

ROAD-KILLED RIVER OTTER NEAR WANDERING RIVER, ALBERTA

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The River Otter (*Lutra canadensis*) is not very abundant in Alberta. Present day distribution and numbers are noticeably reduced compared to historical accounts.³ In the past otters were found throughout the mixedwood forest of northern and western Alberta, but according to Soper were never common. Even as early as 1900 otters were relatively scarce over much of Alberta.³ Don Reid (pers. comm.), University of Calgary, states that otters are fairly common in the area between Wandering River and Mariana Lakes.

Otters tend to occur in remote areas and therefore are not observed very often. In remote areas they are reported to be most active in the early hours of the morning and in the late afternoon.¹ Rue found otters active at any time of the day.² Don Reid, in his study area, has observed otter activity at all times of the day.

On 9 August 1980, while driving south on highway 63 we came across a road-killed river otter. It was a 9 kg female. The location was approximately 30 km north of the town of Wandering River. The time was between 0800 and 0900 hours. The habitat where the otter was found can be described as a Sphagnum moss-Black Spruce bog with a creek running through it.

¹ BANFIELD, A. W. F. 1974. The mammals of Canada. National Museums of Canada, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 438pp.

² RUE, L. L. 1967. Pictorial guide to the mammals of North America. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York. 299pp.

³ SOPER, J. D. 1964. The mammals of Alberta. Queen's Printer, Edmonton 402pp.

NORTHERN RACCOON RECORDS

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For unknown reasons some southern animals are spreading farther north. The case of the Raccoon is a good example of this. From time to time there have been sight records of the Raccoon in the The Pas area. Positive specimens are, however, another matter. I was, therefore, pleasantly surprised to receive a Raccoon skull taken at Sipanok Channel, Saskatchewan (about 60 miles west of The Pas) by trapper Jack Grimsky in 1950. The skull was given to me by Phil Reader of Reader's Lake who has preserved it all these years. The data was pencilled on the skull which may well have been cleaned by the late Sam Waller as the word "Raccoon", inked on the skull, is in his hand. He was boiling and cleaning many skulls in the late 1940's and early 1950's for his museum which was then on the Indian Reservation at The Pas. The skull is slightly broken and the saggital crest is also chipped. It will be preserved in the writer's collection at The Pas.

In further discussing this skull with Mr. Reader, who at the time was Inspector of Registered Trap Lines for the area, he mentioned an earlier record of a Raccoon for northern Manitoba. A Raccoon was taken by a trapper at Thicket Portage on the Hudson Bay Railway about 1948. This is about 170 miles northeast of The Pas. This record was reported in "The Pas Northern Mail" at the time.