



## Wildlife Watch Program

The "Wildlife Watch" program promotes 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 other agencies, public conservation groups and local communities are involved in the program. For more information, contact the BC Environment office in Nelson at (604) 354-6333



## Access

Highway 3A provides access from Nelson to Balfour and across the Harrop ferry to Proctor. Kokanee Creek road provides seasonal access to Kokanee Glacier Park.

Public boat launches at Nelson, Kokanee Creek and Balfour give access to the West Arm of Kootenay lake.



## Facilities

Tourist facilities are found along Highway 3A and in Nelson and Balfour. Additional information on wildlife viewing may be obtained at the West Kootenay Visitor Centre in Kokanee Creek Provincial Park from June to September. Phone (604) 825-4723



## Conservation Ethics

Wildlife viewing demands courtesy and common sense. For the well being of the wildlife and habitats of the West Arm, please consider the following:

### Be Considerate of Wildlife

Use binoculars to view wildlife from a distance rather than approaching them too closely.

### Be Considerate of Habitat

Plants and the landscape are important parts of wildlife habitat. Please do not damage or remove them and stay on designated trails or roads.

### Be Considerate of Other People

Respect private property and the wildlife viewing activities of others.

### Control Pets

Pets can harm wildlife and hinder viewing opportunities.

### Do Not Approach Baby Animals

Baby animals are rarely "abandoned" or lost. The mother is usually at a safe distance waiting for you to leave.

Blue Heron &  
Cover Photo—D. Green



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BC  
Environment

# Wildlife Viewing



in the  
West Arm of  
Kootenay Lake



British Columbia  
Wildlife Watch



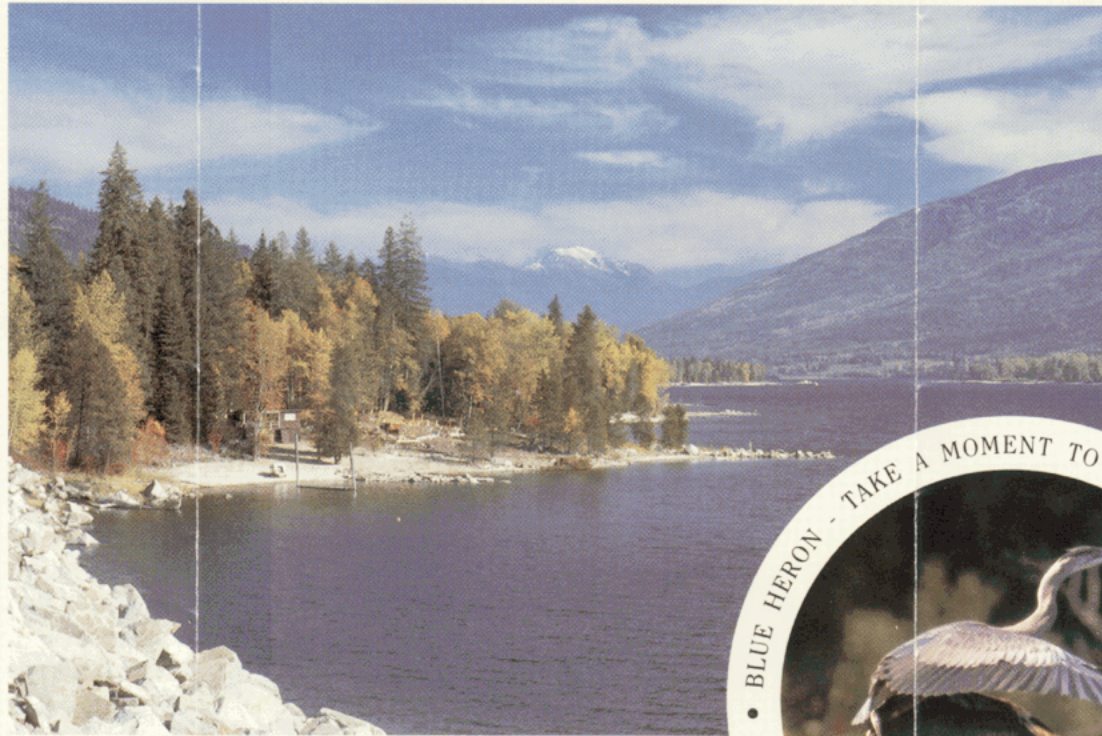
# Wildlife Viewing in the West Arm of Kootenay Lake

