



Wildlife in the Petersville Area

In these magnificent settings, Alaska offers superb wildlife viewing opportunities. Bald eagles, caribou, and grizzly bears, driven away from other lands by the crush of modern development, roam wild and free. Walrus, muskoxen, and polar bears, which simply do not exist elsewhere in the nation, flourish. Species thrive undisturbed in their rich, natural habitats.

Wildlife Viewing Hints—

Choose your season. Many species of wildlife appear only during certain seasons at any given site. They may hibernate in the winter, migrate during the spring, or use special nesting areas during the summer. Check site write-ups and call site managers for detailed information before you go.

Dawn and dusk are the best times to view most wildlife. Areas that are barren of wildlife at midday may have been teeming with various kinds of animals during the early morning. Those who arrive early and stay late see more wildlife.

Learn the feeding habits of your quarry. Many shorebirds, marine birds, and waterfowl follow the tides in their daily feeding cycle. Other wildlife, including bears, spend large amounts of time during the summer near salmon streams and berry patches. Knowing the feeding habits of animals will help you to find them.

Use binoculars, a zoom lens, or a spotting scope. These tools will open a new world of wildlife viewing. For instance, with a 20-power spotting scope mounted on a tripod, it is possible to watch the activity of a mountain goat standing 1.5 miles away.

Move slowly and quietly. The best thing you can do to improve your chances of seeing wildlife is to slow down and

stop periodically. Animals often disappear as you arrive, but may return shortly if you are quiet enough. Use your ears to locate birds. Use your peripheral vision to spot movements in trees, thick brush, and water.

Fade into the woodwork. Wear natural colors and unscented lotions. Hide behind vegetation or boulders. Relax your muscles and avoid staring; animals can easily detect tension and may interpret a direct stare as a threat.

Look for animal sign. Tracks in the mud or snow, unusual scents, vegetation that has been recently browsed, and scat are all clues that wildlife has been in the area. Look for these clues as a way to find animals or appreciate them when they're out of sight.



Use field guides. Many good field guides are available to help identify mammals, birds, fish, and other fauna and flora. Knowing what you're looking at greatly enhances your viewing pleasure.

Ask an expert. Some viewing areas have on-site staff. Don't be afraid to ask for advice. It can often make the difference between a disappointing visit and one you will remember forever.

Be patient. Allow yourself enough time in the field. Even in Alaska, where wildlife is abundant, it can take years, if not a lifetime, to see all the species we speak of here.

Wildlife Viewing Ethics—

Give wildlife plenty of space. Binoculars, a telephoto zoom lens, and spotting scopes allow you to view wildlife without getting too close. Approach wildlife slowly, quietly, and indirectly. Always give animals an avenue for retreat.

Try to view animals without changing their behavior. Avoid using calls or devices that attract wildlife. Resist the temptation to throw rocks to see a flock fly. Remember, harassing wildlife is illegal.

Be respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries, and calving grounds. Well-meaning but intrusive visitors may cause parents to flee, leaving young vulnerable to the elements or predators. Stay on designated trails whenever possible.

Leave "orphaned" or sick animals alone. Young animals that



appear alone usually have parents waiting nearby.

Restrain pets or leave them at home. They may startle, chase, or even kill wildlife.

Let animals eat their natural foods. Sharing your sandwich may get animals hooked on handouts; it may even harm their digestive systems. These animals may eventually lose their fear of cars, campers, or even poachers.

Learn to recognize signs of alarm. These are sometimes subtle. Leave if an animal displays them.

