



TIPS FOR WILDLIFE VIEWERS

Organized ventures turn out best. Once you've decided where to look for wildlife, you can make the most of viewing opportunities by following these tips.

- ◆ **Check the season.**
Most sites offer wildlife viewing opportunities only at certain times of the year. Before heading out to a site, make sure it's the right season.
- ◆ **Choose viewing times carefully.**
Best times to observe wildlife, other than fish, are usually early morning and early evening. Try exploring a range of time periods.
- ◆ **Use cover or screens to hide from view.**
Hiding behind natural or artificial blinds (even your vehicle) will help you see more wildlife.
- ◆ **Keep silent.**
Noise frightens wildlife away. Sit quietly in one place for an extended period, to observe what happens around you.
- ◆ **Be patient.**
Successful wildlife viewing often requires longer waits and searches than you might expect.
- ◆ **Learn signs, read clues.**
Learning to recognize signs of animal life will help you see more and understand more. Some obvious clues are nests, dens, holes, sleeping areas and droppings.
- ◆ **Use field guides.**
Field guides will help you identify and locate species and their habitat.
- ◆ **Use binoculars or spotting scope.**
Scanning wide areas with binoculars is often essential. Without the magnified view these glasses give, wildlife viewing is severely limited.
- ◆ **Stay safe.**
Animals in their natural habitats are wild and move freely, unlike animals in zoos. All wild mammals are potentially dangerous if approached too closely, especially bears and cow moose with calves. Be careful and keep your distance. Brochures about safety in bear country are available in provincial and national parks and at BC Environment offices.

In southern B.C., watch out particularly for Western Rattlesnakes. Generally non-aggressive, B.C.'s only venomous snake should not be approached. In rattlesnake country, always be careful where you step or put your hands. If bitten, remain calm and go to hospital.



CONSERVATION THROUGH RESPONSIBLE VIEWING

It may seem odd to think that animals can be "watched to death," but overuse of wilderness areas and harassment by humans can harm wildlife. Always follow this code of conservation ethics when viewing wildlife:

- ◆ **Keep all vehicles on designated roads.**
Vehicles that wander off roads can destroy vegetation.
- ◆ **Keep to marked trails.**
Using trails protects plant life and assists animals in adapting to human movement.
- ◆ **Be considerate of wildlife.**
Stress is harmful to animals. Use binoculars to view them from a distance rather than approach them closely. Never chase or flush animals from cover. Always respect their nests and dens.
- ◆ **Be considerate of others.**
Respect the space of others who are viewing wildlife in the same area as you.
- ◆ **Control pets.**
Pets are a hindrance to wildlife viewing. They may chase, injure or kill wild animals. Leave pets at home or keep them under control.
- ◆ **Keep British Columbia clean.**
Leave the environment unchanged by your visit. Place garbage in receptacles, where provided, or take your garbage with you.
- ◆ **Take only the right souvenirs.**
Take home memories and photographs. Leave flowers, plants, rocks, fossils, artifacts, shells and woods as you find them. Never touch or feed wild animals. Baby animals are seldom abandoned or orphaned and it's against the law to take them away.
- ◆ **Report environmental abuse.**
If you see others abusing the environment or bothering animals, report their vehicle license number to local authorities or the nearest conservation officer.

*Thank you.
Your cooperation
makes a difference!*



Front Cover: Yellow-headed Blackbird, Steve Cummings Designer: Raiffi Ritchie Design

Wildlife Viewing

in the
South Okanagan
& Similkameen



British Columbia
Wildlife Watch

BC Environment

The South Okanagan-Similkameen WHERE NORTH MEETS SOUTH

LOSS OF HABITAT—LOSS OF SPECIES

Since the 1860s, urban encroachment, agriculture and ranching have changed native flora in much of the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

Now one of Canada's three most endangered ecosystems, only about 10% of the valley landscape remains in a near-natural state. Only 3% of the Okanagan basin is set aside as parks or ecological reserves.

While all remaining habitat fragments are vulnerable, the valley benches, Canada's tiny heritage of desert-like habitat, are most threatened in the South Okanagan. Diminishing habitat has already forced out a number of species once native to the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

For example, prior to a re-introduction program begun in 1983, the Burrowing Owl had become extremely rare. It is now listed as endangered.

Scarcity of habitat also makes the valley home to 31% of B.C.'s at-risk species. Today there are 22 Okanagan species being considered or designated as threatened or endangered.

