



Leibniz Institute for Zoo  
and Wildlife Research

IN THE FORSCHUNGSVERBUND BERLIN E.V.

## Close-up of the bandit: among-individual differences in behaviour and cognition of wild raccoons



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Behaviour and cognition mediate how animals interact with their environment and are outstanding drivers of success of both biological invasions and adjustment to urbanised human-altered habitats. Individuals with enhanced cognitive abilities have better chances of successful establishment and survival, especially in the context of current global change. For example, invasive or urbanised animals often display increased behavioural flexibility and innovativeness - the ability to produce new behaviours or to apply novel solutions to old problems.

Investigating the different facets of behavioural flexibility and other cognitive traits promoting biological invasions and colonisation of urban environments will provide valuable insights into the determinants of successful biological invasions, how they can be slowed down or counteracted, and on how animals cope with human-altered environments, two aspects which have important implications for conservation.

For further information and applications, please contact: Dr. Valeria Mazza ([vamazza@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:vamazza@uni-potsdam.de)); Dr. Manuel Roeleke ([roeleke@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:roeleke@uni-potsdam.de)); Dr. Carolin Scholz ([scholz@izw-berlin.de](mailto:scholz@izw-berlin.de)).



In this project, we propose to test among-individual variation in behaviour and in innovative problem-solving in populations of invasive raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) living along a rural-urban gradient.

Within the project we will offer the opportunity to develop and conduct student projects suitable for internships / Erasmus+, specialisation modules, Bachelor and Master theses on:

- innovative problem-solving along the rural-urban gradient
- among-individual variation in exploration and risk-taking propensity
- individual variation in movement behaviour
- neophobia and neophilia across foraging and technical contexts
- behavioural indicators of sociability and docility
- vocal communications and acoustic signals

Successful candidates will be interested in combining fieldwork sessions with theory-driven research, work well in a team, and be in possession of a valid drivers' license.