Offal Wildlife Watching

Understanding when and what species use the deer gut piles provided by the hunters across Minnesota.

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This project is done with the intention to help researchers knwo more about the time and species eating deer gut piles across Minnesota. "Minnesota offers a unique opportunity to look at this across four different biomes and a major metropolitan area, different hunting methods (rifle, archery, and shotgun), and different scavenger assemblages. Hunters are uniquely positioned to record everything that comes in to feed on gut piles by setting a camera immediately after field dressing a deer." stated by the research team.

Image taken from their project on Zooniverse.
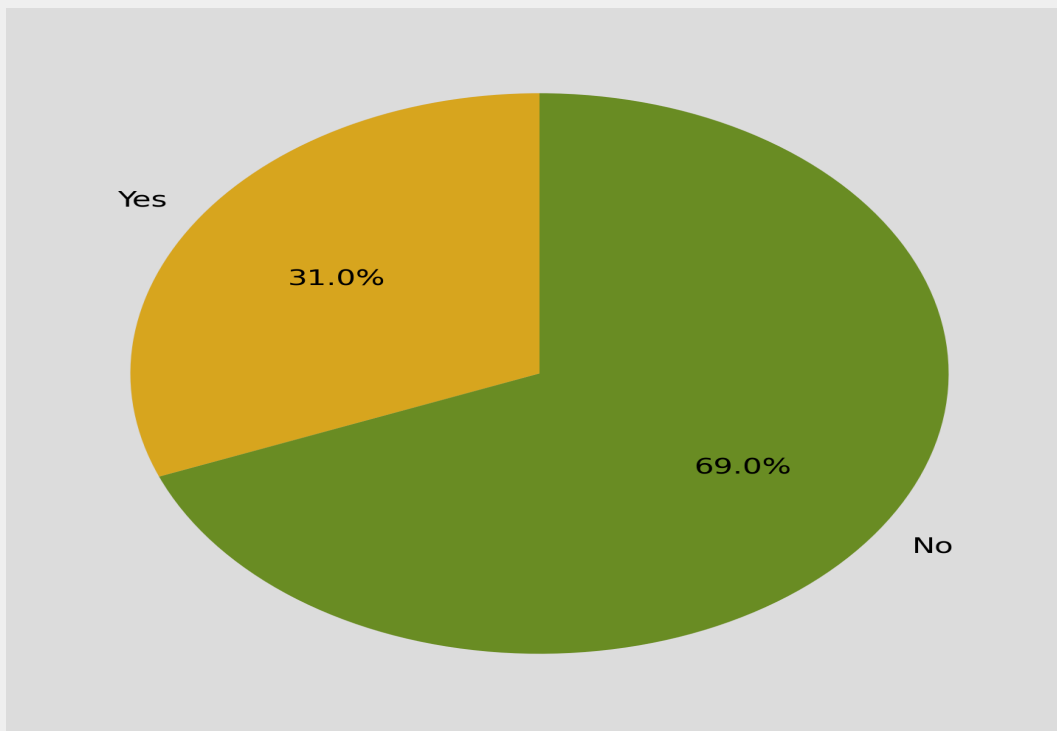
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Methods: Volunteers has to answer a few questions concerning the images like : Is there snow in the image? Is is a mammal(s) or bird(s) in the images? What specific species are they? How many? Is there any young present? What are they doing?

In this project, observations on 100 images were recorded on Google sheet, and then organized properly in this file. All the following graphs have been coded by me.

Data and Analysis:

