

Seen the “Road Turtles”

By Harry Wilde



A few weeks back, I was out with some of my riding friends. Someone started to describe these things that were on the roadways around town. I think it was Dave that said, “Oh come on, we have all seen the “Road Turtles”. Well because I write articles in this magazine, they wanted me to find out what they are.

I did a little research to find out they are nothing more than traffic counters. Don't be fooled, these are state of the art mini-computers. These things can record what kind of vehicle has passed over them, motorcycle, car, truck, or tractor trailer, as well as the time of day. What they do is send out a magnetic signal above them. When a vehicle drives over it the magnetic field is broke, and then the event is recorded.

To retrieve the information, a technician removes the rubber cover that holds it in place. There is a plug on the side of this mini-computer for a cable that attaches to a computer. The technician then downloads the info for a traffic study.

This sure beats the other method of stretching a rubber tube across the road. Yes it was a tube, and not a cable. That was done with air pressure. The sensor was in the box that was chained to a pole or tree. It would sense the pressure change and record that something drove by. I remember as a kid jumping up and down on those things. Now that I am a little older, I wonder how safe it is for a motorcyclist to ride over those tubes if they have become loose.

After doing the research, I believe the infra-red traffic counters are going to be the way to go. Really, any non-intrusive system is fine with me. But until then, I am still going to point at the “Road Turtles” when someone is riding behind me. They claim that they can record a motorcycle, but it won't be me. Well there you have it, until next month, I'm out of here.

