



Tips for Wildlife Viewers

■ Be Considerate

Respect private property and other viewer's need for space. Keep pets under control, they may otherwise chase or injure wildlife.

Keep the area clean! Take your garbage out with you. If others haven't, take it out too.

REPORT any abuse of the environment and its wildlife to the nearest conservation officer. Record vehicle license numbers if you are able.

■ Be Careful

Wild animals may be dangerous if they feel threatened or have young. ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. If you find a wild young animal leave it, the mother is nearby!

■ Respect Wildlife and their Habitat

Stress is harmful to animals. Keep your distance. Respect their den sites and nesting areas.

Nesting birds are very sensitive to disturbances. When they are flushed from their nests the eggs or young are unprotected. Birds that appear injured are not always hurt. The Sandpiper, found mostly around ponds, acts injured to draw attention away from its nest. Some birds molt (lose their flight feathers) after nesting. They must grow new feathers before they can fly. Roosting and hibernating bats are very sensitive to being disturbed.

GRASSLANDS are fragile. Long lasting damage occurs when they are driven on. Drive only on designated roads.

■ Access and Road Conditions

Highway 20 is a paved highway. Farwell Canyon is a good gravel Forestry road. Drive carefully, as logging trucks travel this road and the switchbacks are many. Junction road, closed from December 1 to March 31, is a rough road best suited to a 4 wheel drive. When wet it is very slippery.

Cover: California Bighorn Sheep Ram
(Photo: Stephen Walker ©)



Rubber Boa

(photo: G. Roberts)



A Viewing Guide

Time: of year, check the **Seasonal Viewing Chart** of day, animals are most active in morning and evening.

Weather: When a wind is blowing, your scent is carried to animals down wind of you. View into the wind. Strong winds will drive animals to shelter. **Snow, dust and mud** are good for seeing fresh tracks.

Clues: As well as tracks, animals leaving droppings and food stores. **Black Bears** will claw aspen trees, bend and break down berry bushes, rip bark off stumps and logs. **Coyotes** dig dens and scratch up patches of ground around where they feed. **Squirrels** leave "shuckings" on tree stumps from such things as rose hips and cones. When rubbing the velvet off their antlers in late summer, **deer** scrape the bark off smaller aspen and willows. In winter, male deer shed their antlers. **Cougar** and **lynx** bury their food in large piles of twigs and brush. **Bighorn Sheep** will often graze close to draws and ravines.

Further Information

Scout Island Nature Centre in Williams Lake, has additional information and lists on the areas wildlife and much more. Drop by or call 398-8532.



British Columbia Wildlife Watch is the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks program designed to promote viewing opportunities within British Columbia. The protection of wildlife and their habitat and a positive, safe experience for the viewer are the primary objectives of this program. Many local communities, other agencies and public conservation groups are involved. For more information, contact the B.C. Environment office in Williams Lake at (604) 398-4530.



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Wildlife Viewing

in the Chilcotin Grasslands



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Wildlife Viewing in the Chilcotin Grasslands

Spectacular scenery and abundant wildlife combine for a world-class wildlife viewing opportunity! The rolling grasslands of the Chilcotin Plateau are the northernmost in British Columbia. With sage-covered steppes ending in rugged cliffs and steep canyon brakes along the Fraser and Chilcotin rivers, these grassland areas are ideal seasonal and year-round habitat for many species of birds, reptiles and mammals.

The Canyonlands

The **Chilcotin** – just 20 minutes west of **Williams Lake** on Highway 20. At **Sheep Creek Bridge**, view the spectacular Fraser River canyon. **Lava flows** lying under the surface of the **Chilcotin Plateau** are exposed along the canyon walls. Gouged out through time and erosion, the steep ragged cliffs of lava rock, limestone and clay (**glacial till**) tower over the churning rapids of the Fraser. In wider locations the river meanders past fine **silt** beaches left by **glacial lakes**. To these shores come the California Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Coyote, Fox, Black Bear, and Cougar in need of water.

In the fall on the steep banks below the Sheep Creek bridge, the **Tsilhqot'in** (Chilcotins) fish with long-handled dip nets as their ancestors before them did. The **salmon** are on their way to spawning grounds further north. Down river from here, the Fraser makes its way through canyons created from **volcanic** rock. Simon Fraser, passing through in June of 1808, wrote "The river here ... is turbulent, noisy and awful to behold." Soaring above these canyons, the **Bald** and **Golden Eagles** hunt, nesting in the rock ledges above.

From Sheep Creek Bridge the highway winds its way steeply up to the **Chilcotin Plateau**. Watch for small bands of **California Bighorn Rams** that roam these brakes. **Mule Deer** also use the Douglas-fir forests in winter. In spring, watch them enjoying the first blades of grass on southern slopes and in fields.

High rock and **limestone** cliffs in the area provide shelter for birds such as **White-throated Swifts**, **Rock Wren**, and **Rosy Finches**. **Bats** roost in the crevices on hot, summer days. In the evenings, some feed on moths in the forests, others hunt insects over the sagebrush down by the rivers. In winter, the bats **hibernate** in the limestone cliffs along the Fraser. These boulder-strewn slopes are also safe sites for cougar dens.

The Grasslands

Scattered over the grasslands are many rocks and depressions left by **glaciers**. These depressions, now fed by streams, form the lakes and marshes that dot this plateau, making it the most productive waterfowl region in British Columbia. An estimated 21 species breed here, one of the most diverse areas for waterfowl in Canada. **Becher's Prairie**, part of this area, is also sometimes referred to as the **Aspen Parkland** of British Columbia.



