



# Keep the Wild in Wildlife



Parks Canada / Parcs Canada

Canada

National Parks help protect uniquely Canadian landscapes along with the ecosystems that wildlife depend upon 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 or bike the trails, or relax in town, take time to understand the important precautions wild areas demand. Your responsible behaviour affects the survival of wildlife and helps ensure your safety.

The chance of seeing wildlife is one of the most exciting things about visiting the mountain national parks. It is important to treat wild animals with respect. Approaching too closely threatens their survival. Once wildlife become accustomed to being around people, they are in danger of losing the very thing that makes them special – their wildness.



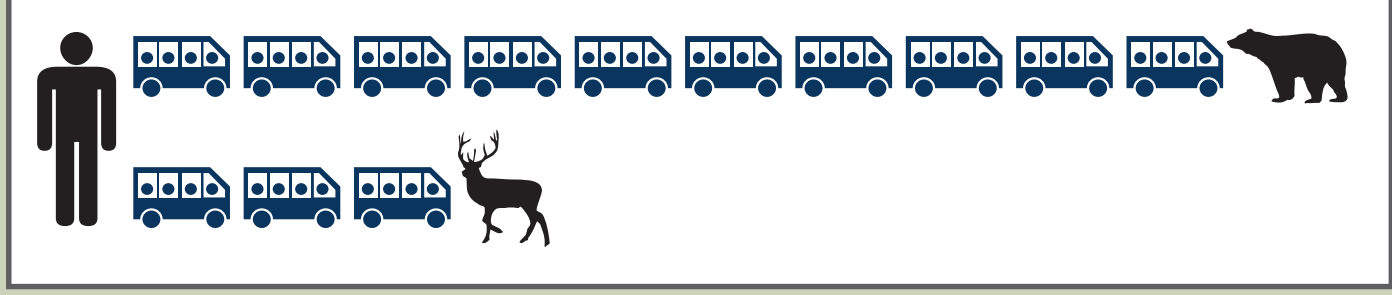
S. Gignac

## SAFE VIEWING

Keep a minimum of **three bus lengths** (30 metres/ 100 feet) away from elk, deer, moose and bighorn sheep and **ten bus lengths** (100 metres/325 feet) away from bears, cougars and wolves.



R. Ruff



## PREVENTING A WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER

Wildlife are extremely sensitive to the stress of human activity. You can help protect these animals and yourself by avoiding encounters with them. The best way to handle a serious wildlife encounter is to avoid having one in the first place.

- Make noise! Let wildlife know you are in the area. Call out, clap hands, sing or talk loudly – especially near streams, thick vegetation, berry patches, during windy days, and in areas of low visibility. Bear bells do not work.
- Watch for fresh wildlife signs. Tracks, droppings, diggings, torn-up logs and turned-over rocks are signs that wildlife have been in the area. If the signs are fresh, leave the area.
- Larger group sizes are less likely to have a serious wildlife encounter. We recommend hiking in a tight group of four or more. Never let children wander.
- If you choose to run or cycle along park trails be careful, as you put yourself at increased risk of surprise encounters due to your speed and quietness.
- Do not wear ear buds when out on the trails.
- Use officially marked paths and trails and travel during daylight hours.
- If you come across a large dead animal, leave the area immediately and report it to Parks Canada.
- Dispose of fish offal in fast moving streams or in the deep part of a lake; never along stream sides or lake shores.

## Elk



- Elk are dangerous.
- Female elk can be aggressive during the May-June calving season.
- Male elk can be aggressive during the September-October breeding season.
- If the animal is responding to your presence – you are too close.
- Give them plenty of room.
- Do not approach elk or their calves.
- Elk can endanger themselves or humans by suddenly running into traffic or fences if spooked.

## Deer, Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats

- Although deer, bighorn sheep and mountain goats may appear to be tame, they do startle easily and may suddenly become aggressive. They may strike a person with their hooves, antlers or horns.
- If they approach, move away to maintain a safe distance.
- Do not feed them.
- When walking dogs, keep them closely leashed and stay well away, as wildlife may attack, even when unprovoked.



A. Athwal

## RESPONDING TO AN ENCOUNTER

### Bear

If you see a bear, stop and remain calm. Be prepared to use your bear spray. Do not run away.

