

Surveying Furbearer Populations with Trail-Cameras at the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, Georgia

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The use of cameras in wildlife studies has increased significantly in recent years. Motion activated cameras, often referred to as “trail-cameras” offer a unique advantage in that they allow the monitoring of animal populations without physical capture. Numerous small mammal studies have used trail-camera technology to successfully collect data regarding species occurrence, habitat selection, and behavioral patterns. The objectives of this study are to obtain information regarding population size and habitat preference for furbearers on the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge (PNWR), located in central Georgia. One of the mandates for the Federal Wildlife Refuge system is to manage for the protection of all game and non-game species. Because population estimates at the PNWR have not been conducted in recent years, furbearer abundance is unknown. Using infrared triggered trail-cameras, we established 26 camera sites within the 14163-ha refuge. Data collection in this study has begun and will continue over a 20-week sampling period in various habitat zones. A discussion of field methodology and the initial data collected will be the focus of this presentation.

Key Words: furbearer, trail-camera, Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge