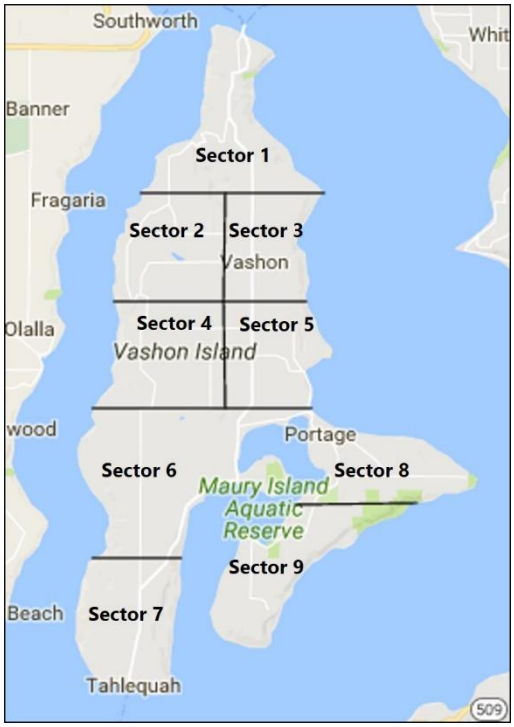
Vashon Nature Center

Welcome to VNC's wildlife camera monitoring program

Vashon Nature Center, with the cooperation of a dedicated group of citizen scientists, operates and maintains a network of wildlife camera traps throughout the greater Vashon-Maury island ecosystem. Nine geographic sectors have been established each representing approximately four square miles covering the combined Vashon-Maury island footprint of thirty-seven square miles.



Cameras are placed in randomly selected locations within each sector with the intention of capturing established island wildlife, black-tailed deer, raccoon, and coyote as well as occasional visitors and transients such as black bear, cougar, beaver and others.

Data gathered from camera captures assists VNC in promoting a clearer picture and better understanding of wildlife/human co-existence in our shared community. Your participation as citizen scientists is an important part of VNC efforts to "build a community of islanders and visitors who connect with local natural wonders and each other through research and education".

The following information will assist you in building a personalized wildcam monitoring station:

- **Selecting a Camera:** VNC has limited resources to buy and distribute wildlife cameras. If we are unable to provide you with a camera and you are in possession of one or plan to purchase one we recommend a few simple guidelines: name brands such as Bushnell and Moultrie are proven rugged and reliable; choose shutter speeds of 0.5 sec. or faster and no glo flash.

  Cameras come in an infinite variety of features and picture quality but simpler is often better. Cost will most likely dictate your final choice but the objective of the wildcam program is to get cameras in the field that can record presence absence of wildlife on Vashon-Maury island and your participation is greatly appreciated.
- **Location:** Find a location where wildlife will most likely pass by – a game trail, a location with tracks or sign, travel corridors (valleys, stream corridors), and landscape features that tend to funnel wildlife movement and areas close to water may be good sites. Place the camera so that it is pointed toward this area.
- **Trail Sets:** If you are setting up a camera to target a trail, try to aim it at a 45-degree angle to the trail (instead of shooting up or down the trail, or directly perpendicular to it). A 45-degree

angle generally captures the best images. When setting a trail camera on a road or trail used by humans, in addition to using a lock box and python lock, consider trying to set the camera below or above head height so it is less visible. Setting it in a location that doesn't draw attention to it can also help with keeping it concealed from people.

- **Lighting:** For best results, consider how the light may affect the photos. Shadows and changes in lighting can trigger the camera. Note that pointing the camera in a north-south direction often offers the best results.
- **Visual Obstructions and False Triggers:** Look for a clear site or one that you can easily clear so that the camera's view is not obstructed by branches, leaves, or brush. Plan to use a knife or saw if needed in forested areas to clear the screen. Be diligent about removing vegetation in the camera's view, especially from the foreground. This can otherwise produce false triggers resulting from wind or shadows.
- **Mounting Instructions:** Attach the camera to the mounting tree, pole, stake, etc. about chest level pointed slightly downward. Depending upon the camera model you have, use the laser or test feature to help aim it at the right location. Point it low enough to capture smaller animals like squirrel, raccoon and mink while the placement of the actual camera is high enough to get a view of larger animals, like deer, bear and cougar walking in front of it. Cameras are often mounted pointing too high, so aim on the low side.
- **Test Your Set**: Some cameras have a test function in setup mode. Following your camera model instructions, place your camera in test mode. Have one person walk in front of the camera and look for the red flashing light. Test the range of your camera by walking back and forth. The red flashing light indicates where the camera catches an image. Some cameras have a viewer feature that will allow you to actually view the test images recorded. Use this feature if you have it, or you can use a standard digital camera to view test images. Set up your camera and walk in front of it in the location you anticipate wildlife to travel. Then turn off the camera, remove the memory card and view the photos on your viewer or camera. Reposition as needed.
- **Camera check frequency**: Check wildlife cameras on either a 1-week or 2-week cycle. You can check more frequently but going longer than 2 weeks in between checks makes information less current. Checking at least once every two weeks also allows us to catch camera malfunctions earlier.
- **Uploading your data**: Once you have signed on as a camera station operator contact Vashon Nature Center: info@vashonnaturecenter.org and we will create a google drive folder for you with your last name and the number of your camera station. Keep the link to this folder we share with you somewhere where you can always access it. For transferring to your computer--most cameras have small square SIM cards that can be popped out like most cameras and plugged straight into the computer. Download your photos into a folder on your personal computer. Go through the photos to weed out blank, blurry, and redundant photos. Open up your google drive folder and make a subfolder with the date range your photos cover. Drag your photos from your computer into your google subfolder. Email John Rupp: john.rupp@comcast.net to notify him of your download. Please also share any highlights or questions. We will periodically share these with members of the whole camera network.