**OBSERVE: Is the bear unaware of your presence?** If so, move away quietly without getting its attention.

OR

**OBSERVE: Is the bear aware of your presence?** 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.

- **Stay calm.** Calm behaviour can reassure the bear. Screams or sudden movements may trigger an attack.
- **Speak to the bear.** Talk calmly and firmly. This lets the bear know you are human and not prey. If a bear rears on its hind legs and is sniffing the air, it is trying to identify you.
- **Back away slowly.** Never run as it may trigger a pursuit.
- **Make yourself appear BIG.** Pick up small children and stay in a group.
- **Do not drop your backpack;** it may provide protection.

**If you must proceed, make a wide detour around a bear or wait at a safe distance for it to move on.**

### Cougar, Coyote and Wolf

- Immediately pick up small children and pets.
- Do not turn your back. Back away slowly and maintain eye contact.
- Do not run; it may trigger an attack.
- Do not play dead.
- Make yourself appear as large as possible; wave an object above your head.



A. Athwal

## BE PREPARED

**Carry bear spray with you at all times on the trail, ensure it is accessible, and know how to use it.**



S. Gignac

Bear spray has been proven to be effective at deterring attacks by grizzly and black bears. It could also be a useful deterrent for encounters with other wildlife such as cougars and elk.

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 people viewing roadside wildlife:

- Slow down. You have more reaction time when you travel slowly.
- Be aware of traffic, both in front of, and behind you.
- Warn other motorists by turning on your hazard lights.
- Watch the road. Both wildlife and people, particularly children, may suddenly run onto the road.
- 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 in heavy traffic. Do not drive off the hardened road surface.

- Remain in your vehicle, safe from both wildlife and traffic. Move on after a few moments.
- Obey the posted speed limits.
- Be extra cautious at sunrise and sunset. Animals are most active at these times of day.
- Keep moving. Accept that your passengers may get a quick look, but you may not. When travelling along the Trans-Canada Highway, stop only for emergencies.



T. Donald

**Some tips for wildlife viewers and photographers**

- Photograph wildlife from a vehicle or observation area. Do not surround, crowd or follow an animal. If you do not 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 get a better photo.
- Keep the animal's line of travel or escape route clear. If it approaches, 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 newborn or young animals alone.
- It is illegal to entice wildlife by feeding, reaching out, or simulating calls (eg. elk bugling).



A. Abrial



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**FEEDING OR APPROACHING**

Feeding or approaching animals causes them to lose their natural fear of people. Animals that become habituated or food-conditioned 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.
- Cause even small animals to become very aggressive and may bite.
- Affect your health. No one can predict possible threats to human health such as injury or disease due to direct contact with wildlife.

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



D. Wainio

**CHILDREN**

Children may be 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 thick vegetation.
- Never encourage children to pet, feed or pose with wildlife.

**PETS**

To ensure the safety of wildlife, yourself, and your pet, keep your pet under control and on a leash at all times. Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Wildlife may become aggressive when a dog is nearby. Watch for, and stay far away from, all wildlife.

**It is illegal to have pets off leash in a national park.**

**LIVING WITH WILDLIFE**

Whether you are in towns, campgrounds, or picnic areas, animals may travel through at any time.

- Store all food, food-related items and pet food inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle, food locker, or special bear-resistant container. Coolers, boxes, cans, tents and soft-sided campers are not wildlife-resistant.
- Wild animals are attracted to a range of smells which includes cosmetics and toiletries, wash basins, cooking stoves, and empty pet food bowls. Store all items that have odours the same as you would food.
- Dispose of wastewater in the proper facilities.
- Deposit all garbage in wildlife-proof garbage bins.
- Keep your pets on a leash at all times. They look like prey and can lead predators to you.
- Do not remove branches from trees or the ground as it destroys habitat and cover for birds and small animals.