The West Arm Wildlife Viewing area stretches from Nelson north to Balfour and encompasses the entire valley from lake level to mountain peaks. The combination of lake, shoreline and forested mountains provides a rich diversity of habitats for wildlife. Osprey find plenty of nesting areas on cottonwood trees and old pilings along the lake. They feast on fish, particularly kokanee that spawn in the creeks during the fall. South facing slopes above Highway 3A provide winter habitat for deer while the shallow bays of the Arm are used as feeding and nesting areas by waterfowl and shorebirds. Dense evergreen forests, open deciduous woods and shoreline willow thickets provide a variety of habitats for many songbirds and small mammals.

Seeing animals in their natural environment is a special experience. Whether you are a resident or a visitor of this area, take a moment to watch and observe the wildlife of the West Arm.

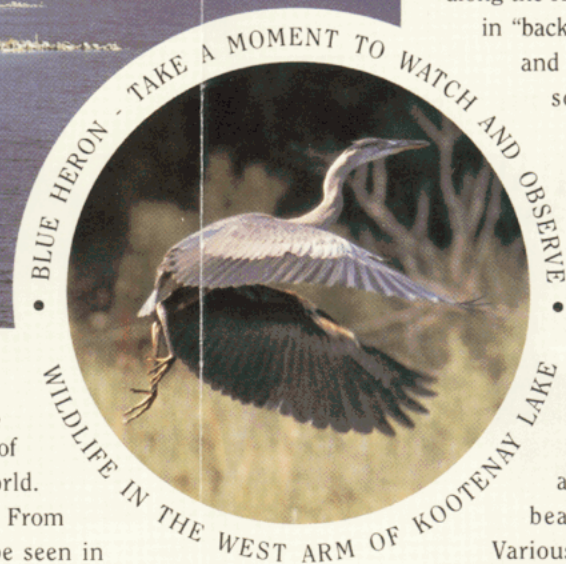
## Wildlife Highlights

**Osprey** . . . are fish-eating hawks. They return from their southern wintering grounds in early April and can often be seen soaring above the lake or perched on a tree near the shore. To catch fish, they make dramatic dives into the water, landing feet first to seize their prey. Osprey



KOOTENAY LAKE—Sphinx Mountain

build large conspicuous stick nests atop trees, poles or pilings. The West Arm is home to one of the most dense osprey populations in the world. **Kokanee** . . . are freshwater sockeye salmon. From late August through September, they can be seen in Harrop Creek, and in the spawning channels at Kokanee and Redfish Creeks. Kokanee are silver coloured while in the lake. In their third year, they turn red with green heads and swim up the creeks to spawn. The kokanee cycle of “spawn and die” creates a banquet for wildlife such as osprey, herons, gulls, ravens and



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occasionally bears. **Waterfowl** . . . can be seen along the entire shore of the West Arm. In winter, species such as widgeon, bufflehead, mallard and coot gather in the bays. Canada geese are common in all seasons and mergansers are often seen in the summer “cruising” the shore with numerous young in tow. **Deer** . . . move down in elevation in winter and may be seen near the highway, along the Harrop road, by the lake or in “backyards”. Both white-tailed and mule deer prefer sunny, south-facing slopes. In summer, they return to higher elevations and are often seen on backcountry trails and roads. **Birds** . . . of many species are found in a wide range of habitat along the West Arm. Sandpipers and killdeer are frequently seen on the beaches or in marshes.

Various sparrows and warblers are found in deciduous thickets while chickadees and woodpeckers are common in the coniferous forests. Contact the local naturalist club or the West Kootenay Visitor Centre in Kokanee Creek Park for more information and a detailed bird checklist.





