

## A Tidal Wave of Field Mice: Agriculture, Injurious Voles and the “Economic Relations” Among Species in the US Biological Surveys around 1900 \*

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### Summary

This article analyzes the moral and scientific construction of the vole as a dangerous, yet intriguing rodent. Using a case study of *An Economic Study of Field Mice (Genus Microtus)* by David E. Lantz as example, this contribution discusses the role that agriculture comes to play in knowing the behavior of animals in natural history, and in turning wildlife into a matter of national government in the USA around 1900. In this setting, the *Microtus* is given the shape of a “small [...] pest [...] that] inflicts enormous injury upon the crops of the country”. However, by granting field mice an important role in the agricultural development of the US Midwest, Lantz also qualifies the rodent as a capable agent deserving of scientific attention and political consideration. Thus, an animal otherwise perceived as repulsive and insignificant is transformed into an intricate being well worth dedicated study.

*Keywords: Human-animal relations, natural history, agriculture, non-human agency, rodents*

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