**Violations of Canada's National Parks Act, such as disturbing wildlife, ignoring garbage storage regulations, or entering an area that has been closed due to wildlife activity, may result in the individual being charged under the National Parks Regulations; maximum fine \$25 000.**



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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION**

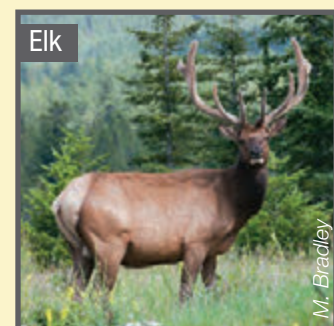
**Report wolf, bear and cougar sightings, and wildlife-related incidents to Parks Canada:**

Banff, Kootenay and Yoho:  
Park Dispatch 403-762-1470  
Jasper, Mount Revelstoke and Glacier:  
Park Dispatch 780-852-6155  
Waterton Lakes:  
Park Office 403-859-2224

**To report national park violations:**

24 hours, 7 days per week  
1-888-927-3367  
(Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and Waterton Lakes)  
1-877-852-3100  
(Jasper and Mount Revelstoke & Glacier)

**For general information visit:**  
pc.gc.ca  
or a Parks Canada Visitor Centre



Elk

Brown body, darker neck and large tan rump patch. Backwards slanting antlers.



Moose

Long legs, shoulder hump. Built like a horse with a large head. Shovel-like antlers.



White-tailed deer

Tan colour, tail has white underside and is held erect like a flag when alarmed.



Mule deer

Black tip on tail, large ears, white rump, grey colour.



Caribou

Darker body with light neck hair. C-shaped antlers with shovel-like tines at their base.



Bighorn sheep

White rump and light brown fur and horns. Males: thick curved horns. Females: short narrow horns.



Mountain goat

Narrow black horns, beard, long white hair.



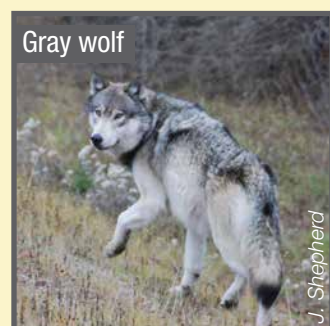
Pika

Grey-coloured, short round ears. Blends in with rocks.



Coyote

Medium-sized dog. Thick, bushy tail. Greyish-brown in colour.



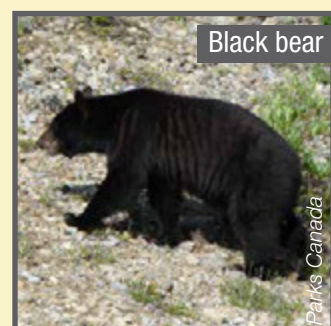
Gray wolf

Built like a large German Shepherd dog, with longer legs. Colour can vary from white to black.



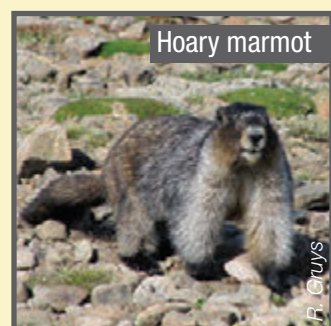
Grizzly bear

Distinctive shoulder hump, large head, short rounded ears and long claws.



Black bear

No shoulder hump, small head, tall ears and short claws. Can be cinnamon colour.



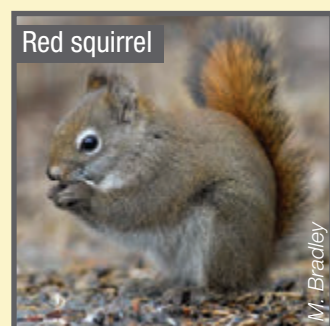
Hoary marmot

Brown/black coat with white over the shoulders. Black feet.



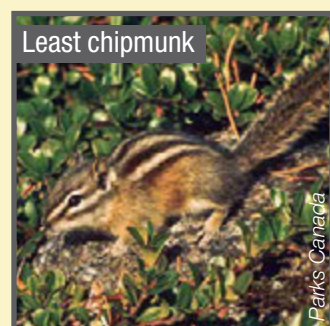
Columbian ground squirrel

Tan-coloured. Reddish nose and feet. Has a high-pitched "squeak".



Red squirrel

Red body, white underside and very large, bushy tail.



Least chipmunk

Striped with two white lines on face. Four grey lines on back.