

Summary of 1949 Damage Complaints

The following report is based on analysis of damage complaints reported by the Department's Predatory Animal Control Officers. The results of the analysis show the relative importance during the year of the various predatory species which have caused direct losses to persons through depredation on livestock and inanimate property.

The total number of damage cases is a computed figure which was arrived at in the following manner. Each species involved in a complaint was considered to be one case. In this manner if raccoons, foxes, and mink were involved in one complaint, the result would be a total of three cases. The number of cases were then added to obtain the total. The total number of damage cases in 1949 was found to be 512.

The raccoon supplanted the red fox as the most important offender in 1949 when it was involved in 262 cases as against 120 for the fox. This is the first time since the establishment of the trapper instructors that the red fox has not been the number one predator in damage investigations. Table I shows the trends of the two most important predators in respect to the number of cases they were involved in from 1946 to 1949.

Damage to inanimate property increased in 1949 to 102 cases as compared to 78 cases in 1948. This increase was undoubtedly caused by the higher frequency of raccoon damage as the raccoon has a propensity for eating corn and entering buildings, a characteristic almost lacking in the fox. Property damaged is tabulated in Table III.

Chickens were still the major item in the list of prey species. They were taken 294 times or in 57.4 per cent of the cases. As chickens are probably raised much more commonly than other types of poultry the fact that they are most often taken is not unusual. Ducks were taken 26 times and were the second largest item preyed on. Turkeys were third in importance while game was fourth. All 15 complaints that game was being destroyed listed the fox as the offender. The fact that dogs appeared twice as prey items is of interest in that one dog was reported as having been struck by a bear and the other was bitten by a rabid skunk and died. The frequency of other prey items is presented in Table III.

Population trends of some species of predators may at times be indicated by the frequency of the damage cases. However, other factors may influence the number of complaints to an extent that the population trend is not discernible. While bounty records and kill reports have shown that the fox population is gradually receding, a fact which agrees with a decreased number of fox complaints, the number of cases involving coyotes does not reflect the trends in coyote populations. Bounty records of the coyote show their population to be remaining at approximately the same level from 1946 through 1949. However, over these same years the number of complaints involving coyote damage has receded. The number of coyotes bountied in the years 1946-1949 were 3080, 3268, 3117, and 3130 respectively, while the number of coyote damage cases reported were 51, 33, 9, and 3. From these figures it is evident that damage complaints are not always indicative of predator abundance.

Table I. Trends in Number of Damage Complaints Involving the Red Fox and the Raccoon.

1946 - 1949

Year	Red Fox		Raccoon	
	<u>Number of Complaints</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	<u>Number of Complaints</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1946	401*	59.1*	77*	11.3*
1947	285*	52.0*	98*	17.9*
1948	185*	40.3*	123*	26.8*
1949	120	23.4	262	51.2

*From Report #996 by D. F. Switzenberg

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Table II. Frequency of Occurrence of Predatory Species Involved in 1949 Damage Complaints

<u>Species</u>	<u>Frequency of Occurrence</u>	<u>Frequency in Per Cent of 496 Cases</u>
Raccoon	262	51.2
Red Fox	120	23.4
Dog	24	4.7
Badger	18	3.5
Skunk	16	3.1
Bear	13	2.5
Mink	13	2.5
Opossum	10	2.0
Owl	8	1.6
Weasel	5	1.0
House Cat	5	1.0
Coyote	3	.6
Unknown	15	2.9

Table III. Frequency of Occurrence of Prey and Inanimate Property in Damage Complaints

1949

<u>Item Damaged</u>	<u>Frequency of Occurrence</u>	<u>Frequency in Per Cent</u>
<u>Prey</u>		
Chickens	294	57.4
Ducks	26	5.1
Turkeys	22	4.3
Game	15	2.9
Sheep & Lambs	14	2.7
Guineas	4	.8
Cattle	4	.8
Pigs	3	.6
Geese	2	.4
Dog	2	.4
Domestic Rabbit	1	.2
Bees	1	.2
<u>Inanimate Property:</u>		
Crops	47	9.2
Buildings	23	4.5
Gardens	23	4.5
Fruit Trees	4	.8
Garbage Cans	3	.6
Near building - no damage	3	.6
Scaring Children	2	.4
Meat	1	.2
Golf Course	1	.2
Bridge	1	.2

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