

KILL OF MAMMALS AND BIRDS AND ENTRAPMENT OF TURTLES ON RAILROAD TRACKS

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ABSTRACT.—The kill of wildlife on floodroads consisted of various species of mammals and birds as well as the entrapment of turtles. Opossums (*Didelphis marsupialis*), domestic dogs (*Canis familiaris*) and box turtles (*Terrapene* sp.) were the most common victims.

Information on kills of wildlife on floodroad tracks if known is unpublished. In late January and February, 1962, a limited investigation of such types of kill was made by walking approximately 18 miles of railroad tracks in Jackson County, Illinois. Three separate floodroad tracks were walked as follows: the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad (both of Murphysboro (8.8 miles from the Big Muddy south to Pomona); the Illinois Central Railroad (6.7 miles from one mile south of Carbondale to Makana); and the Missouri Pacific Railroad (3 miles northwestward from DeSoto).

There was found to be tremendous variation in kill on these three tracks. The Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad tracks had 75% of the total kill with an average traffic of about 45 freight trains per week. These tracks passed through areas of wooded flood plain (ca. 5 miles) and rolling farmland with wood lots (ca. 4 miles). The Illinois Central tracks had 23% of the total kill with an average traffic of 175 freight and passenger trains per week. The area was gently rolling, partly wooded agricultural land (ca. 2 miles) and along a

partially wooded creek (ca. 4.5 miles). The Missouri Pacific tracks were travelled predominantly by local slow moving trains hauling coal. Only 2% of the total kill was taken in this uniform, gently rolling agricultural area.

Found in this short survey were nine species of mammals: 13 opossums (*Didelphis marsupialis*), 11 dogs (*Canis familiaris*), 4 cats (*Felis catus*), 4 woodchucks (*Marmota monax*), 3 cottontails (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), 2 skunks (*Meophitis mephitis*), 1 raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), 1 deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), 1 grey fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*); five species of birds, one of each of the following: bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*), mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), domestic chicken (*Gallus gallus*), screech owl (*Otus asio*), and barred owl (*Strix varia*); and three species of turtles (as follows): 36 box turtles (*Terrapene* sp.), two musk turtles (*Sternotherus odoratus*), and two sliders (*Pseudemys* sp.).

Of special interest is the number of turtles found. Apparently turtles find an entrance between the rails where the roadbed of the track is eroded between the ties and under the rail. Once between the tracks, finding another such opening becomes a matter of chance resulting in the turtles becoming trapped between the rails and eventually dying. Where wooded hillsides bordered a stream of flood plain, an average of one box turtle was found every 0.25 mile.

Manuscript received April 25, 1966.