

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
Parks Canada

Patrimoine canadien
Parcs Canada

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-Cragg 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.

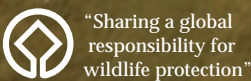


Give Them the Space They Need

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



Également offert
en français

Canada

Wild Always Means Wild



The chance of seeing wildlife in the wild is one of the most exciting things about the mountain national parks.

However, it is important to treat wild animals with the respect they deserve. Approaching them too closely threatens their survival. Also, once animals become accustomed to being around people, they are in danger of losing that very thing that makes them special – their wildness.

"Kindness" Kills Wildness

Feeding or approaching animals too closely causes them to lose their natural fear of people. Once habituated, animals are likely to become increasingly aggressive. Feeding may also:

- Attract animals to roadside areas where they can be injured or killed by vehicles.
- Lead to eating garbage. Animals eat almost anything which has the smell of food.
- Affect your health. No one can predict when threats to human health due to direct contact with wildlife can occur. Known hazards include rabies and tick-related diseases.

It is illegal to feed, entice, or disturb any animal in a national park.

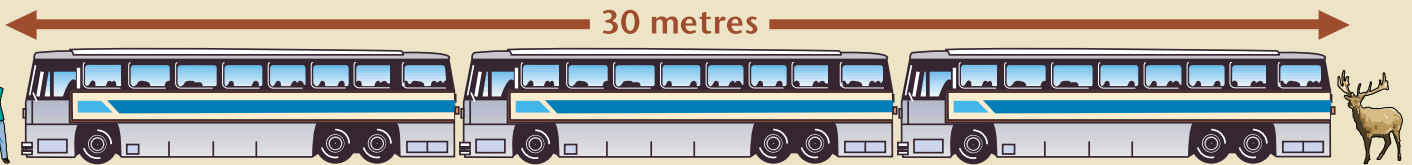
Getting the Perfect Shot



People searching for good photo opportunities have a special responsibility to wildlife and fellow visitors. Here's how you can help:

- Photograph wildlife from a vehicle or observation area. Don't surround, crowd or follow an animal. If you don't have a telephoto lens (at least 300 to 400 mm), show the animal in its natural surroundings, or crop and enlarge the image later.
- Don't make sounds to startle or move animals to gain a better shot.
- Never put people (especially children) at risk by posing them with wildlife.

Chuck Bartheleugh, CWI



How Close is Too Close?

We recommend you keep at least **three bus lengths** (30 metres/100 ft) away from large animals and about three times that distance (100 metres/325 ft) away from bears. Here are some more tips for wildlife watchers and photographers:

- Don't entice wildlife by feeding, reaching out or simulating calls (eg. elk bugling).
- Keep the animal's line of travel or escape route clear. If it approaches you, move away.
- Retreat immediately if you notice signs of aggression or any behaviour change.
- Avoid direct eye contact. Animals feel threatened by this.
- Leave nesting birds, denning animals and new-born or young animals alone.



Day to Day Living . . . With Wildlife In Mind



Deposit all garbage in wildlife-proof trash containers.

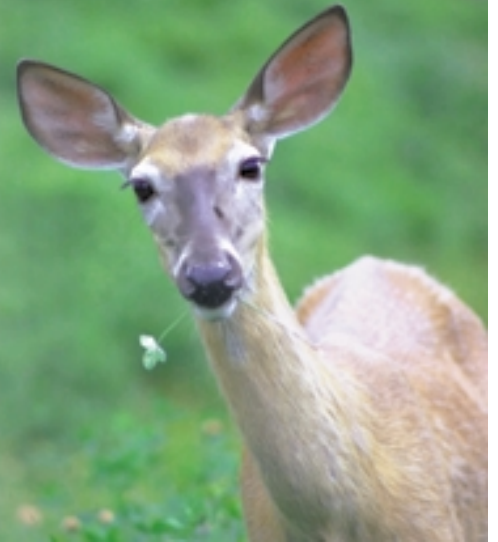
Whether you're in towns, campgrounds, or picnic areas, animals can travel through at any time.

- Store all food, food-related items and pet food inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle or special bear-resistant container. Ice chests, coolers, boxes, cans, tents and soft-sided campers are not bear-resistant!
- Wild animals are attracted to a range of smells that includes cosmetics and toiletries, wash basins, cooking stoves, and empty pet food bowls.
- Dispose of wastewater in the proper facilities.
- Keep your pets on a leash at all times. They look like prey and can lead predators to you.
- Removing branches from trees or the ground destroys habitat and cover for birds and small animals.

Moochers & Munchers

Placidly munching grasses or mooching for snacks, deer and bighorn sheep appear tame. In fact, they startle easily and may suddenly strike out with their hooves, antlers or horns. As they get used to people, they become aggressive. They may persistently beg for or boldly take food and food-related items.

