

Keep the Wild in Wildlife

How to Safely Enjoy and Help Protect Wildlife

National Parks help protect uniquely Canadian landscapes and the ecosystems that animals depend on for their survival. When our actions reduce an animal's wildness, the natural character of our national parks diminishes.

Whether you plan to drive the roads, hike the trails, or relax in town, take time to learn the important precautions wild areas demand. Your responsible behaviour affects the survival of wildlife – and your own safety!



**Bear Safety
Information
Inside**



Canadian Heritage
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You are in Bear Country

– wherever you are in the mountain national parks!

Bears are naturally wary of humans, and generally choose to avoid us. However, bears may threaten and even attack people when they become accustomed to humans, when they are surprised, or when they are forced to defend themselves, their young or their food.

Reduce Your Risk

- **Make noise!** Let bears know you're there – call out, clap hands, sing or talk loudly – especially near streams, dense vegetation and berry patches, on windy days, and in areas of low visibility.
- **Travel in groups**, on established paths and trails, and during daylight hours.
- **Keep food smells away from bears** by properly storing food, garbage and food-related items, day and night, wherever you are. Even empty pet food bowls can attract bears.
- **Stay alert, stay alive!** Watch for bears in the area and for their sign – tracks, droppings, diggings, torn-up logs, and turned-over rocks. Leave the area if you see fresh sign.
- **If you come across large dead animals, leave the area immediately** and report it to Park Wardens.
- **Dispose of fish offal** in fast moving streams or the deep part of a lake, never along stream-sides or lakeshores.
- **Never approach or feed a bear.** Keep a distance of at least 100 metres.
- **Report** all sightings of bears to park staff.

Grizzly Bear



Black Bear



If You Encounter a Bear

Bears are very intelligent and complex animals. Each bear and each encounter is unique; there is no single strategy that will work in all situations. Some guidelines:

- **Stay calm.** Most bears don't want to attack you; they usually want to avoid you and ensure you're not a threat. Bears may bluff their way out of an encounter by charging and then turning away at the last

second. Bears may also react defensively by woofing, growling, snapping their jaws, and laying their ears back.

- **Immediately pick up small children** and stay in a group.
- **Don't drop your pack.** It can provide protection.
- **Back away slowly, never run!** Bears can run as fast as a racehorse, both uphill and downhill.

- **Talk calmly and firmly.** If a bear rears on its hind legs and waves its nose about, it is trying to identify you. Remain still and talk calmly so it knows you are a human and not a prey animal. A scream or sudden movement may trigger an attack.
- **Leave the area or take a detour.** If this is impossible, wait until the bear moves away. Always leave the bear an escape route.

Bear Attacks

Bears do not like surprises. Try to avoid such encounters by being alert and making noise.

If you surprise a bear and it defends itself:

If you have bear spray, use it. If contact has occurred or is imminent, **PLAY DEAD!** Lie on your stomach with legs apart. Protect your face, the back of your head and neck with your arms. Remain still until the bear leaves the area. These attacks seldom last more than a few minutes. While fighting back usually increases the intensity of such an attack, in some cases it has caused the bear to leave. If the attack continues for more than several minutes, consider fighting back.

If a bear stalks you and then attacks, or attacks at night:

DON'T PLAY DEAD - FIGHT BACK!

First – try to escape, preferably to a building, car or up a tree. If you can't escape, or if the bear follows, use bear spray, or shout and try to intimidate the bear with a branch or rock. Do whatever it takes to let the bear know you are not easy prey. This kind of attack is very rare but can be very serious because it often means the bear is looking for food and preying on you.

Bear Spray?

Effectiveness is not guaranteed!

Recent research indicates that bear spray can be effective against some bears when used properly. If you plan to carry it, be aware that wind, spray distance, rain and product shelf life can all influence how well it works. Carefully read directions on the can prior to your trip. The best way to live safely with bears is to avoid contact with them.



Elk Alert!



