

UW Highlights and Natural Resources & Energy

UW Raccoon Project To Begin Trapping

By CAROLINE BALLARD • MAY 16, 2016

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The University of Wyoming Raccoon Project is gearing up to trap raccoons for further study.

Over the last year, a team of undergraduate and graduate students has been studying where raccoons in Laramie live and congregate. This week, they will set live traps around the city in order to collar, chip, and collect biological samples from the raccoons. This allows the team to track the animals, and ultimately set up puzzles around town to observe and test the raccoons' intelligence.

The traps contain cat food, and have been open for some time but not activated. Emily Davis is an undergraduate student working on the project. She says cats sometimes eat the food in the traps, but it's easy to tell when a raccoon has been there because the can – and food – will often be missing.



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"There was a trap I had placed facing one way and I went to the trap and it was completely flipped around and the can was nowhere to be found. So I don't know if that speaks too much of their intelligence but it definitely speaks to their curiosity, which I think has a large impact on their intelligence," says Davis.

Lauren Stanton, a PhD student on the research team, says Laramie raccoons could possibly be more intelligent than other raccoons because of the high altitude.

"There actually has been some evidence that shows that animals that live in harsher environments as well as animals that occupy high elevations actually have advanced cognitive abilities than even members of the same species living at lower elevations or in more mild environments," says Stanton.

Laramie residents can submit raccoon sightings to the University of Wyoming Raccoon Project at www.wyobio.org.

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