B.C. Environment encourages viewing of native flora and fauna. But public appreciation of habitat fragility is crucial for the survival of associated wildlife.

CANADIAN SPECIES FOUND ONLY IN THE OKANAGAN

Pallid Bat

Night Snake

10 species of spiders

14 species of wasps

Unique in Canada, the South Okanagan-Similkameen ecosystem hosts both desert and northern wildlife.

Stretching along the valley bottom and benches, the northern tongue of the Upper Sonoran Desert nurtures southern plants and animals found nowhere else in British Columbia or Canada.

These desert creatures share territory and interrelate with boreal forest dwellers.

The South Okanagan-Similkameen's varied habitats—open water, lush marshes, riparian shrub thickets, meadows, sandy uplands benches, sheer rock cliffs and dry, coniferous forests—support one of the most diverse arrays of terrestrial vertebrates in B.C.

Contrasting habitats and species diversity in unusually close proximity makes the South Okanagan-Similkameen a prime wildlife viewing area.



Pygmy Short-horned Lizard

BC Environment

SPECIES LOST

Short-horned Lizard

Sage Grouse

Sharp-tailed Grouse

White-tailed Jackrabbit



Sage Thrasher

Steve Cummings

SPECIES AT RISK:

The Okanagan's special responsibility to conserve

Tiger Salamander

Leopard Frog

Night Snake

Western Grebe

American White Pelican

Ferruginous Hawk

Peregrine Falcon

Prairie Falcon

Upland Sandpiper

Forster's Tern

Burrowing Owl

Short-eared Owl

White-headed Woodpecker

Sage Thrasher

Yellow-breasted Chat

Brewer's Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrow

Pallid Bat

Southern Red Bat

Northern Long-eared Myotis

Northern Bog Lemming



Burrowing Owl

Al Peatt

Please do not to disturb plants and animals while viewing.



WHAT to SEE ~ WHEN and WHERE

1 HEDLEY~KEREMEOS CLIFFS

Cliffs are an important and relatively secure habitat feature in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Two pull-outs along Highway 3 between Hedley and Keremeos offer some of the province's best opportunities to view Mountain Goats on south-facing cliffs.

Chukar Partridge, California Quail and Yellow-bellied Marmots also inhabit steep slopes beneath the Golden Eagle's watchful eye. From May to September, the area hosts Mountain Bluebirds.

During the winter, scanning along the river often reveals Bald Eagles.

HABITAT: Dry cliffs

WHAT TO SEE: Mountain Goats, Golden Eagle, Chukar Partridge, California Quail, Yellow-bellied Marmot

WHEN TO LOOK: Mountain Goats • Best in Spring and Fall
Golden Eagle, Chukar Partridge, California Quail • Year round
Mountain Bluebirds • May to September
Bald Eagle • Winter



*Mountain Goat
Seeking early green forage—goats are often low and close to the highway in spring.*

2 OKANAGAN FALLS PROVINCIAL PARK

A wetland wonder set in an arid bunchgrass and sagebrush landscape, Okanagan Falls Park hosts a variety of insects, birds and bats.

Songbirds roost in large stands of deciduous trees, while swallows, Nighthawks and 14 species of bats soar over the river, feeding on insects.

The river is home to Beaver, Muskrats, Garter Snakes, and waterfowl.

HABITAT: Open water and riparian thicket

WHAT TO SEE: Songbirds, Cliff and Barn swallows, Nighthawk, Bats, Beaver, Muskrat, Garter Snake, Gadwall, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, American Dipper

WHEN TO LOOK: Bats and Nighthawks • Dusk in Spring, Summer and early Fall
Waterfowl • Year round
Swallows • Spring through Fall

3 VASEUX LAKE • WILDLIFE CENTRE

Diverse habitats close at hand, host a wide variety of wildlife near Vaseux Lake.

Drive carefully along Highway 97. If California Bighorn sheep aren't crossing the pavement, they may be feeding nearby. In the fall rutting season, rams charge and butt their massive horns together on the hillsides.

The marsh, river and lake provide attractive nesting ground for waterfowl and feeding ground for the area's 14 bat species.

Approaching quietly, you may see Beaver and the Western Painted Turtle in the water.

