



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 3 May 15, 2017

## Welcome Back, Volunteers!

We greatly appreciate the efforts of all of our volunteers and the time spent in providing photo identifications. Our count of volunteers continues to grow, as newcomers jump on board with the Focus on Wildlife project. Meanwhile, many of our faithful ongoing volunteers continue to log many hundreds of photo ID's each week.

Your patience is definitely appreciated as we work through growing pains with the Zooniverse website. We have experienced some extensive project downtime as old image sets have been completed and new ones uploaded. We believe that a lot of these kinks are being worked out, and we expect smoother transitions between photo sets going forward.

The classifications counter (number of photo ID's recorded) was recently reset by the Zooniverse team. Don't be fooled! Focus on Wildlife volunteers have logged at least a half million more classifications than the number currently shown on Zooniverse!

Recently a new image set of over 3,000 photos was uploaded to Zooniverse representing August 2016 camera activity. Our volunteer team is rapidly working through this set, and may be finished with these by the time you read this newsletter.

## Species Spotlight

In this newsletter 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. This month's Species Spotlight highlights the **groundhog**.

Groundhogs (*Marmota monax*) are common to the northeast Ohio area, although they are only occasionally observed on Cleveland Metroparks wildlife cameras. They have

short, coarse brown or grey-brown fur, and have a round body with a short, bushy tail. The head is flat and somewhat broad, with small eyes and short ears. Groundhogs grow to about 20 inches in length and about 6 to 12 pounds. In various areas of the U.S., they are referred to as woodchucks, whistle pigs or land beavers.

Groundhogs generally live from 3 to 6 years in the wild. Males tend to be polygamous breeders, and litter sizes consist of 4 to 5 young on average. At about 2 to 3 months of age, the young are driven from their burrows by their mother to find or create new burrows nearby.

Groundhogs tend to prefer sandy or gravelly soil, which is easier for burrowing. Groundhog burrows typically contain more than one entrance, and may be as long as 45 feet and as deep as 5 feet, with separate chambers for various purposes, such as nesting, sleeping or defecating.

As many northeast Ohioans with gardens already know, groundhogs are generally considered to be herbivorous, although they will occasionally consume very small prey such as insects or snails. During the late summer and early fall seasons, groundhogs eat heavily to put on fat reserves that are needed to carry them through their winter hibernation. As true hibernators, during the winter their body temperatures can drop from 99 degrees Fahrenheit to 40 degrees, while their heartbeat slows from 80 beats per minute to only 5.

Groundhogs are known as an "edge species", meaning that they tend to be seen in transitional areas where open fields meet forests or woodlands. Open grassland areas are favored habitats partly because openness makes locating predators such as coyotes or hawks easier, and groundhogs can occasionally be seen standing on their hind legs, which helps to increase their field of view. In camera photos, groundhogs may be confused with beavers, although they lack that species' wide, flat tail. In terms of observation frequency on Metroparks camera photos, groundhogs are likely to be more frequently seen than beavers, as there are fewer cameras placed near aquatic habitats preferred by beavers. They tend not to be seen at night, though they may be active at dawn and dusk.