Gary Moore (Banff Crag & Canyon)



“Urban Elk” – Their Story

- Elk are dangerous - no matter when or where you see them. Give elk the right of way and stay at least three bus lengths away (30 m/100 ft).
- Cow elk are particularly dangerous during calving season (mid-May to the end of June).
- Bull elk are especially dangerous during mating season (mid-September to the end of October).
- Report all conflicts with elk to park staff.

In park townsites, you may see elk peacefully mowing someone’s front lawn or pruning the back yard shrubbery. They look pretty tame, but they’re not. They are wild animals that have learned to survive in a place that’s full of people. ‘Urban’ elk have the same needs as other wild animals: they need to feed, rest, mate, and bear

young – undisturbed. If these needs are not met, survival is threatened. And whenever a wild animal perceives a threat – say someone approaching too closely – it is likely to attack. The only other option is to run away, but in populated areas there just aren’t many places for an animal to run. Instead we’re the ones who must “back off”.

This Is Also Cougar Country

Cougars are not often seen because they are solitary, elusive and active mainly at night. They may be more active in areas that have habituated deer, like towns and campgrounds. Avoid meeting a cougar by travelling in groups and making lots of noise.

Keep children close to you. Free-roaming pets may attract and be attacked by cougars.

If you encounter a cougar:

- Immediately pick up small children.
- Face the animal, and retreat slowly – do NOT run or play dead.
- Try to appear bigger by holding your arms or an object above your head.
- Actions such as shouting, waving a stick and throwing rocks may deter an attack.

Be aggressive.

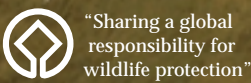


Give Them the Space They Need

Please do your part to limit the impact that so many people have on park wildlife. Give all the animals you see the respect they deserve and the space they need. Enjoy a safe visit and ensure that future generations have the chance to see wildlife that is truly wild.

