



Lincoln Park Zoo Nature Boardwalk
Photo Credit: Alan Scott Walker

Studying the Resilient Urban Wildlife of Chicago: The Work of the Lincoln Park Zoo

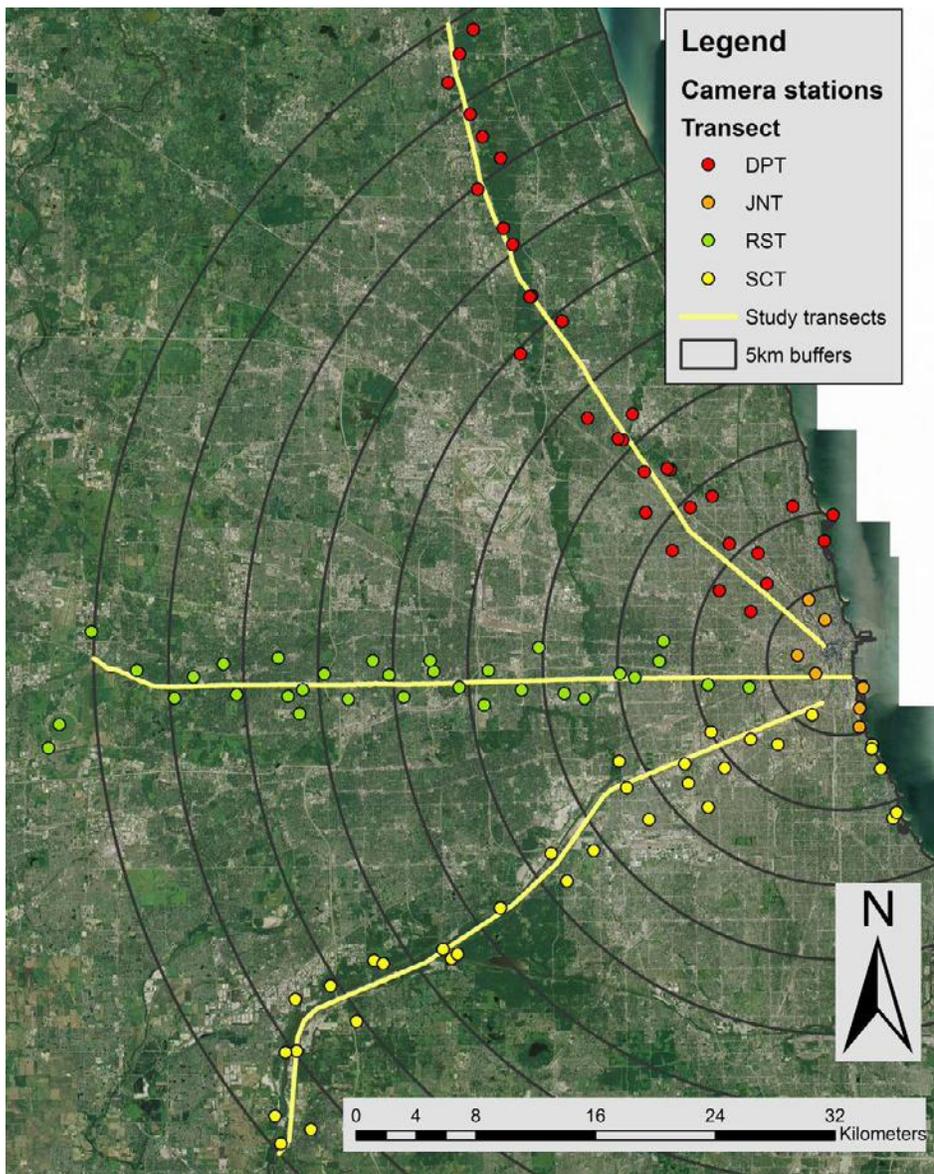
By Tim Beatley



Seth Magle Setting Camera Trap
Photo Credit: Tim Beatley

Wildlife biologist Seth Magle directs the Urban Wildlife Institute at the Lincoln Park Zoo. He has become a leading researcher studying the ways that urban wildlife is adapting to cities. His early work focused on prairie dogs and he discovered, among other things, that their colonies are dramatically more dense in and around cities compared with more rural settings. He also found that where coyotes and prairie dogs shared the same spaces, coyote-human conflicts tended to lessen, likely because coyotes had a natural food source and

were less interested in human pets. I had the chance to interview Magle about his work, and especially his work uncovering and understanding the wildlife of Chicago. He is assembling a comprehensive picture of animals in this city, especially through the use of 120 camera traps that are deployed four times a year, on three delineated transects running from the center of the city to the northwest, west and southwest. He's also been engaging the public in the interpretation of this data, and specifically asking what they see



Camera trap locations Photo Credit: Lincoln Park Zoo

when viewing some of the 2 million images that have been collected from the camera traps so far. People can view the images through the webpage [Chicago Wildlife Watch](#). The photos are only part of the data being collected, which also include bat sonic recordings, bird data, and small mammal trapping data, among others. And through the Lincoln Park Zoo's [Partners in Fieldwork](#) initiative, Magle is working with local high schools, where students are involved in the hands-on collection of data.

Magle believes that taken together this data collection effort may represent the most comprehensive look at urban wildlife in any city in the world. There are already many insights about how this wildlife is behaving and adapting. As Magle told me: "All the normal behavioral patterns of these species that we read in the literature, that we see in the woods and in the prairies, is not held up in the city ... Almost everything we look at [in terms of animal behavior] has changed in some way." As with urban prairies, which Magle found were

remarkably healthy near cities, species like coyotes have adapted well. They are savvy, he tells me, and have even learned to look both ways before they cross roads.

The latest chapter in this work is the creation of a new national network of researchers in other cities willing to deploy similar research methods (i.e. camera traps along transects). Called the [Urban Wildlife Information Network \(UWIN\)](#), there are now seven other cities collecting similar data with the potential to learn how wildlife might be adapting similarly or differently than wildlife in Chicago.

Resources

Lincoln Park Zoo. Partners in Fieldwork. Retrieved from <http://www.lpzoo.org/partners-in-fieldwork>.

Lincoln Park Zoo. Urban Wildlife Information Network (UWIN). Retrieved from <http://www.lpzoo.org/conservation-science/projects/urban-wildlife-information-network-uwin>.

Zooniverse. Chicago Wildlife Watch. Retrieved from <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/zooniverse/chicago-wildlife-watch>.