



Camera Trapping for Science

Best Practices

Before the Field:

- **Define your goals:** List out your goals. Are you trying to build a species list for an area? Target a particular species? Estimate a population?
- **Inventory your resources:** How much money, time, people, and other resources do you have available to meet your goals?
- **Map your study area:** Determine where in your study area you'll place cameras. Consider your goals and available resources as you do this.
- **Plan your camera deployment:** How many cameras will you deploy and how will you get them installed across your study area? How often will you check/change SD cards? How long will you leave them out?
- **Learn your equipment:** Know how your camera equipment works before starting your study. Play with settings, test sensitivity, range, etc. at home to get a sense of strengths and limitations of the equipment.

Field Preparation:

- **Gather your equipment for the field:** Make sure you have everything you'll need for camera deployment, including:
 - Cameras
 - Security boxes
 - Cable lock and keys
 - Fully charged batteries
 - SD cards
 - GPS-enabled device
 - Map of the area with your camera installation points marked.
- **Check your camera settings:** Make sure your battery level is adequate and that your time and date are set accurately.





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In the Field:

- **Mark your location:** remember to use a smartphone or hand-held GPS to record the coordinates of each camera installation point
- **Prep your site:** check for things that may impede your camera's line of sight or trigger unintended photos (like moving branches). Do you need to modify any vegetation (trim grass, etc.)?
- **Secure your camera:** Double-check the camera orientation – is it right-side-up? Find a secure attachment like a tree and test the cable lock to make sure it's properly tightened.
- **Test your camera:** Use the test mode to make sure your camera is triggering properly for the area and range you're trying to capture



Processing Data:

- **Keep your SD cards organized:** When swapping out SD cards in the field, bring Post-it notes or envelopes to separate SD cards and match them to their camera and site location
- **Keep your image files organized:** Set up a filing system on your computer to sort files by camera location and by organism captured
- **Share your observations on iNaturalist:** Make your observations work for science and conservation! Upload your camera trap photos to iNaturalist and share them with relevant Texas Nature Trackers projects. Don't forget that you can set locations and geoprivacy for whole batches of photos at the same time.

