

AIP Conference 2022: Exploring Ghost Bikes, Ghost Animals, and Road Safety

My presentation for the AIP conference 2022 summarized my current research on the phenomenon of wildlife road-killing and the shifting recognition of these deaths in 'ghost animal' memorials.

This research is a response to increasingly high levels of wildlife mortality on roads and the mass cultural forgetting that surrounds these deaths. It is estimated that one million vertebrate animals are killed daily on U.S. roads, fading unceremoniously into the tarmac (Koelle, 2010: 230). I have always said my own silent prayers for these animals, and it has moved me to ask: *How can we facilitate a **public** remembering, or noticing, of wildlife road fatalities which might lead to change? Are ghost animals a way to do this?*



'Ghost hedgehogs' in Dorset (Varndell, 2020)



A 'ghost bike' in King's Cross, London, commemorating student Min Joo Lee (Robertson, 2011)

Ghost bikes and ghost animals are both created to represent individual cyclists and wildlife killed on roads. Painted white, they haunt the places where lives were lost. I am intrigued by the striking parallels these memorials make between vulnerable human and nonhuman road users and, with the goal of further understanding this connection, my project examines the attitudes of cyclist safety advocates towards ghost animals.

Through this work, I aim to explore the potential for cross-cutting – or 'intersectional' – road safety advocacy which addresses *overlapping* experiences of violence on roads. This can benefit both wildlife and cyclists, as scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Elizabeth Evans (2022: 999) observe that this expansive approach draws increased attention to social movements and amplifies their impact.

Ultimately, I hope that this research will play a part in drawing attention to the lives of wildlife road traffic victims as worthy of grief and protection. Projects like ghost animals may offer a way to forge alliances and tell the individual stories that draw us into new duties of care. In my mind, an exciting future vision of mobility emerges, where the welfare of cyclists, pedestrians, the environment, *and* nonhuman animals are prioritised.

References

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Robertson, G. (2011) A 'ghost bike' in King's Cross, London, commemorating student Min Joo Lee. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/nov/10/ghost-bikes-memorials-cycling-victims> (Accessed: 1 December 2022).

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