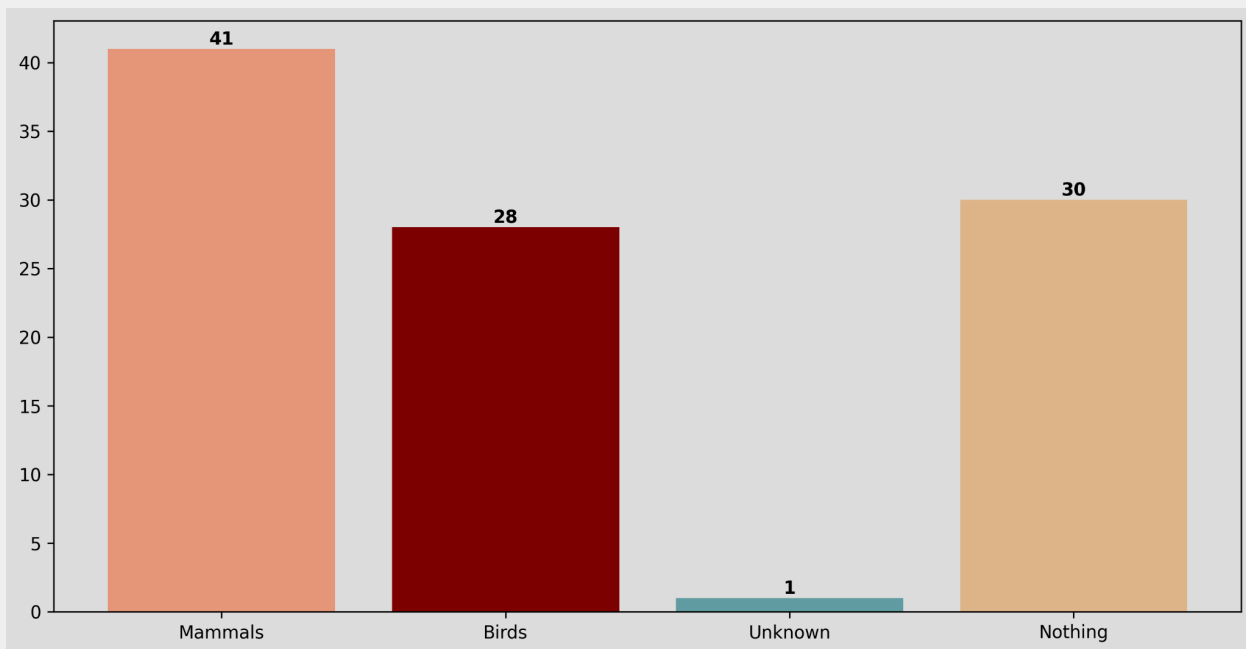**Table 1.**
Presence of Snow in the Image:

The presence of snow is important for the researchers because of their affect on detectability of food resource. Thus the availability of snow was collected so they can later relate that to the species that are visiting the offal at that time.

In my observations, snow was absent in most of the image/ places.

Table 2.

Is the Creature in the image a Mammal(s) or Bird(s)?

The most common class of animal was mammals, which makes sense due to the images focusing on ground-involved images.
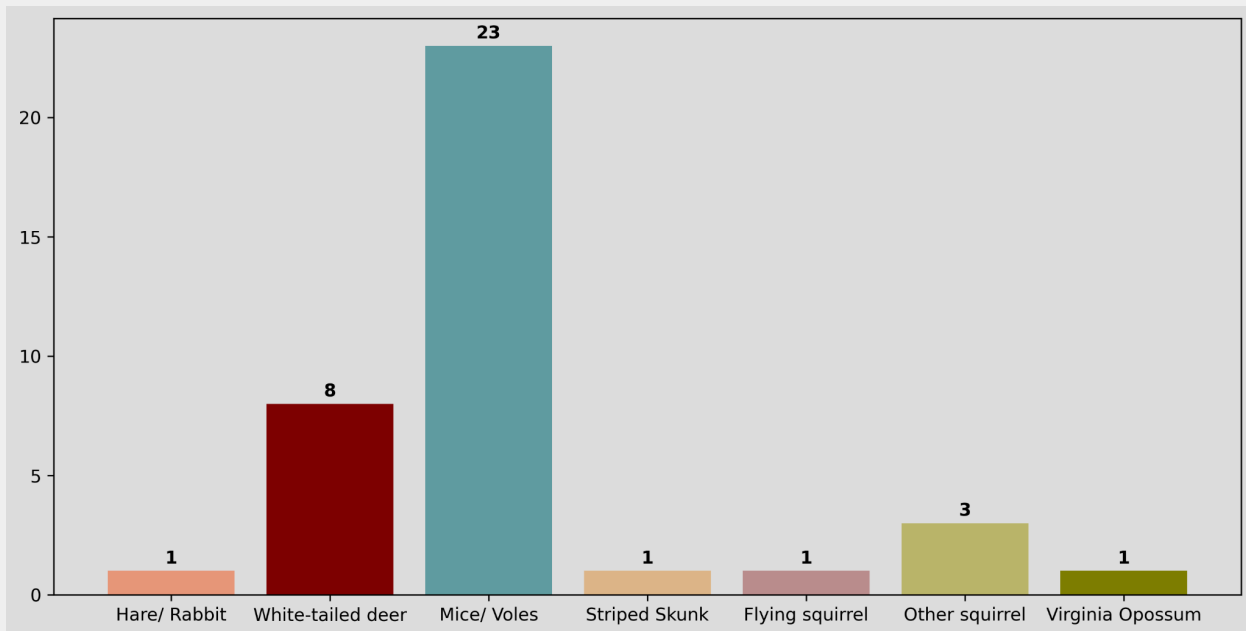
Table 3.