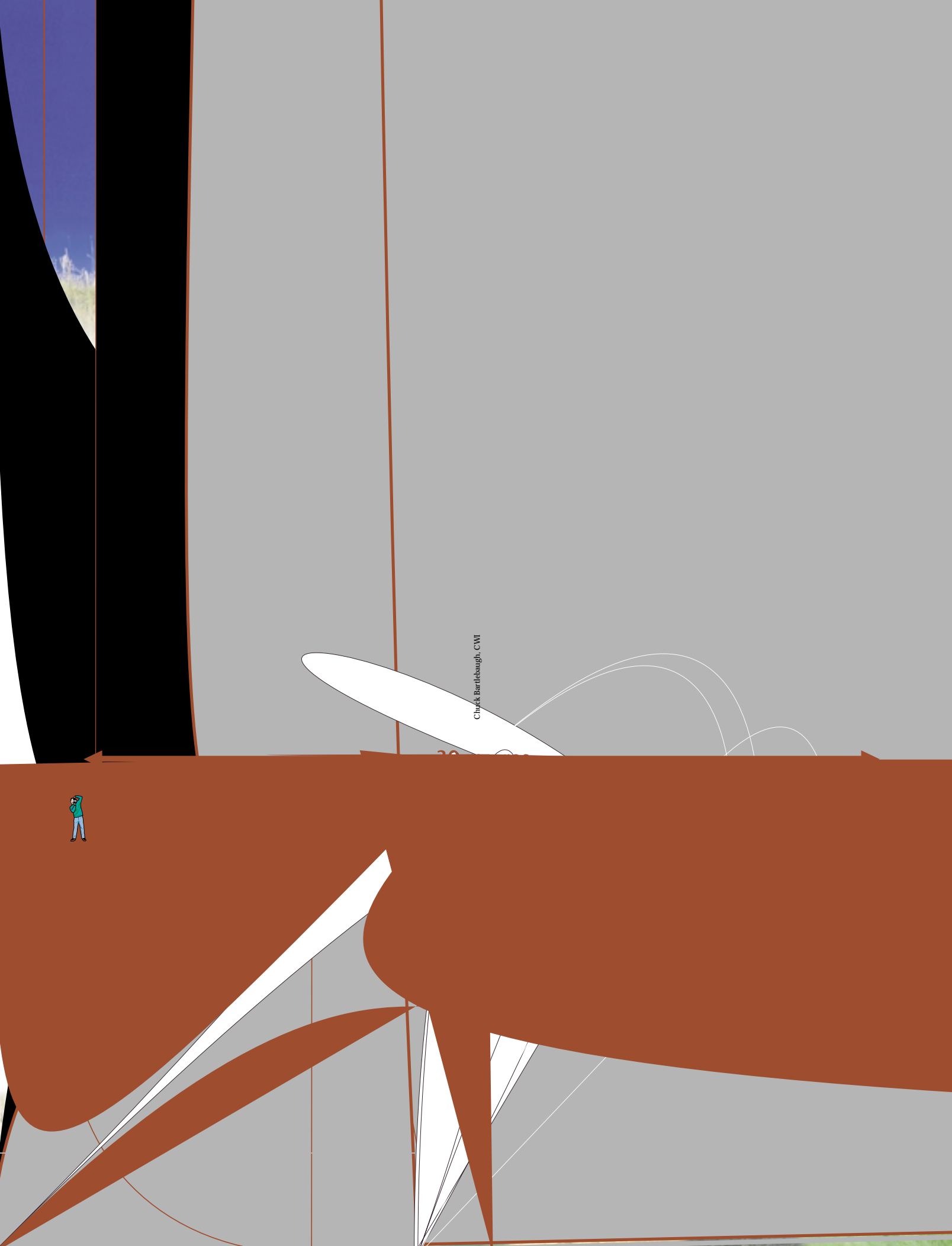


Terry Willis

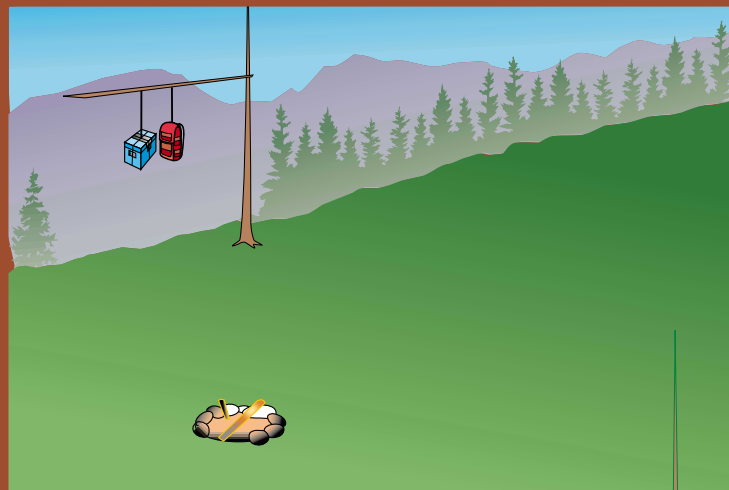


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Canada



Chyck Bartlebaugh, CWI



Along the Road...

Be Alert

Hundreds of large mammals are killed on roadways in the mountain national parks. These accidents often result in injuries to the driver and/or passengers. Roadways attract wildlife because they provide easy travel and roadside forage. To prevent collisions with wildlife:

- **Be alert.** Use quick glances to scan ahead for animal movements or shining eyes.
- **If you spot one animal, look for others.** Animals often travel in groups.
- **Improve visibility.** Keep your windshield and headlights clean.
- **Stay within posted speed limits.** Slow down when entering snowsheds or tunnels – wildlife may be inside.

Be extra cautious at sunrise and sunset. Animals are most active at these times of day.

Chuck Bartlebaugh, CWI

An animal can run in front of you in an instant.

Wildlife Watch

Report suspicious activities.

Call Toll Free

1-888-WARDENS

(1-888-927-3367)