- If they approach, move away to maintain a safe distance.
- You contribute to the problem by enticing them, by allowing them to take food, or by posing with them. This will increase risk to others – particularly children.
- Dogs, both large and small, have been trampled and killed by deer protecting their fawns during the spring. When walking dogs, keep them closely leashed and steer well clear of all deer. They may attack, even when unprovoked.



Kids and Wildlife

Your children are the same size as some predator's prey. For their safety:

- Keep children in immediate sight and within close reach at all times.
- Children should avoid playing in or near areas with dense cover.
- Never encourage children to pet, feed or pose with wildlife.



When fed or teased, small animals can become very aggressive and may bite.



Chuck Bartelbaugh, CWI



Backcountry Travel

To stay safe, and protect the wilderness, you have a responsibility to travel with two goals in mind - limiting your impact by avoiding encounters, and managing food and food smells.

When you go into the woods today....



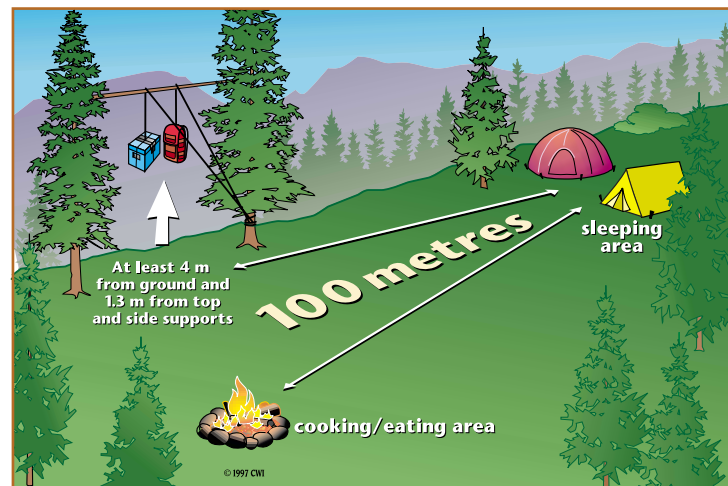
- **Make noise.** “Bear bells” are not loud enough – clap, call out or sing instead. Cyclists, who travel quickly and quietly along trails, are most at risk of surprising wildlife.
- Be particularly **alert** in dense forest or vegetation, near running water and when travelling into the wind. Bears or cougars may not be able to hear or smell you.
- **Travel in groups** of three or more and keep children within reach.
- **Watch for sign.** If you see fresh tracks, diggings, droppings, or come across a dead animal – leave the area. Don’t linger in feeding areas such as berry patches.
- **Keep pets on a leash.** Your pet may come running back to you with a bear, cougar or coyote in pursuit.
- **Camp in designated areas.** Avoid camping near running water, thick brush, or berry patches.

Visitor Centres

Visitor centre staff can provide information on current sightings, warnings, closures and safety tips. Wilderness Passes are required for all over-night trips and can be purchased there.

Prevent uninvited dinner guests....

- Set up cooking, eating and supply areas at least **100 metres from your tent.** Designated backcountry campsites may already be arranged this way.
- Store all food, including pet food and livestock feed, in special caches provided, or hang it between two trees at least **4 metres above the ground.**
- **Wash and store all dishes and food utensils** immediately after use. Strain food particles from dishwater and store with garbage. Dump dishwater in designated areas, or at least 100 metres from your sleeping area.
- Handle garbage the same way as food. Pack it out in airtight containers. **Never bury or burn it.**
- Keep sleeping bags and tents completely free of food, food odours or beverages. Do not sleep in the same clothes that you cook in.
- Store personal items (deodorants, toothpaste, etc.) with food. Leave perfumes, hair sprays and scented soaps at home.



Along the Road...



"Animal Jams"

Visitors are often unintentionally responsible for the death of roadside wildlife. If people get too close, animals can react aggressively. When public safety is threatened, wildlife may have to be destroyed.

If you come across a traffic jam caused by roadside wildlife:

- Slow down. You have more reaction time when you travel slowly.
- Be aware of traffic, both in front of and behind you.
- Watch the road. Both wildlife and people, particularly children, may suddenly run onto the road.
- Keep moving. Accept that in heavy traffic situations, your passengers may get a quick look, but you may not. When travelling along the Trans-Canada Highway, stop only for emergencies.
- Pull over onto the road shoulder only if it is safe to do so. Never stop in the middle of the road, close to a hill, curve, or tunnel, or in heavy traffic. Do not drive off the hardened road surface.
- Remain in your vehicle, safe from both wildlife and traffic. Then move on after a few moments.

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)