# Useful Wildlife Viewing Tips

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GREAT HORNED OWL

A successful viewing experience depends upon not only the presence of wildlife, but also on the viewer's ability to seek and observe. The following tips may be helpful. **Choose the right season and time of day.** Before visiting an area, make sure it is the right season for viewing certain species. Then visit at the right time of day - many wildlife species are most active in the evening or early morning. **Be patient and quiet.**

Wild animals are very sensitive to human presence, and are experts at avoiding detection. Move slowly and quietly and try to stay hidden from view. **Be cautious.** Consider all wild animals

as potentially dangerous if approached too closely. Be especially alert and careful when near bears. They are unpredictable and extremely powerful animals. **Be a "detective"** and look for useful clues such as tracks, trails, droppings, nests, sleeping sites or feeding areas. **Field guides and equipment** such as binoculars or spotting scopes are often

essential to locate and identify wildlife species. **Make notes.**

Keep a record of your observations for future comparisons or to follow up with more information. Pass on rare and unusual observations to the BC Environment office in Nelson.



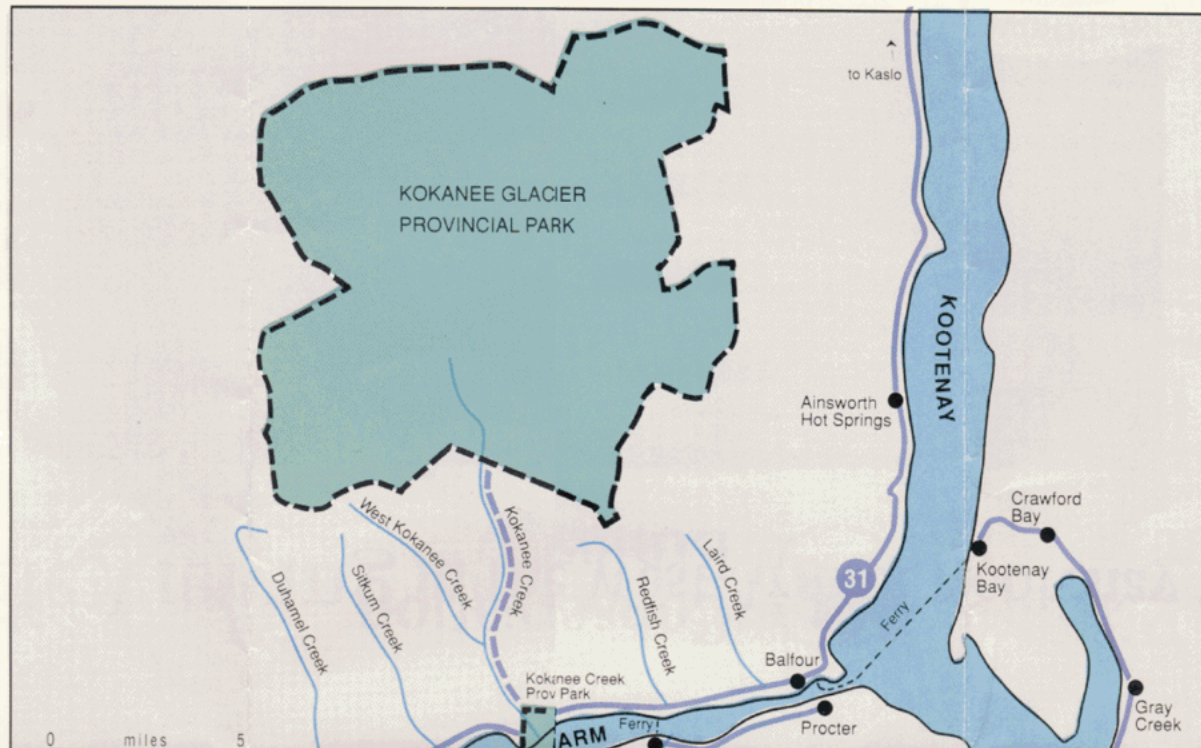
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HEART-LEAF ARNICA

## For Your Safety

Drive carefully along the West arm. Some roads are narrow and congested at places and are often crossed by deer and other animals. Be cautious when boating on the lake. It is subject to sudden high winds and has shallow areas when water levels are low in the spring.



