



*This photo was taken with a 300-mm lens and 1.5x tele-extender from a roadside pullout in the Rockies while standing next to my car. The moose tolerated many viewers standing in the pullout, but he left as soon as some of the viewers with small cameras attempted to move closer to get a better photo.*



*I positioned myself on the ground about 30 metres from the burrow and waited. The ground squirrel came out but was too wary to eat, especially when I looked directly at it. I took this photo with a 450-mm lens and then backed away, preferring to watch with binoculars as the ground squirrels fed.*



*This photo was taken with 300-mm lens from my car at a natural mineral lick in the Canadian Rockies. Many mountain goats came to the lick, but then left when several tourists approached them. The tourists then departed, but I stayed. Ten minutes later this female goat and her kid came back to the lick.*

## How Can You Help?

As a visitor to BC Parks, you can help by personally adopting the wildlife ethics in this brochure and learning as much as you can about the wildlife you seek to view.

When visiting a provincial protected area, minimize your impact on wildlife and vegetation and be aware of any activity restrictions in the park you are visiting. For instance, some ecological reserves are closed to visitors during sensitive times such as seabird nesting. Report wildlife viewing problems to the nearest BC Parks office.

Your assistance in ongoing conservation projects and conservation education is crucial. Your participation can include simply filling out wildlife observation records when in a protected area, or you could become involved in wildlife monitoring projects such as the BC Parks Conservation Steward Program.



## For More Information

BC Parks

<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks>



Ministry of Water, Land  
and Air Protection



# Wildlife Viewing

## RESPECTING & PROTECTING



**W**ildlife in this brochure refers to all animals, both vertebrate and invertebrate. Protected areas in this brochure refer to British Columbia parks and ecological reserves. Guidelines in this brochure will also be useful for responsible wildlife viewing in other locations. Although this brochure refers mainly to wildlife, both wildlife and vegetation are essential parts of our natural heritage, and both are protected in parks and ecological reserves.

## Code of Ethics

**As wildlife viewers, our goal is to watch animals behaving in natural ways in their natural habitats. We respect the needs of wild animals for space, natural vegetation, and ecological community. We recognize our responsibility to know the consequences of wildlife viewing.**

**As guiding principles we agree:**

- ▶ To view or photograph from a distance that respects the needs of wildlife, using proper equipment such as binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses. Before approaching wildlife we will first learn the spatial needs of each species and to recognize their alarm signals and behaviours.
- ▶ To avoid noises or actions that might stress wildlife or cause animals to waste energy in unnecessary flight.
- ▶ To be patient, remembering that we are guests in wildlife habitat.
- ▶ To avoid approaching animals that are breeding, nesting, brooding or raising young, because parents and young are especially vulnerable at these times. We will learn the places and times to avoid these situations. We will not approach young or baby animals.
- ▶ To avoid feeding wildlife outside the back yard, recognizing that feeding usually leads to problems such as unnatural food dependency, habituation to humans, disease or even death.
- ▶ To keep pets on a leash around any wildlife, and avoid bringing pets into sensitive wildlife habitat.
- ▶ To avoid trampling or damaging vegetation.
- ▶ To respect the rules and regulations of protected areas. Trails, roads, closure areas and other management features are designed for safety and welfare of visitors, natural vegetation and wildlife.
- ▶ To be respectful of other wildlife watchers and property owners.
- ▶ To give back to nature for the gifts of wildlife viewing we receive, through conservation work for wildlife, wild land preservation, native vegetation renewal and through helping others learn the ethics of wildlife viewing.

## Protecting Wildlife

Wildlife are protected from harassment or disturbance through a number of laws and treaties intended to protect species and habitat.

- ▶ Provincially, sections of the *Park Act*, *Wildlife Act*, *Ecological Reserve Act*, *Fish Protection Act*, and *Park and Recreation Area Regulation* address such issues as conservation, wildlife feeding, harassment, animal control, and the complete protection of all wildlife within ecological reserves.
- ▶ Federally, sections of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* protect all migratory birds, while sections of the *Fisheries Act* protect marine mammals, fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and seaweeds.

## Penalties

Under the above laws, wildlife harassment could result in a sentence of up to six months and/or a fine of as much as one million dollars.

## Stewardship by BC Parks

BC Parks acts as stewards of protected areas on behalf of the people of British Columbia. In issues relating to wildlife populations and their habitat requirements, BC Parks will:

- ▶ ensure that species habitat needs take precedence over human use in protected areas,
- ▶ ensure that threatened, endangered and vulnerable wildlife are protected,
- ▶ promote effective conservation of wildlife in protected areas,
- ▶ ensure continued suitable habitat for native wildlife populations.

## Required Permits

- ▶ a park-use permit is required for any commercial activity in a protected area, including photography, film production and ecotourism,
- ▶ educational groups such as ecotour groups, school classes, or natural history groups may visit all but the sensitive, restricted ecological reserves. For these visits, groups are required to have an ecological reserve permit.

## Who to Contact for Permits

For park-use permits and ecological reserve permits contact the appropriate Environmental Stewardship office of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. Phone numbers are available through Inquiry BC (1-800-663-7867).

## Viewing Wildlife Safely

Wildlife viewers should always be concerned about their own safety as well as that of the wildlife.

- ▶ Animals are unpredictable. Do not approach wildlife, large or small. View from a safe distance.
- ▶ Feeding wildlife is illegal and is a safety hazard to both people and wildlife.
- ▶ Bears are always unpredictable and dangerous. Become informed on safety in bear country.
- ▶ In marine habitats, be aware of many safety issues. Waves, tides, and tidal rips are hazards of particular concern.
- ▶ Hunting is allowed in some parks. Be aware of hunting seasons and how to travel in hunting areas.

## About the Photographs

Wildlife photographs often perpetuate misconceptions about wildlife tolerance for human viewers, or encourage false expectations about how close you are likely to see wildlife. Wildlife photographer David Denning describes how he got the photographs on these pages to demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate wildlife viewing.



*I spent three hours moving quietly and slowly up the back side of a rocky island to a cliffside corner. Unfortunately, I was too close, even though using a 450-mm focal length lens, and the camera noise disturbed the cormorant. You can see that it is alert and wary. I carefully backed away from the cliff, and have avoided this kind of situation since.*



*With a group of ecotourists, I spent 20 minutes in a stream-side blind watching several black bears feeding on pink salmon. I took this photo with a 350-mm telephoto lens. After our session, we retreated quietly out the back of the blind and another ecotour group moved in.*