

6. Respect Wildlife



In the rest of our country, wildlife occurs in pockets of habitat surrounded by civilization. In Coastal Alaska wildlife habitat surrounds pockets of civilization. As use of our public land grows and the pressure of civilization increases, it is incumbent upon us not to stress wildlife but to honor its wildness.

- Learn the behavior of wildlife you regularly observe and recognize signs of disturbance.
- Read [responsible marine wildlife viewing](http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/seasandcoasts/issues/ak-seas-and-coasts-0306.pdf) to learn ethical viewing practices for marine mammals, sea birds and other common Alaskan coastal creatures. (Link: <http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/seasandcoasts/issues/ak-seas-and-coasts-0306.pdf>)
- Contact local USFS staff to learn about local wildlife concerns, such as food-conditioned animals, sensitive times and areas, and hunting seasons.

Outfitters/Guides and group leaders should discuss ethical wildlife viewing with their clients/group before the trip in order to foster wonderment and to avoid frustration during wildlife encounters.

- Strive to conduct yourselves such that animals do not register your presence or alter their behavior.
- Educate clients and companions to observe/photograph animals in the context of their environment and not to seek the closest possible approach.
- Move slowly and quietly in proximity to wildlife unless you need to make your presence known in bear country.
- Learn the status of different species to educate clients/companions and build respect for the animals' well-being.
- Invest in telephoto lenses, high-powered binoculars or spotting scopes to allow clients/companions to experience wildlife without disturbance.
- When traveling through areas with wildlife, especially via motorized transport such as snowmobiles or zodiac rafts, travel in a close group instead of spreading out.
- Appreciate the greater context in which animals may be pressured by groups beyond your own, day after day.



The near endless capacity of the digital camera allows people to take shot after shot while closing in on wildlife for the best possible photo.

- Think beyond yourself when photographing wildlife and consciously strive not to disturb animals.
- Do not let clients/companions/other outfitters/guides pressure you into forsaking your ethics in order to press animals.
- Understand that when an animal changes behavior as a result of our presence, we are too close.
- Never shout or make noise to get an animal's attention for a photo.
- Educate others who put their photos above the animal's well-being.
- Invest in a telephoto to avoid disturbing animals.

The relationship of children to the natural world is influenced by adult behavior.

- Teach children not to approach, feed, yell at or harass wild animals.
- Share in wonderment and respect for all creatures great and small.
- Be mindful that some species' future survival will depend on the ethics and appreciation learned by today's children.

Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

- Sensitive times and places include those of nesting, denning, mating, nursing, wintering, molting and feeding.
- Avoid streams when salmon are running to keep from encountering bears or displacing other animals that feed on the fish.
- Recognize that many birds nest on the ground in the alpine, near glaciers, along the shore and in flood plains – retreat if local birds show signs of distress.
- Observe harbor seal and Stellar sea lion haul outs from afar rather than up-close.

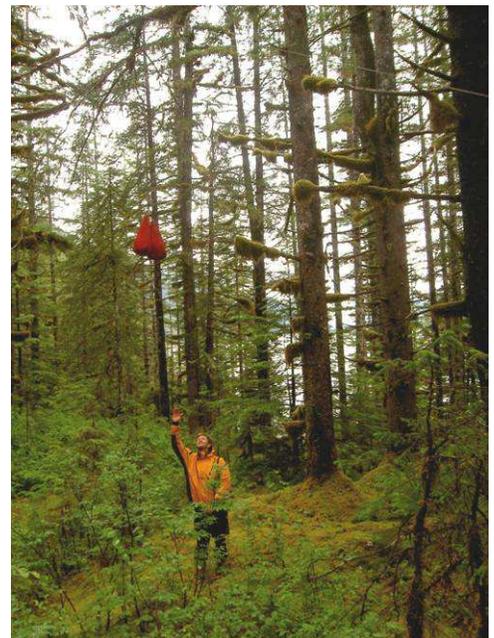


Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

- Never feed animals.
- Recognize that all kinds of animals can become food-conditioned, such as jays, rodents, ravens, deer, coyotes and bear.

Ensure that everyone in your party knows the proper outdoor ethics for recreating in bear country.

- Inquire with local USFS Staff as to the best means for securing food, trash and other attractants during your trip.
- Ensure that everyone in your group recognizes what needs to be secured from bears (food, food scraps, trash, toiletries, feminine hygiene products, bug repellent, cook kits, etc...)
- Establish kitchen areas 100 yards or more from your tent sites.



- Keep clean camps and be extra meticulous in picking up food scraps and straining gray water.
- Never take attractants into your tents!
- Have a plan for what you will do in case of a bear encounter in camp and in transit.
- Lack of visibility/surprise is a consistent key factor in bear attacks.

Extend respect and non-disturbance to all animals, not just mega-charismatic ones.

- Sea birds, including [species in decline](#), are often disturbed by kayakers, boaters and hikers. (Link: <http://ak.audubon.org/pdfs/WatchList2005.pdf>)
- Use brigade lines to pass gear up and down the beach to avoid multiple trips trampling intertidal life.
- See [responsible marine wildlife viewing](#) for guidelines on responsible tidepooling. (Link: <http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/seasandcoasts/issues/ak-seas-and-coasts-0306.pdf>)



Dogs disturb wildlife and impact the experience of other visitors, even on-leash. Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

- The scent, sound, urine, feces and overall presence of dogs affect other animals, whether or not you register the impacts.
- Dogs are often more protective of their owners in unfamiliar areas and may react more aggressively toward other visitors.
- Dog feces displace some animals, attract others and degrade other visitor's experience – clean up after your pet.