GRIZZLY BEAR

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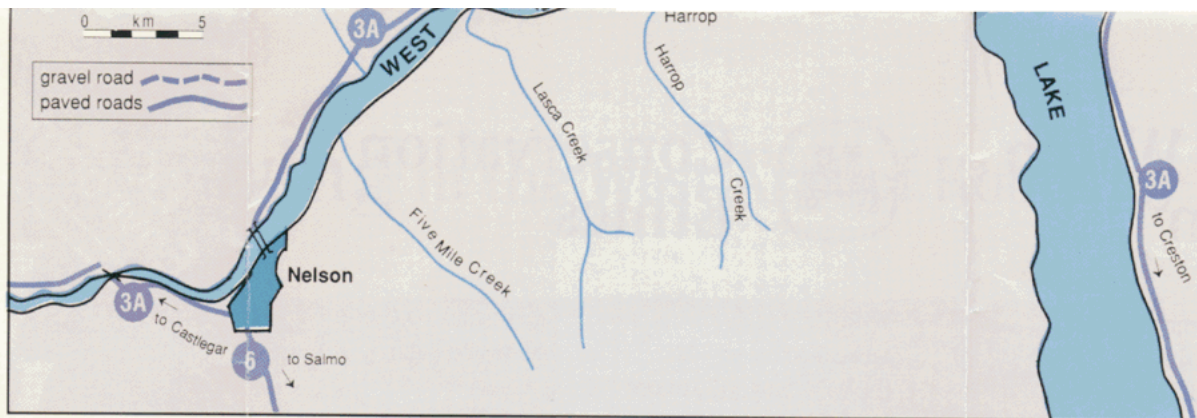
## Less Common Wildlife

**Bald Eagles** are commonly seen in the winter, perched on trees near the shore. **Grizzly Bears** may be sighted in the spring on slide paths across the creek from the Kokanee Creek road. **Hoary Marmots & Pikas** live in the rocky areas of Kokanee Glacier Park and are frequently encountered along the trails. **Beaver** are common residents of the West Arm. Their lodges are often found under docks, wharves and in boathouses. **Coyotes** may occasionally be seen in the fields near Harrop and Procter. **Great Blue Herons** can be seen standing still along the shore or flying gracefully over the lake. Their raucous calls often echo along the West Arm. **Mountain Goats** are occasionally sighted on the high rocky slopes above Gibson Lake in Kokanee Glacier

IMAGING



BUFFLEHEAD



## Viewing Areas in the West Arm

**Kokanee Creek Park** located 19 km east of Nelson on Highway 3A is an excellent place for wildlife viewing. Many nature trails access the forests, beaches, grasslands and the spawning channel. **Kokanee Creek Road** is a 19-km gravel road usually open from June to October. Drive slowly and you may see deer, grouse, black bears and, on the avalanche paths, grizzly bears. The Old Growth trail at 11 km loops through a giant cedar forest. **Kokanee Glacier Park** provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. Hiking trails access the meadows, lakes and peaks. Marmots and pikas are common in rocky areas and grizzly bears are occasionally sighted in meadows or areas of low bush.

During June and July, cutthroat trout spawn in the small creek at the west end of Kokanee Lake.

**Redfish Creek Spawning Channel** has a shady trail that provides good viewing of spawning kokanee. Beaver and great blue herons may be seen near the creek mouth. The **Balfour and Harrop ferry landings** and **Nelson's waterfront** are good places to see waterfowl, shorebirds and osprey.

**Highway 3A** from Nelson to Balfour provides viewing opportunities for osprey in the summer, and deer in late winter. Please be a defensive driver and pull well off to the side if you are going to stop.

The rural **Harrop/Proctor Road** accesses the south side of the West Arm. Spawning kokanee can be observed in Harrop Creek at the bridge and deer are often seen along the road and in fields. Columbian ground squirrels may also be seen in the fields along the road, standing by their burrows, in May and June.



OSPREY



KOKANEE—spawning



Park. **Hulled Grouse** may be seen along roads or in the forests. The low, muffled thumping of the males' mating ritual is often heard in the spring. **Great Horned Owls** in Kokanee Creek Park roost high in old trees of the shaded forest.



HAIRY WOODPECKER



HOARY MARMOT

