How to?
Set up a camera trap

Resilient Landscapes
National Environmental Science Program

Camera types

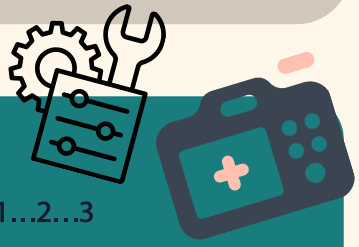
When choosing a trail camera, key features to consider include infrared capabilities for night vision, built-in solar panels for battery conservation, and Bluetooth connectivity for remote access. Budget models (around $50–$100) work well for basic home use, while mid-range models ($100–$200) offer more advanced features like higher resolution and faster trigger speeds. High-end models ($200+) provide superior image quality, longer battery life, and additional capabilities like timelapse and remote access.

Popular brands each offer varying levels of performance, durability, and price. For casual use, a budget to mid-range camera should suffice, while more serious applications may benefit from premium options.

Batteries and SD cards

For optimal performance and sustainability, use long-lasting rechargeable batteries to reduce waste, though standard batteries also work well.

For storage, an SD card with at least 8GB of space is preferred though 32GB or even 64GB is recommended if you plan to leave the camera outdoors for extended periods. Thanks to their low power consumption, trail cameras are highly efficient for long-term monitoring.



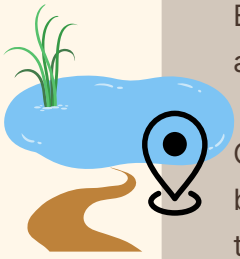
Camera Settings

Getting the settings right may require some experimentation, as different models have varying capabilities.

For casual use, set the camera to capture multiple shots (e.g., 3 per trigger) to help with animal identification, and allow a 20-30 second delay between shots to avoid quickly filling the SD card. Ensure the camera is labeled and the date and time are accurate. Adjust the trigger sensitivity for distant regions, using ‘high sensitivity’ for solid backgrounds (like a tree trunk) and ‘low sensitivity’ for areas with a lot of movement, such as vegetation that may move in the wind.
If possible, use a timer to restrict photo capture to certain hours, such as 5pm to 7am, to monitor nocturnal or diurnal species.

Testing different settings through trial and error is key. If you have pets, use them to check if photos are framed correctly and if animal movement triggers the camera.

Locate suitable position



Before setting up your camera, choose a suitable location by identifying key areas of animal activity, such as trails, water sources, or gaps in fences.

Choosing a location without a lot of background movement- such as vegetation blowing in the wind, is important to reduce the SD card from filling up with ‘false triggers’.

Avoid directly facing water sources to prevent the reflection of the water creating false triggers. Take a set of secataurs with you to trim grass and weedy plants from the line of the camera to prevent false triggers.

Install the camera

Use the camera strap to secure the camera to a suitable tree or fence post. Install it at about knee height or slightly higher for ground-dwelling species like wallabies and bandicoots. Tilt the camera slightly downward using a stick or the built-in tilt mechanism to reduce the chance of it being nudged or disturbed by animals.

Consider marking your location with flagging tape and record the GPS coordinates or save the spot on your phone. Test that the camera is triggering correctly—many models have a test mode, or you can take test photos and check them on the screen.

Dont disturb the camera!

It’s important to leave the camera undisturbed for at least a few days, as frequent visits may discourage wildlife from approaching. The beauty of camera traps is that they can capture shy, cryptic, or rare species without causing disturbance. While periodic checks are fine, be sure to replace batteries and the SD card as needed, or move the camera to a new spot if necessary.

Upload your data

Depending on your camera type, either plug the SD card into a computer or laptop, or access the photos via a compatible app on your phone if your camera allows you to do so. You can then upload the images to iNaturalist to log species records and receive help with identification. iNaturalist allows several photo uploads at once.

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