Farwell Canyon
(photo: M. Evans)



Tundra Swans
(photo: Ducks Unlimited)

Migrating **Tundra (Whistler) Swan**, **American White Pelican** and **Canada Geese** stop on their way to nesting spots beyond. **Long-billed Curlew**, a shore bird that spends winters as far south as the Bahamas, breeds and nests here in the flat, open grasslands. **Coyotes** den in burrowed holes and rock caverns. They roam the fields, often preying on the birds and **Snowshoe Hares** that abound here.

Over the grasslands soar **Rough-legged Hawks** and **Great Horned Owls**. These birds of prey search the ground for small rodents and are often seen perched on fence posts. **Meadow Larks** also use these fences as singing posts. **Bluebirds** nest in the boxes located on fences along the highway.

The Cariboo Gold Rush brought many people through this area. The lush, natural **bluebunch wheatgrass** was good feed for cattle and horses. Ranching and the cowboy way of life can still be found in such places as the **Deer Park Ranch** that runs a large cattle operation in the area. The grasslands were also prime range for California Bighorn Sheep and Mule Deer. The **Deer Park Wildlife Reserve** protects some of this range.

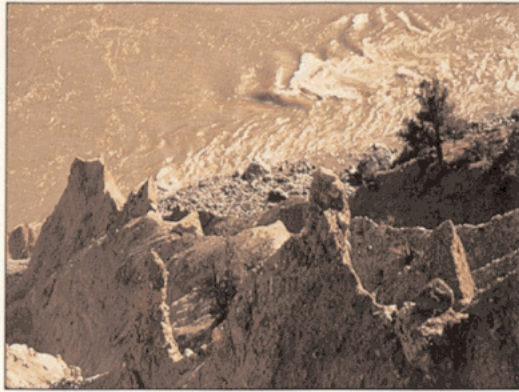
Just East of Riske Creek live the **Toosey** people. The ancestors of these **Tsilhqot'in** natives hunted sheep ("sasyan") on the grassy steppes and fished the river canyons for centuries before white settlement. Their winter homes called "**kekuli**" or pit houses, were located along the Fraser and Chilcotin Rivers. The **kekuli** holes still remain in the area.

Farwell Canyon – Breathtaking!

To reach Farwell Canyon turn south just east of the Riske Creek store. A good gravel road winds down the sage-covered benches to the Chilcotin River. Lying in the rain shadow of the **Coastal Mountains**, the canyons of this area are subject to intensely hot summers, cold dry winters and high winds. The **badlands**, as they are sometimes called, are the home of **sagebrush** and **rabbit brush**. The hot, dry nature of the canyonland is perfect for the small **prickly pear cactus**. **WATCH WHERE YOU SIT!** **California Bighorn Sheep** range the steep, rugged slopes. The sure footed sheep and Mule Deer use the ravines as escape routes from danger. They travel freely up and down them to the river banks.

Crossing the Chilcotin river, look under the bridge for **fish ladders**. In the summer, salmon use these ladders to help them through the churning waters and battering rocks. Watch for natives skillfully fishing here as they have traditionally done for centuries.

From the south side of the Chilcotin River, view the steep clay and limestone cliffs, or **hoodoos**, towering above you. Look for the active **sand dune** at the top of the cliffs that changes form with the wind currents.



Hoodoos, Fraser River
(photo: M. Evans)

Prickly Pear Cactus
(photo: T. Hall)



Viewing Chart



California Bighorn Rams
(photo: M. Evans)

Species Highlights

Viewing Season

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
California Bighorn Sheep Lambing (L) Rut (R)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
California Bighorn Sheep				L	L					R		
Mule Deer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Black Bear				●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Snowshoe Hare	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, and Great Horned Owl	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rough-legged Hawk			●	●						●		
Long-billed Curlew Breeding (B) Nesting (N)				B	N	N						
White-throated Swift, Bluebirds, Songbirds				●	●	●	●	●				
Grouse – Sharptailed, Blue, Ruffed	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Waterfowl – Eared Grebe, Barrows Goldeneye				●	●	●	●					
Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, American White Pelican				●	●				●			
Wildflowers in Bloom – Arrowleaf Balsam Root					●	●						
– Big Sagebrush									●	●		
– Prickly Pear Cactus					●	●						
Bats (at dusk)						●	●					
Sockeye Salmon (Chilcotin and Fraser Rivers)							●	●				

California Bighorn Sheep Range

The Junction Wildlife Management Area (JWMA) is home to 500+ **California Bighorn sheep**. Good **management** of the 5300+ hectares of the JWMA is extremely important. Since 1954, the very healthy sheep found here have been used in an extensive **transplant** program. After almost 40 years of transplants from the JWMA herds, most historic ranges again have wild sheep. Today, there are over 9,000 California Bighorns in North America, up from only 2,000 present in the early 1900's.

Fall is the time of the **rut**. Bighorn rams bang heads at combined speeds of 80 or more km per hour. The horns and skull (having 2 layers of bone) absorb as many as **40 blows** a day during the rut! The strongest ram wins the right to breed the ewes.

Over 40 species of **butterflies** are found in the JWMA area. Large, dead Douglas-fir trees, or snags, are home for the **Lewis Woodpecker** and other cavity-nesting birds. **Black Bear** may be seen rooting for insects in rotting logs, or feasting on rose hips and berries in the aspen groves. Rarely seen but present in the JWMA are **Rubber Boas**. These gentle snakes come out after dark and enjoy the warm road. **DRIVE CAREFULLY.**



Cougar
(photo: L. Elzinga)



Coyote
(photo: Ministry of Forests)



Townsend Big-eared Bat
(photo: A. Roberts)



Ruffed Grouse
(photo: Ducks Unlimited)



Long-billed Curlew
(photo: L. Ramsay)



Balsam Root
(photo: J. Koster)



Montane Vole
(photo: G. Roberts)

Ring-necked Duck
(photo: Ducks Unlimited)