Species of Mammalia observed in the Images:

Table 4.

Species of Aves observed in the Images:

Table 5.

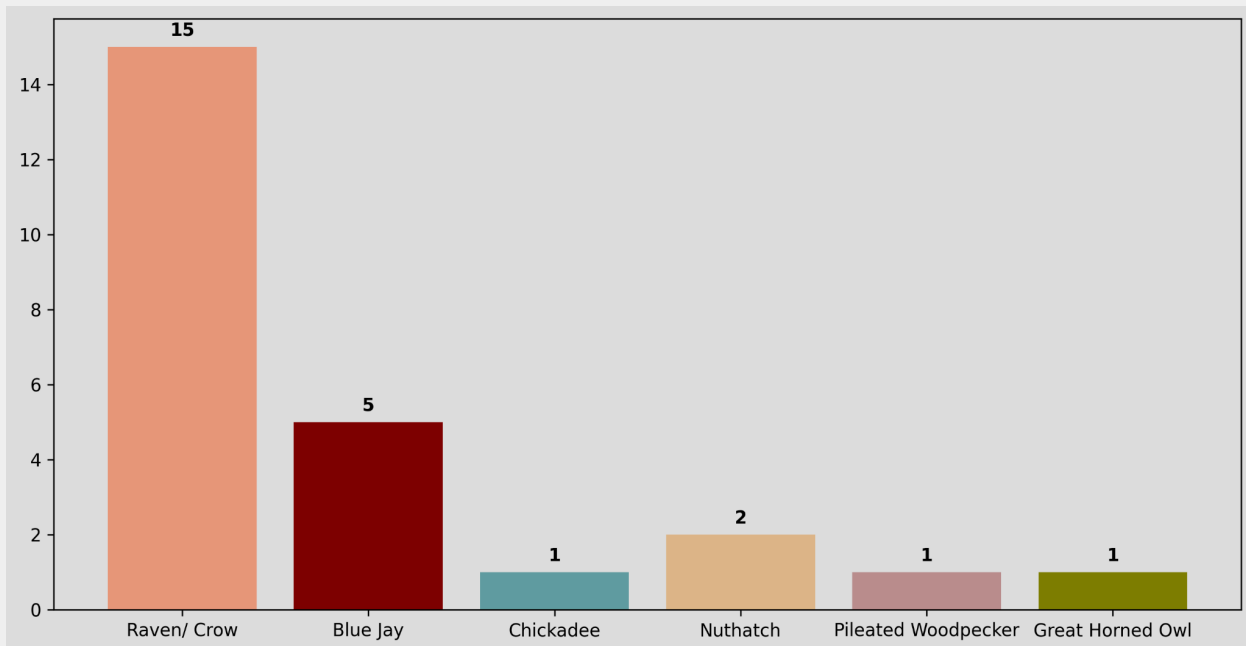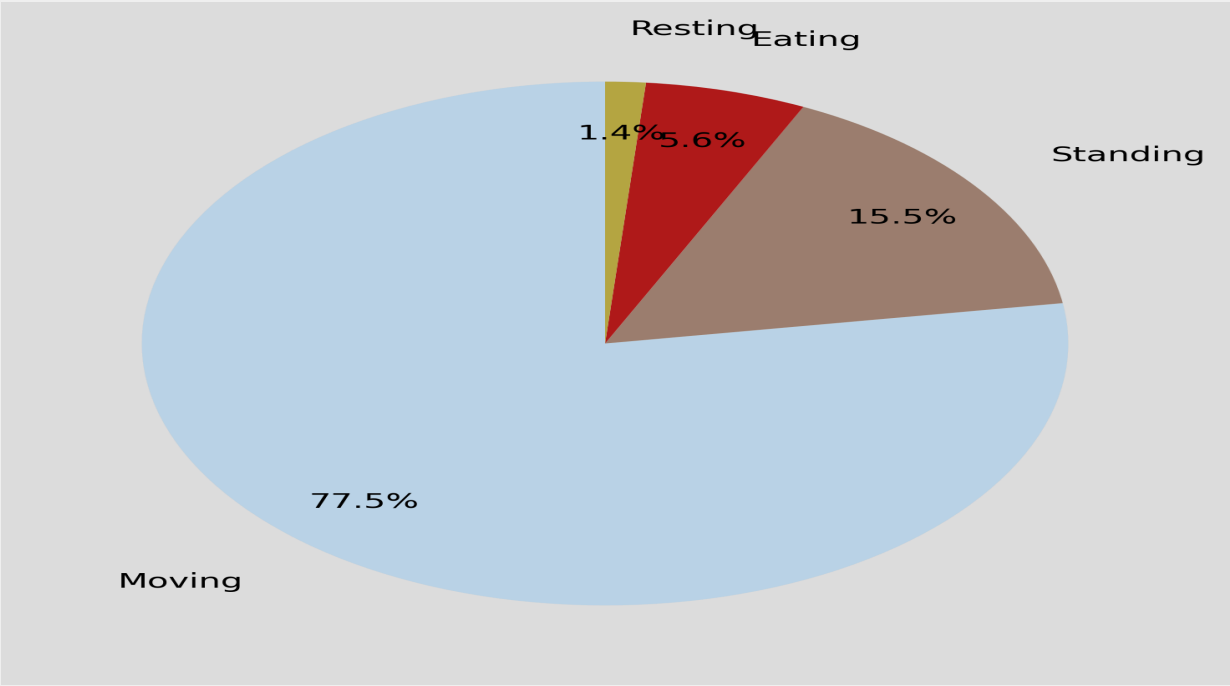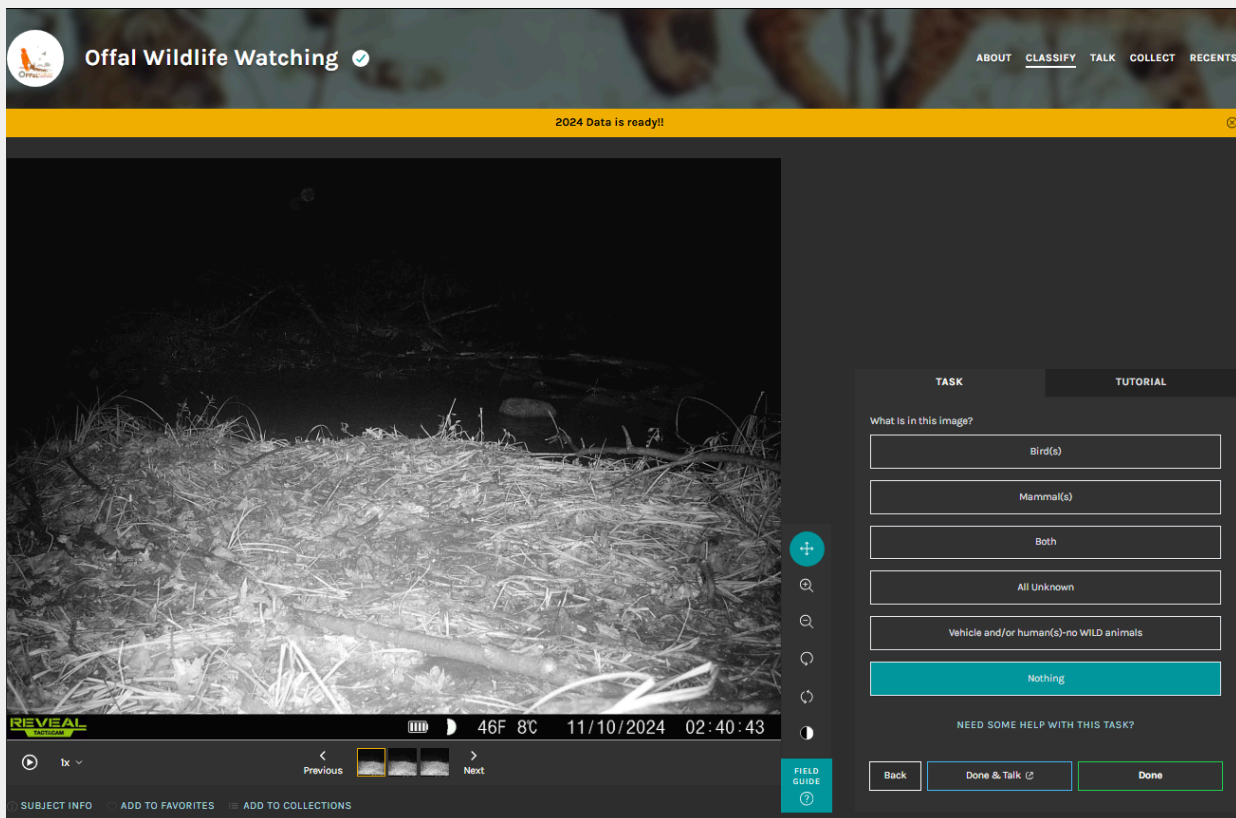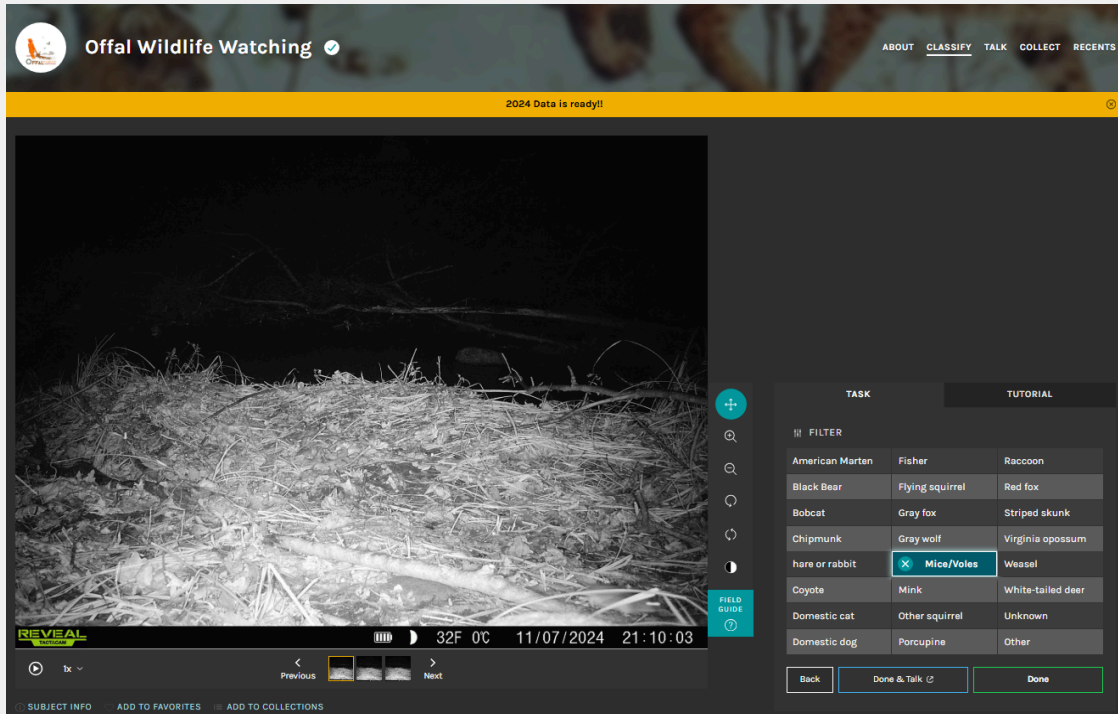**Observation of their behavior:**

Interpretation:

Most of the images were absent of snow, indicating that the most of the camera activities were done around June to August.

Becises mice, white-tailed deers were most frequently, suggesting they are dominant large herbivore in this region. Crows/ Ravens were the most seen among the aves, likely due to their omnivore diet. Many images were at night with low visibility, which may have caused issues with looking for any creature. Movements of mice/ voles were most observed during nighttime because of their nocturnal routine. The high number of Mice/Voles may reflect increased foraging behavior in preparation for winter.

Conclusion:

Mice were the most frequently observed species, while other mammals like white-tailed deers appeared less often. Snow presence influenced animal activity, with some species appearing more active during winter months.

These observations provide insights into animal distribution, behavior, and most importantly their use of the deer gut piles provided by the hunters in Minnesota, which could show how gut piles from hunters act as a temporary, high-quality food source for scavengers, and how this human-creared "carrion pulse" effects predator-prey relationships and wildlife behavior.

Some images were unclear due to low light, so additional camera placements could improve data accuracy in future surveys.