

Snapshot USA's 2026 Expansion: A Modern Lewis and Clark Adventure

As the United States of America approaches its 250th birthday in 2026, our nation's legacy of discovery, resilience, and exploration invites a reconnection with the natural world that has inspired generations. America's development as a young nation was shaped by scientific, geographic, and cultural explorations like the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which was charged by President Thomas Jefferson to find a westward route to the Pacific Ocean and to document the flora and fauna encountered along the way. These and other explorations led to a common awareness of some of the nation's many species, and its vast array of ecosystems. Yet, humans have taken their toll on wild places and iconic species, and today the country's wildlife confronts new challenges and increasing pressures from humans. In addition, the United States lacks a national program for monitoring the status of the nation's wildlife and raising public awareness for wildlife conservation.

The Smithsonian is uniquely positioned to fill that gap through **Snapshot USA**, an annual and standardized initiative to document American wildlife with camera traps. Established in 2019, Snapshot USA has logged over 1 million detections of mammals submitted by collaborators from over 200 institutions across all 50 states. All data are managed and identified within the [Wildlife Insights](#) platform, which uses Artificial Intelligence to assist with identifications. Collaborating institutions range from four-year universities, community colleges, and high schools to government agencies, Tribal entities, and nonprofit organizations. Project protocol details and information on registering for our 2025 season can be found on our www.snapshot-usa.org website.

For America's 250th anniversary, we will expand the Snapshot USA project by conducting a **Lewis and Clark Resurvey in 2026**. Using our existing network and new recruits, we will install at least 250 additional camera traps along the route traversed by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (**Figure 1**). The fieldwork will take place during a two-month window determined by the contributors during the growing season in their region (approx. April to October). By focusing our outreach efforts on these regions, Snapshot USA will establish new collaborations with rural, underserved communities, foster stronger relationships with Tribal agencies and colleges, and reach more people outside of the wildlife research community. We will facilitate collaborations by providing training sessions and camera kits to 20 potential collaborators that lack the necessary equipment.

We will also launch *Smithsonian Wildlife: Our Shared Future 250*, a dedicated project page on the participatory science platform **Zooniverse.org**, to allow volunteers across the nation to view images of wildlife captured by camera traps along the route and participate in the identification of species and behaviors. On the NZCBI website (<https://nationalzoo.si.edu>), select images and all metadata will be available for public use.

If you are interested in contributing toward this modern survey of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail, please [register through this link](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to Snapshot USA Program Manager Brigit Rooney (rooneybr@si.edu).



Figure 1. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail with an 80 km buffer.

Lewis and Clark Trail Survey 2026 Protocol:

1. Each collaborator selects one setting (Urban, Suburban, Rural, Wild) and one habitat (Forest, Grassland, Desert, Wetland, Other) within 80 km of the Lewis and Clark Historic Trail in which to deploy camera traps. If possible, avoid mixing habitats across a single array.
2. The sampling window is the growing season in your region, so roughly **April to October**.
3. For 2 months within the sampling window, deploy camera traps at 15 or more locations across the site. We require a **minimum of 500 camera nights (# cameras X # nights)**, but the more effort the better. For example, 12 cameras functioning for 50 nights equals 600 camera nights. If you have less than 15 cameras, you can move them (still following the distance requirements) to accomplish 15 locations during the study period.
4. The deployment locations must be at least **200 meters** away from other cameras but no further than **5 kilometers**.
5. For each camera deployment, record the location (latitude and longitude in degrees minutes), start date, end date, and camera make and model.
6. Make sure to capture at least one image of a camera trapper when each camera is deployed and retrieved, as these determine the start and end dates (if no final image of a camera trapper, we will have to use the date on the last image the camera took).
7. Cameras used must meet these baseline capabilities and be set to **these settings**:
 - a. Trigger speed <0.5 seconds
 - b. Infrared flash (no white flash allowed)
 - c. 3-5 image bursts per trigger
 - d. No delay between triggers (if necessary, a few seconds is okay)
 - e. **No videos**
8. These are just some examples of permitted camera makes and models:
 - a. Reconyx (all models)
 - b. Browning (Strike Force Elite HD, 2017 Strike Force HD Pro, or camera of = or > quality)
 - c. Bushnell (Trophy Cam HD, Essential, Aggressor, or camera of = or > quality)
 - d. Moultrie (M-999I, M-1100i, or camera of = or > quality)
 - e. Primos (Proof Cam 02, Proof Cam 03, or camera of = or > quality)
 - f. Spypoint (Solar, Force 10, Force 11D, Force GM, or camera of = or > quality)
 - g. Stealth Cam (G45NP Pro, G42NG, or camera of = or > quality)
9. Cameras should be placed ~ **50cm off the ground** (knee height) and with orientation parallel to the slope.
10. **No food bait or scent lure** will be used.
11. While cameras can be placed on trails or logging roads, this must be indicated by the collaborator.
12. Once field work is complete, the collaborator will upload images and metadata to WildlifeInsights. We encourage collaborators to identify their favorite pictures, so that we can highlight these on the website.

All registered participants will receive a link to a webinar in March 2026, where the protocol will be reviewed and questions answered.

Please reach out to Survey Coordinator Brigit Rooney (rooneybr@si.edu) with any questions.

Data accessibility: After processing, all data from this project (except the location of endangered species and images of humans) will be made accessible to the public. All contributors can access uploaded data at all times.