

HOW TO FIND AND VIEW WILDLIFE



Tips from ODFW biologists

Getting Close To Wildlife

Quiet patience is the key for appreciating wildlife. Sitting or walking slowly will allow an experience that hurried observations often miss.

For your safety and the safety of wildlife, observe animals from a safe distance. Get close by using binoculars, a spotting scope or a camera with a telephoto lens. Move slowly and casually, not directly at wildlife. Allow animals to keep you in view; do not surprise them. Watch or photograph animals without knowingly disturbing, chasing, or repeatedly flushing the animal in alarm.

Study Natural History

You can increase your chances of finding and successfully identifying animals by studying field guides and natural history books. Get to know the habitat, appearance, and behavior of your quarry. It will help you target the right habitat and to distinguish similar-looking species. Knowing what is expected at a site will help you determine if you might be seeing something unusual. Understanding animal behavior can help you find animals. For example, the frenzied alarm-calls of blackbirds or jays could reveal an owl hidden nearby.

Learn from Other People

The best way to learn animal identification is from other people. It is also fun. Find out about local opportunities for nature walks. Join a local birding group. If you don't know any wildlife viewers, get a book about Oregon's wildlife.

Hide in a Blind

Some parks, wildlife refuges and wildlife viewing areas have viewing blinds. Blinds allow you to watch wildlife without disturbing them. Animals are more likely to get close and behave normally if they don't sense that you are there.

Sometimes, your vehicle can be an effective blind. Some wildlife are not alarmed by an automobile, as long as the automobile is parked or moving slowly on an established road.

Study Tracks and Other Animal Sign

Some animals are hard to see and are best observed through tracks and other sign. Look for tracks, scats, scrapes, burrows, beds, chewed vegetation and cavities. A field guide can help you identify those signs. Be a detective and figure out who the animals were, where they were going, and what they were doing.

Keep a Journal or Sketchbook

Record your observations. Keeping a journal or sketchbook helps you slow down and observe. It can also help you notice patterns. Some information you might want to jot down include date, location, time, weather, species, habitat, markings, and behavior.

Follow Wildlife Viewing Ethics and Etiquette

1. Be careful not to disturb wildlife and use their behavior to tell you if you are too close. You probably are too close if animals are watching you alertly, if they start moving nervously, or if they are “jumpy” when you move or make a noise. If you see these signs, sit quietly or move slowly away until their behavior changes.
2. Keep a respectful distance from nests and young animals. This is particularly important in poor weather. Also, give adults with young extra space; they can be protective
3. Never chase or harass wildlife; harassment of wildlife is unlawful. Do not knowingly flush wildlife to see them better. Don't encourage resting animals to “do something” for you or your camera.
4. Leave pets at home. At best they hinder wildlife watching; at worst they can chase, injure or kill wildlife.
5. Do not feed wild mammals. Human food is not healthy for them. Also, feeding mammals can make them lose fear of people, putting them at risk and increasing conflicts like garbage-raiding.
6. Respect other people. Get prior permission to enter private or posted property. Be considerate of others around you
7. Protect the natural surroundings. Stay on existing roads, trails, or pathways to protect fragile ground cover. Leave the area as you found it (including gates). Know and observe the laws, rules, and regulations governing the site.
8. Avoid animals that behave strangely or aggressively. They may be ill.
9. Be extra careful if you are in a group of people. Remember that group actions have magnified effects. Inform others in your group about these guidelines and monitor so all behave responsibly.
10. Don't tolerate unethical viewing behavior. If you witness inconsiderate or harmful viewing behaviors, assess the situation and intervene if prudent. Otherwise, document it in detail and promptly notify appropriate authorities.

Become a fan of Oregon Wildlife Viewing on Facebook and learn about Oregon's native species—one species at a time.



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