	Small unidentified birds	
Skunk	2	(sparrow size)	15
Jack rabbit	3	Grackle	2
Crow	3	Hereford Cow	1
Mallard	1	Dog	1
Pintail	1		
TOTAL			2

*Department of Cooperation
1091 - 103rd Street,
North Battleford, Sask.
S9A 1K3.