Some Drivers Intentionally Run Over Turtles, Clemson Student Finds During Experiment (VIDEO)

A Clemson University student was surprised by his findings this week after attempting to research the best way to ensure the safety of turtles trying to cross busy roadways.

Nathan Weaver, a 22-year-old senior in the School of Agricultural, Forest and Environmental Sciences, was trying to figure out how to help the turtles in their risky endeavor, but instead ended up discovering the extent to which some drivers go out of their way to flatten the hapless reptiles, according to the Associated Press.

"It was a bit surprising. I've heard of people and from friends who knew people that ran over turtles. But to see it out here like this was a bit shocking," Weaver told the AP.

For his initial experiment, Weaver placed rubber turtles in the middle of a busy street near the Clemson campus in South Carolina and watched as seven out of 267 cars purposely crushed the fake turtles in the space of an hour.

Read more about the experiment here.

Weaver's observations are not necessarily new, however. In July, NASA employee Mark Rober documented his own, similar experiment measuring the rate motorists tried to run over rubber turtles, snakes and tarantulas planted on the roadway.

Of the 1,000 cars Rober watched go by, six percent of drivers went out of their way to try to hit the rubber animals, which were stationed safely on the shoulder, Gizmodo reports.

Calling the six percent "cold blooded rubber animal killers," Rober documented the results of his somewhat scientific study in a tongue-in-cheek YouTube video.

But turtle deaths are, in reality, far from funny. As Groton Patch notes, research shows that American aquatic turtles have an unusually high percentage of males to females, due to the high number of females killed trying to cross roads. Furthermore, because the reptiles take a long time to reach sexual maturity -- and many die as babies -- turtle populations are especially hard-hit by the killing off of mature, healthy adults.

In fact, this May the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife helped put up turtle crossing signs to try to protect the state's endangered reptiles as the females embark on overland treks to arrive at their preferred nesting areas, the Bangor Daily News reported.