



## NEWSLETTER

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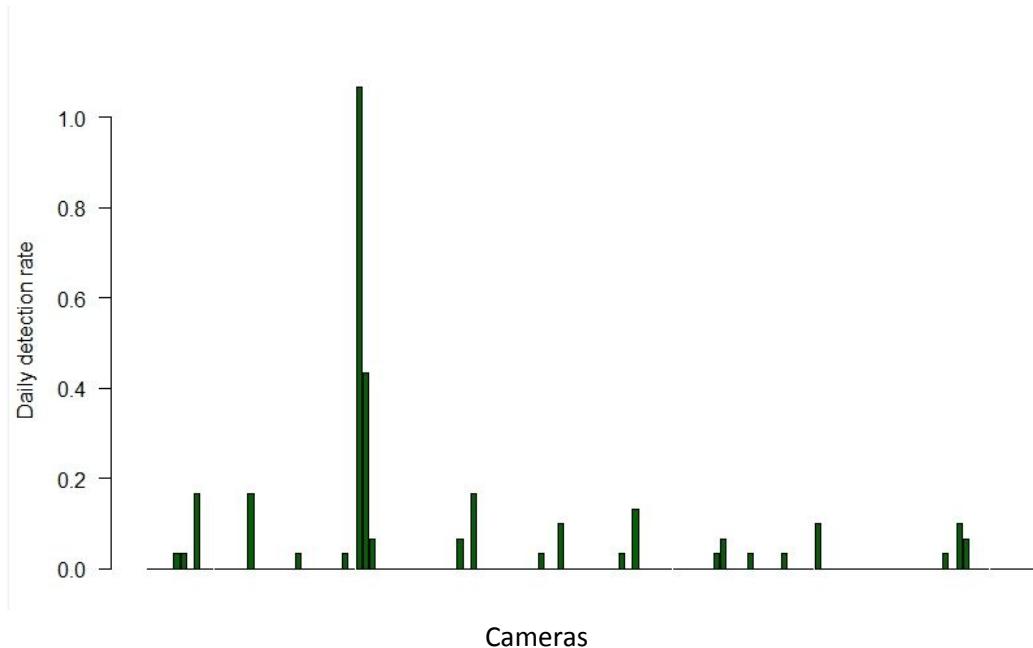
### Welcome to Our Second Newsletter! Shout Out to Volunteers!

Many thanks to all who continue to devote their time and skills in identifying photo subjects. At this point, we have exceeded 3,500 volunteers, with over 388,000 classifications made. Truly amazing statistics! We have recently retired one large photo set, as well as a second smaller set, and new photos are being uploaded to Zooniverse. Your help in doing these identifications is greatly appreciated.

Most recently, we have been identifying photos from the month of July 2016. Soon, our volunteers in the field will be collecting photo cards with images from the March and April 2017. We have a tremendously large backlog of photos to work through! We appreciate your ongoing efforts, and with persistence and additional volunteers, we can begin to catch up to the more current photos. Please mention your volunteer work to your friends and acquaintances who may have an interest.

### Survey Data - Striped Skunks

As introduced in our initial newsletter for domestic cats, the graph below illustrates daily detection rates by camera, this time for striped skunks. Skunks are relatively common in the Cleveland Metroparks, and are occasionally seen in our wildlife photos. The vertical bars in the graph represent the daily frequency of detection of striped skunks for 23 particular cameras in our study that had captured skunks. Note the two cameras showing very high detection rates relative to all the others. These high frequencies of capture might suggest these two cameras' proximity to a den or a commonly used travel route for skunks.



## Species Spotlight

In this column, we will feature an animal species seen in our wildlife photos, providing facts and information about the species, as well as helpful tips for identifying that species in our Zooniverse photos. To continue with the above theme, this month's Species Spotlight highlights the striped skunk.

There are 4 species of skunk in North America, but the lone species living in the Cleveland Metroparks area is the striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). Skunks are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on a variety of plants and animals, including fruit and berries, mushrooms, insects, small rodents and amphibians. They normally establish their dens in abandoned burrows, but may also live in hollow logs, under large rocks or even in or under buildings.

Skunks typically mate between late February and the end of March, and bear litters of anywhere from 1 to 10 young, sometime between late April and early June. Baby skunks are weaned by about 2 months of age. They reach sexual maturity at about 10-12 months, at which time they leave their den to start their own families. The typical life span of a skunk in the wild is about 3 years.

Skunks are of course most well known for their ability to expel a noxious spray when threatened. This spray is released through its anal glands, and can be sprayed a distance of up to 10 feet. It is a powerful deterrent against potential predators, or even curious investigators such as dogs or humans.

Identification: Skunks are relatively easy to identify on wildlife camera photos, due to

their distinctive markings. They are normally between 8-19 inches in length, with their tail adding an additional 5-15 inches. Their hair is black and long, with a white patch on the head and shoulders, extending toward the base of the tail, which is long and bushy. If the white markings are obscured or not visible in the photos, a positive ID might still be made on the basis of other characteristics, such as size, body shape, tail shape, etc. Skunks are generally nocturnal, and so will normally be seen in nighttime photos, although they are occasionally seen during daylight hours as well.



**Striped skunk photographed during daylight hours**

## **ID Tips**

In each newsletter, we would like to offer a few tips to assist you with identifying those "hard to determine" animals in the photos you are viewing. Here are a couple of suggestions you may not have thought of:

- When in doubt about the identification of an animal in a photo, it is usually better and more accurate to go with the more likely species, in terms of its abundance within the Cleveland Metroparks area. For example, fox squirrels are more abundant locally than either gray squirrels or red squirrels. Likewise, red

foxes are fairly common, whereas gray foxes have not been observed locally for a number of years. Photographic evidence of an uncommon species should be fairly convincing before you select that species.

- Bears, bobcats and mountain lions are seldom, if ever, observed within Cleveland Metroparks boundaries. Again, you should be fairly certain of this identification before selecting one of these three species.



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**Deer are commonplace in our wildlife photos, but often it is impossible to determine whether antlers are present, as in the above photo. For photos such as these, be sure to select the "Adult head not visible" option rather than "Adult antlerless" or "Adult antlered".**

As always, use your best judgment when providing identifications, but always consider other factors such as the position of the animal within the photo, size of the animal relative to other objects within the photo, etc.

## Other Wildlife Camera Projects

In addition to the Cleveland Metroparks "Focus on Wildlife" project, there are many other wildlife camera projects going on across the U.S. and abroad. In this newsletter,

we would like to feature interesting findings from other projects, in addition to our own.

### **Trail Camera Captures Rarely Seen Animal in Northeastern Iowa**



#### **Source:**

<http://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Trail-camera-captures-rarely-seen-mammal-in-northeastern-iowa-413885983.html>

An Iowa Department of Natural Resources camera study captured the above image of a fisher last November in Allamakee County. It is the first documented sighting of a fisher in Iowa since the 1800's. You never know what unexpected creature might pop up on a wildlife camera! Keep on checking our photos!

### **Cool Photos**

Finally, as introduced in our initial newsletter, we would like to feature cool photos from our own Cleveland Metroparks wildlife camera study in each newsletter. If you would like to "nominate" a photo that you have come across, please call out the photo using the "#cool" hashtag or save it to a collection.



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**From our current photo set, image of a coyote carrying the head of a deer**



**Adult raccoon returning to its four young**



**A very active flying squirrel**

**Newsletter compiled by John Felix (volunteer) and Pat Lorch**