



NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 5 September 29, 2017

Focus on Wildlife is in the News!

Welcome to another newsletter, volunteers! As the seasons shift from summer to fall, our outdoor fun will gradually start to migrate indoors. Park visits, hiking and wildlife sightings in nature will start to wind down and give way to TV watching, comfort cooking and other indoor pursuits. But have no fear! There is a never-ending supply of Focus on Wildlife photos on Zooniverse that are available 24/7 all year round to help you to get your “wildlife fix”!

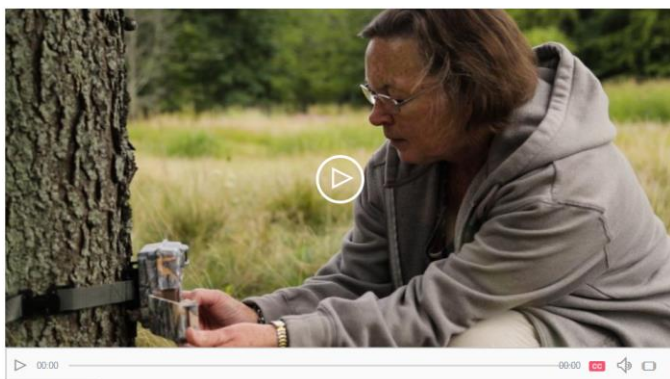
Our project was recently spotlighted in a short story and video on the local WVIZ television station’s website, Ideastream.org. One of our project volunteers, Marty Reynard, is featured in the video. Marty is very active with this project, handling a camera maintenance route in each month, as well as providing many photo identifications on Zooniverse. For those of you who read or utilize the Zooniverse “Talk” feature, you will likely recognize Marty’s frequent contributions and lively commentary regarding photo subjects, and in particular, her thorough bird identifications. Links to the WVIZ story, as well as their related facebook post, are provided below.

<http://www.ideastream.org/news/metroparks-volunteer-captures-creatures-on-camera>

<https://www.facebook.com/903wcpn/videos/10155148123753877/>

Kudos to Marty and to all of the unsung heroes who are driving the success of this project!

Metroparks Volunteer Captures Creatures on Camera



Species Spotlight

In this column, we feature an animal species seen in our wildlife photos, providing facts and information about the species, as well as helpful tips for identifying it in our Zooniverse photos. This month's Species Spotlight highlights the **opossum**.

Opossums are the only true marsupials native to North America. Marsupials are an order of mammals that are characterized by lack of a true placenta. They have a pouch on the abdomen of the female that is used for carrying young. Although there are numerous species of opossum worldwide, *Didelphis virginiana* is the only species found in the U.S. and Canada.

Adult opossums grow as large as 2.5 feet from nose to tail, or roughly the size of a domestic cat. Typical life span of an opossum is about 2 to 4 years. They are opportunistic scavengers, feeding on carrion, insects, rodents, amphibians, birds, snails, slugs and plant matter. Opossums have a prehensile tail, which, although not strong enough to allow them to hang from it, is often used as a "fifth limb" to assist with climbing and balance, or even for collecting and carrying bunches of leaves or grasses (seen in at least 3 image sets in July and August 2016, e.g., <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/pat-lorch/focus-on-wildlife-cleveland-metroparks/talk/244/446184?comment=744521&page=1>).

Opossums are remarkable in their ability to find and remember locations of stored food. They also demonstrate extremely strong immunity to rabies and to bites of venomous snakes. They are famous for their ability to feign death when threatened, or "play possum", by involuntarily rolling over and becoming rigid, while baring their teeth, foaming at the mouth, and secreting a foul-smelling fluid.

Opossums are primarily nocturnal, and therefore are most often seen in nighttime photos, although they may occasionally be spotted during daylight. In nighttime photos, opossums may be confused with raccoons, but usually can be easily distinguished by their thin, hairless tail, when visible. Additionally, opossums have a longer and pointier snout than that of the raccoon, and lack the dark "mask" around the eyes and the rounded back that are seen on raccoons. Within the Cleveland Metroparks, raccoons are more abundant than opossums. Therefore when providing photo identifications, if you are unsure between the two species, it is generally safer to assign a raccoon identification rather than opossum.



Nighttime photo of an opossum – Note the long, hairless, prehensile tail



From the same camera, a daytime shot of an opossum

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:

- Photos occasionally contain more than one subject. It is a good habit to scan the photo an additional time after making your initial identification for the possibility of another animal appearing elsewhere within the same photo.
- If after setting the photos in motion, you still do not see anything and are tempted to select the "Nothing there" option, sometimes it is helpful to take one more look at the lower left-hand corner of the photos to see if an animal is "hiding" behind the Bushnell logo. Sometimes a large portion of a subject is obscured by the logo, but it still may be possible to provide an identification based on limited features.

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.

Wildlife study finds White Horse Mountain is home to an elusive critter



Source: <https://potomac.org/blog/2016/12/1/wildlife-study-white-horse-west-virginia-bobcat>

In January 2017, the above photo was taken by a trail camera managed by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources on White Horse Mountain in the eastern portion of the state. White Horse Mountain is a 1,750 acre property that was recently saved from development by the Potomac Conservancy. Wildlife cameras were installed to assess the native wildlife that make this property their home.

We are still awaiting our first confirmed image of a bobcat in our Focus on Wildlife project. Bobcats have been increasing in number in Ohio as they spread northward across the state. They have been documented and are occasionally seen in neighboring Lake, Geauga, Summit and Portage counties, but as yet, none have been verified in Cuyahoga County, although it is likely only a matter of time. Keep on checking our Zooniverse photos! You never know when one of these beautiful cats might pop up!

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 on Zooniverse using the "#cool" hashtag. You can also save it to a collection.

This issue: the magic camera! Regular readers of this newsletter may recall a group of close-up photos of four different types of squirrels from the May 15, 2017 newsletter. Those photos came from one specific camera situated in a popular west-side reservation. This same camera attracts a high diversity of wildlife, and continues to yield many good-quality images of both mammals and non-mammals alike. Below is Part 1 of a group of additional photos which came from this camera in recent months, featuring various mammal species. Part 2 will be included in the next newsletter and will highlight photos of bird species taken by this camera. Enjoy...



Raccoon family



Raccoon in daylight



Groundhog



Coyote



Muskrat



Opossum



Chipmunk



Red squirrels mating



Domestic cat



Domestic cat with prey in mouth

Newsletter compiled by John Felix (volunteer)