

Wildlife cameras for feral predator monitoring

By Alice McGlashan 2019

There are four flash key types of wildlife cameras, your choice of which depends on what you plan to use them for. The flash types relate to the wavelength of light (white, red, non-visible wave length) that the wildlife camera uses to illuminate your intended target, particularly at night, and in dim lighting. Detection smarts and camera case design are also important aspects of a camera purchase decision.

Flash type

The four categories are **white flash**, **red flash**, **low glow** (dim red flash), and **no glow**. A no glow camera emits light at a wavelength that is not visible for humans and most target animals, for image recording illumination – particularly at night.

Low glow flash type cameras

If you are seeking to detect the presence/absence, or monitor the behaviors of nocturnal animals, other than shy feral predators (cats & foxes), I have found the no glow, or (very) low glow cameras to be the best. Native mammals such as brushtail possums, sugar gliders and wallabies don't seem to be disturbed by a dim red flash (low glow), however they will avoid or be startled by a white flash, or a bright red flash camera. There is a very limited range of true no glow cameras on the market, and there are numerous models of many brands that are advertised as no glow, but are in reality low glow cameras. So buyer beware! TrailCamPro gives true ratings of a camera's flash type, there is more about this below.

No glow flash type cameras

If you are seeking to photograph foxes and feral cats that tend to be very camera shy, I have found that only true no glow (emit absolutely no visible red light) cameras are effective. For even dim red flash cameras, foxes will clearly be surprised by the camera in images for the first couple of nights, and then apparently there will be no foxes in that location from that time onwards. Actually, they will be avoiding the camera, by taking a slightly different route. Hardly effective for monitoring a feral predator population, or for detecting presence or absence!

White flash or red flash type cameras

For monitoring daytime animals only, a white flash or a red flash camera will be perfect. These types of cameras are usually a little cheaper than the equivalent no glow and low glow models, and their picture & video quality is usually a little better. However if you might want to use your cameras for a range of tasks (as I do), then selecting very low glow, and no glow models will ensure that they will be suitable for most tasks.

No Glow – False Advertising!

I have found that many brands of cameras falsely advertise cameras as 'no glow', when in reality they emit a dim red flash at night. Similarly I have found that cameras advertised as 'low glow' can actually be quite bright for subjects that are at a little distance, and very much do frighten off shy nocturnal animals.

Wildlife Camera Reviews

My go-to source for less biased write-ups of wildlife cameras and of their actual flash type, is TrailCamPro (www.trailcampro.com). You can find reviews of current models, and also

search in the archives for past model reviews if you are seeking information on an on-sale last year model. Their overall ratings for each individual camera are overly optimistic for the lower-performing cameras (trigger happy – poor detection algorithms, poor daytime or nighttime video, terrible casing design etc.), however the within-group ranking of individual camera reviews for the season (a mark out of 100) provides a good indication of which models are better than others for the type of camera within the price range that you are after.

No glow camera options

For 2019, there are two good options for true **no glow cameras** from the quality mid-priced brands, being the **Browning Spec Ops Advantage** and the **Bushnell Core No Glow** model (not the Bushnell Core DS No Glow – this is actually a low glow camera). The Spec Ops Advantage camera takes pretty good night time videos, and very good daytime videos. This model will be great for monitoring feral predators as well as all other nocturnal and daytime critters. The other plus is that Browning has been making cameras with this same design for several years, so any issues have long since been sorted.

The second true no glow option is the **Bushnell Core No Glow model**, which is a completely new camera design for Bushnell. The reviews of image quality for both day and night for this model aren't as good as for the Spec Ops Advantage camera. I only have the Browning Spec Ops camera of these two because of the reviews.

I've written up options for low glow wildlife cameras also if you are interested, on my nestboxtales website here:

<https://nestboxtales.com/nest-box-monitoring/wildlife-cameras/>

How to set up your camera

The basics are, **first** set the date and time. **Secondly**, choose if you want still images (photo, trail, camera - depending on brand), or record video (video). **Thirdly**, set the image size, or the video quality. Fourthly, set the video length, or number of still images taken per sensor trigger. For still images, set the capture number – the number of photos to take in rapid succession to record the movement/path/behavior of an animal. For video, set the video length – however for many cameras there is a limit of 15-20 seconds for night time video regardless of if you set the video length to 30 or 60 seconds. **Fourthly**, set the interval (amount of delay between each video recording, or each series of still images taken). I always set this to the absolute minimum (1 seconds, 0.6 seconds, 5 seconds for my oldest camera), but it depends on what you are seeking to record. **Finally**, I set the sensor level (if this option exists), to “auto” for bigger targets like foxes and cats, or to “high” for Sugar Glider and Rosella sized targets and smaller. **The rest I leave as default**. You can also add a camera name, that will appear on the bottom of each image to know which camera it came from.

Make sure you check your settings after you have set them. If they didn't stay set, you may not have pressed “E” = enter, when changing each setting from default, which is camera speak for “save”. You will forget to do this from time to time, I still do. Some cameras will lose all settings and reset to defaults when the batteries are removed, or if they have had no batteries for a few days. So just check your settings (especially date and time) every time you set up the camera in a new spot, or after flat batteries have been swapped out.

Batteries and battery charger

The natural resource management industry favorite battery brand for use in wildlife cameras has for years been Eneloop AA rechargeable batteries. However in the last couple of years, the Eneloop brand name was sold to a Chinese company, and the Eneloop battery technology (what battery users care about) was sold to Fujitsu. My new Fujitsu and old Eneloop batteries perform way better – last longer in use, stay charged while sitting around for longer, and last for years, compared to other battery brands that I have. I have purchased Fujitsu rechargeable AA batteries from Professional Trapping Supplies, but there will be other sellers in Au also. Be sure that the batteries you are purchasing are genuine. I would strongly recommend that you also purchase a good quality slow battery charger, as the cheap fast chargers significantly reduce the life of rechargeable batteries. Maha Powerex is a good battery charger brand, they typically come in 4 battery and 8 battery charging units. Wildlife cameras take 6-8 batteries, depending on the brand and model.

Where to purchase wildlife cameras

I purchased most of my cameras from B&H Photo Video, and TrailCamPro in the USA. They always stock the most current models, also often the last year's models are available at a good sale price. The range of brands and models available is extensive and excellent. Purchases will land at my door less than a week after ordering. I don't purchase technology from Ebay or Amazon, but prefer to purchase directly from established reputable subject matter expert businesses. They will provide great tech support if needed, and will happily refund or replace faulty items. There are local wildlife camera sellers, but they often don't sell the current models or stock both Bushnell and Browning cams. They can be worth a try once you know exactly which model you are after.