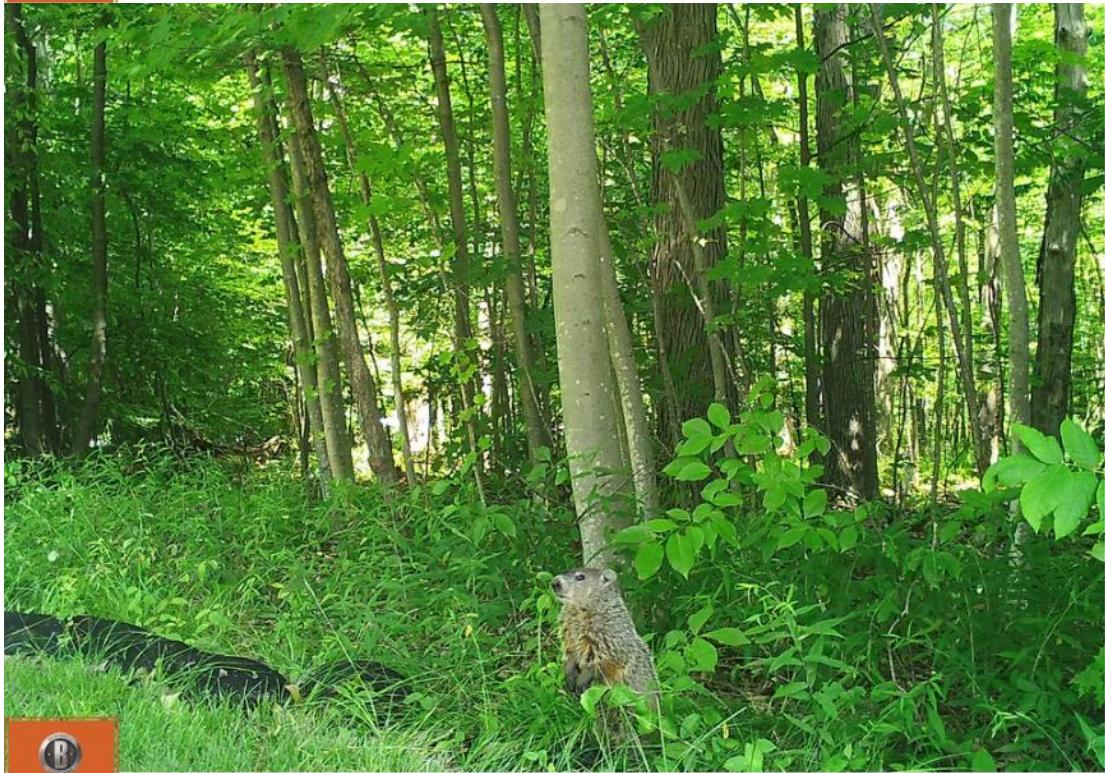


 **Bushnell**

 M

82°F 27 °C 

06-26-2016 13:18:25



 **Bushnell**

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82°F 27 °C 

06-25-2016 14:46:55

Groundhog photos from our recent photo set

## 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:

- Evening or nighttime photos lack color that is helpful for distinguishing similar species, such as the various types of squirrels. Do not assume that just because a squirrel appears gray in a black-and-white photo, that it is a gray squirrel, and likewise for black squirrels. Morphological features (size and shape) are reliable indicators of an animal's species in addition to the shades of gray and black that are seen in photos with limited exposure.
- In some nighttime photos you will see thin lines crossing the forefront of the image. These are typically the legs or appendages of spiders or other insects. Spiders frequently nest within the camera boxes and can occasionally be seen as they walk in front of the camera lens. If there are no other mammal subjects visible within the photo, then the "Nothing there" option should be selected.
- A fallen tree near one of our cameras has provided an excellent viewing area for small mammals, including each of the types of squirrels that can be found within the Cleveland Metroparks. To assist you with your squirrel identifications, the photos below clearly illustrate the differences in these squirrels. Note the relative sizes of the squirrels, as well as their distinctive markings. From top to bottom: fox squirrel, gray squirrel, red squirrel, black squirrel.





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.

### Exclusive: Jungle Puppies Captured on Film for the First Time



Source: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/jungle-dogs-peru-amazon-rare/#/01-jungle-dog-camera-trap.jpg>

Using trail cameras, an ecotourism company named Rainforest Expeditions captured the above image of a short-eared jungle dog carrying one of its puppies in its mouth. Short-eared dogs are an elusive canine species found within the Amazonian rainforests of Peru.

This and other similar photos are the first known recorded images of these jungle dog puppies.

You never know what unexpected creature might pop up on a wildlife camera! Keep on checking our Zooniverse 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.

Since our cameras shoot three photos in rapid-fire succession, it enables us to occasionally capture photos of birds in mid-flight. These images often show off interesting wing patterns not easily observed in casual birdwatching.



A red-bellied woodpecker and a blue jay within the same image



77 °F 25 °C

06-30-2016 19:13:45

From a recent photo set, another woodpecker in flight



62°F 16°C

06-29-2016 14:07:34

From a recent photo set, a northern flicker coming in for a landing



68 °F 20 °C

07-07-2016 08:15:34

An unidentified bird species spreading its wings for the camera

Newsletter compiled by John Felix (volunteer)