HABITAT: Open water, marshes, riparian thicket, sagebrush, talus slope and rocky cliff

WHAT TO SEE: California Bighorn Sheep, 14 species of bats, Beaver, waterfowl, Canyon Wren, Lazuli Bunting, songbirds, 7 snake species, Western Painted Turtle

SOUTH OKANAGAN WILDLIFE VIEWING SITES



BC Environment



Yellow-breasted Chat

Steve Cummings

4 INKAMEEP PROVINCIAL PARK

One of the best but least known birding sites in the Okanagan, the deciduous trees bordering the water's edge in Inkameep Provincial Park support diverse and abundant species of our feathered friends.

HABITAT: Riparian thicket

WHAT TO SEE: Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lewis' Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Sockeye Salmon

WHEN TO LOOK: Birds • Year round
Salmon • Fall

5 OSOYOOS OXBOWS FISH and WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT RESERVE

The last remnant of diminishing habitats representative of the Okanagan Valley, the Osoyoos Oxbows Fish and Wildlife Management Reserve also hosts what remains of Canada's tiny heritage of desert-like habitat.

An interpretive kiosk on the reserve points the way to a woodland trail, Deadman Lake and a Burrowing Owl re-introduction site.

Due to the fragility of the region's desert-like habitat, please view the arid benchlands from Black Sage Road and the Burrowing Owl site. Walking off of designated trails can damage fragile upland habitat.

HABITAT: Open water, river marshes, riparian thicket, meadows, arid grasslands

WHAT TO SEE: Western Painted Turtle, Canyon Wren, Bobolink, Spadefoot Toad, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great Blue Heron, Beaver

WHEN TO LOOK: Bobolink, Yellow-headed Blackbird, songbirds • Spring and Summer
Great Blue Heron, waterfowl • Year round
Shorebirds, Osprey • Spring through Fall
Bats • Dusk in Spring, Summer and Fall
Western Painted Turtle • Spring through Fall
Beaver • Dusk and dawn, Spring through Fall
Sockeye and Kokanee • mid-October–November

WHEN TO LOOK: California Bighorn Sheep • Year round—especially
Fall rutting season and May lambing season
Bats • Dusk in Spring, Summer and early Fall
Beaver • Dusk and dawn, Spring to fall
Waterfowl • Year round
Canyon Wren • Year round
Lazuli Bunting • Summer
Songbirds • Spring through Fall
Western Painted Turtle • Spring through Fall
Swans • Fall through Spring

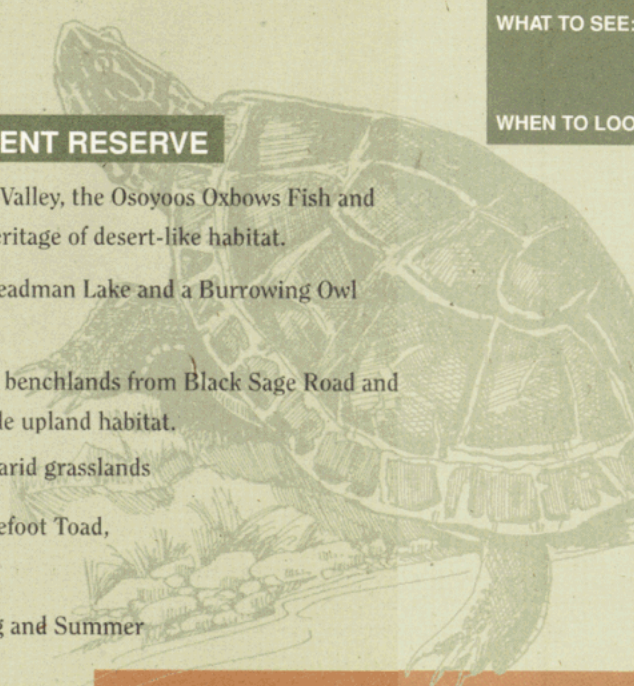
6 HAYNES POINT PROVINCIAL PARK

On a narrow spit of land extending into Osoyoos Lake, Haynes Point Provincial Park harbors numerous bird species.

HABITAT: Open water, marsh, riparian thicket, dryland

WHAT TO SEE: Blackbirds, waterfowl, songbirds, Western Painted Turtle

WHEN TO LOOK: Best viewing • Spring through Fall



Tiger Salamander

BC Environment

Beyond these sites, wildlife can be spotted throughout the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Keep your eyes open for California Bighorn Sheep along the highway between Oliver and Vaseux Lake. Deer frequent hillsides between Summerland and Peachland. Green spaces within urban areas such as Penticton shelter Canada Geese.