

How to Make the Most of Your Trail Camera

Downeast Lakes Land Trust

- ⇒ Position the camera on a north facing axis to minimize false triggers from the sun.
- ⇒ Put the camera on a tree with a diameter greater than 6 inches to avoid false triggers from the trunk of the tree swaying in the wind.
- ⇒ Try to avoid understory vegetation, branches, stumps, and other debris in front of the camera as it limits visibility and can inspire more false triggers than needed.
- ⇒ Try to place the camera roughly 24 inches off the ground to maximize triggers from animals.
- ⇒ If using bait, place the bait on the northern camera and the trail camera on the southern tree. Ideally these trees should be about 15 feet apart.



How do researchers use trail cameras in their work?

Wildlife Biologists typically set up trail cameras out in the woods where they think their target study species might be. When an animal walks in front of the camera, a sensor is triggered making the camera take a photo or video of the animal.

Some researchers “bait” or “lure” their cameras with visual, auditory, or olfactory attractants, while others do not. This depends on the types of questions the researcher is asking. For example, if a researcher is doing a presence/absence study in regards to a sensitive species like a Canada Lynx, they may put bait out to see if that species is in that relative area. On the other hand, if a researcher is doing a behavioral analysis of a species, they might choose to leave the camera on its own without bait.