



CELLULAR TRAIL CAMERA 101

Cellular trail cameras can be game changers for deer hunters, but some newcomers go through a learning curve of frustration. Here's the rundown on cell cameras, optimized settings for extended battery life and real-world examples of how they can change your hunting.

■ by *Mark Olis*

Cellular trail cameras are the ultimate high-tech redneck device. They combine motion-activated cameras with cellular transmission to deliver deer pictures directly to your smartphone and computer. And if that doesn't raise your eyebrow, some systems have built-in artificial intelligence to automatically sort your images and show you only pictures of bucks, turkeys, hogs or other critters.

Although many hunters have taken the cell-cam plunge — never to return to SD cards again (see the sidebar) — many more hunters stand on the

sidelines intimidated or believing false information. With proper understanding and a few setup tweaks, cellular trail cameras can be the advantage you've been seeking.

WHY CELLULAR?

Making fewer trips to a hunting lease or property saves a lot in gas money and also keeps human intrusion out of sensitive habitats where mature bucks bed. Saving money and reducing pressure on your hunting property are reasons enough to try cell cams, but there are plenty of other advantages, too.





■ Cellular cameras let you make fewer trips to your property, reducing pressure and decreasing gas expenses.

WHY DO I PAY A MONTHLY FEE?

One of the perceived negatives of cellular trail cameras is the monthly cellular fee. Just like a cell phone, subscribers pay a monthly data fee to receive images via cellular transmission. Depending on the plan, the monthly fee can range from \$10 to \$17 per camera (bundle options are available for subscribers running multiple cell cams). Depending on how far away a hunting property is, and with gas prices anywhere near \$3 a gallon, cell cams begin to make a lot more sense financially, too.

SETTINGS FOR LONGER BATTERY LIFE

Most new cell-cam users set their cameras to upload images immediately. This means each time an image is taken, the camera connects to a cloud-based server and transmits the image cellularly. The elation of receiving images within minutes of being taken quickly wanes when batteries drain within a week or more. Cell cams perform the same functions as a regular trail cam, but they also have the power-sucking task of sending images via cellular transmission. Although sending 10 to 15 images in one upload doesn't

burn as much power, the camera connecting to the server is a big power draw. So you'll save dramatically more on battery life by uploading images one to two times per day instead of every time the camera takes a picture. Plus, a cell camera isn't taking images during the transmission phase, so you will likely miss a lot more images of deer and other animals when using immediate upload.

Photo only: Cellular trail cameras can also transmit videos to the app. Video is another heavy power user, especially at night, when the infrared flash remains illuminated during the entire video recording process. If a cell cam is set up on an active food plot or bait site, video mode can drain batteries within a week or less (the same is true for regular trail cams). However, if conserving battery life is a major concern, it's best to use photo-only mode. Using one-shot instead of three-shot burst will conserve even more power.

Solar power cures all: The easiest way to set up a cellular camera for success is to add a solar-power option. If the camera is in an area of direct sunlight for six or more hours, it can be set on immediate

Cellular trail cams also give you the most recent intel from your property. Traditional trail cameras leave you guessing where to hunt between card pulls, but cell cams let you know which bucks have passed by your cameras recently. This information is invaluable for a hardcore hunter but equally time-saving for the weekend warrior doing everything possible to juggle work, family and hunting time. Instead of guessing where to hunt Saturday morning, a quick app check verifies the area with the most activity, so you can confidently hunt the hottest stands.

Another huge advantage of cell cams is the ability to change camera settings remotely from the app. Imagine sitting on the couch, scrolling through your trail camera images from a hunting lease in another state and wanting to set a one-minute detection delay because only does or dozens of raccoons are coming through. You simply go to your camera's settings, make the change and hit save. The next time the camera checks in, your new settings will be implemented. This works equally well when switching between photo and video mode, too.

“CELLULAR TRAIL CAMERAS OPERATE SIMILARLY, BUT NOT ALL APPS ARE CREATED EQUAL. THE APP IS WHERE CELLULAR SCOUTING COMES TO LIFE.”

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the Mobile app is one such example, in which the subscriber gets premium features without paying extra. The Moultrie Mobile app is free (cellular data for sending images has a monthly fee). Moultrie Mobile offers free unlimited cloud storage, where all your images can be accessed 24/7, even if you cancel your monthly subscription. Some apps will charge extra for extended or unlimited storage and will lock you out of your photos after a monthly subscription is canceled. So be sure to read the fine print on what features come standard with the app. The Moultrie Mobile app has two scouting features that are game changers. The first is species recognition. Using advanced AI technology, the system scans every uploaded image for bucks, does, with useful scouting features. The Moultrie Mobile app is where cellular scouting comes to life, especially if it's a quality app loaded Cellular trail cameras operate similarly, but not all apps are created equal. The Moultrie Mobile app has two scouting features that are game changers. The first is species recognition. Using advanced AI technology, the system scans every uploaded image for bucks, does, upload, video or any other setting desired. In this environment the camera can be set up and left alone for many months without having to visit it. It's still recommended to run AA batteries in the camera for backup. You never know when a pesky raccoon or squirrel will decide to pull the plug from your camera, or an extended overcast event drains the external solar battery. If direct sunlight is a problem, there are also external battery options that will greatly extend the run time.

WHAT'S IN THE APP?

The Moultrie Mobile app lets you create custom tags for individual bucks. So, when you create a specific tag to each image of that deer and use that custom tag inside activity charting to track that specific buck's movements. The Moultrie Mobile app also includes a robust weather section that shows current, hourly and daily forecasting for your area, complete with wind-direction arrows and sunrise and sunset times for easily gauging legal shooting time. Combine that with interactive mapping that lets subscribers drop 20 pins for cameras, stands, food sources, bedding areas, rubs, blood trailing and many more.

Learn more about Moultrie Mobile and cell cameras at www.MoultrieMobile.com.



NO SD CARD NEEDED

In the past, cellular trail cameras required an SD card, and the camera was specific to one cellular carrier. That changed with the Moultrie Mobile Edge cellular camera. With 16GB of built-in memory, the camera doesn't use an SD card, which not only saves the user money up front but also eliminates the issues associated with SD cards: the wrong type of card, lost SD cards, corrupted files and the need for formatting. The Edge also features Auto Connect technology, where it searches for the strongest cell signal in the area regardless of the carrier. So there's no more choosing a Verizon-only camera and worrying if it will work in a new hunting location. Simply turn on the Edge, and it finds the best signal for you. And with an MSRP of \$99, it makes it tough to not take the cell-cam leap. When you go cellular, there's no turning back. Check out the Edge camera at www.moultriemobile.com/cameras