

Alaska Wildlife Guide

Your Complete Guide to Alaska's Incredible Wildlife & Where to See It



One of the biggest reasons travelers visit Alaska is the opportunity to see wildlife in its natural habitat. Few places on Earth offer the chance to watch humpback whales breach beside your cruise ship, see brown bears fishing for salmon, spot a moose grazing in the wilderness, or hear the call of a bald eagle soaring overhead.

Every day in Alaska is different, and that's part of the excitement. You never know what you might see around the next bend, from the deck of your ship, or during a shore excursion.

This guide will help you discover the incredible animals that call Alaska home, where to find them, and the best times to see them.

Marine Wildlife



The waters surrounding Alaska are filled with marine life.

Humpback Whales

One of Alaska's biggest attractions.

Best places to see them:

- Juneau
- Icy Strait Point
- Glacier Bay
- Sitka

Best months:

- June through September

Watching a humpback whale breach is an unforgettable experience.

Orcas (Killer Whales)

Although less common than humpbacks, orcas are regularly spotted.

Best locations:

- Kenai Fjords
 - Resurrection Bay
 - Inside Passage
 - Glacier Bay
-

Sea Otters

Perhaps Alaska's cutest residents.

Often seen:

- Floating on their backs
- Holding hands while sleeping
- Cracking shellfish with rocks

Best locations:

- Seward
 - Sitka
 - Glacier Bay
-

Harbor Seals

Frequently seen resting on floating ice near glaciers.

Best viewing locations:

- Glacier Bay
 - Endicott Arm
 - Hubbard Glacier
-

Bears



Alaska is famous for its bears.

Brown Bears

Best opportunities:

- Bear viewing excursions
- Katmai National Park
- Pack Creek
- Admiralty Island

During salmon season, bears are often seen fishing in rivers.

Black Bears

Commonly spotted near:

- Juneau
- Ketchikan
- Sitka
- Skagway

Although smaller than brown bears, they are still powerful wild animals.

Moose



Moose are Alaska's largest land mammals.

Best places to see them:

- Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks
- Talkeetna

They often appear surprisingly close to roads and communities.

Remember—they may look calm, but they are wild animals and should always be given plenty of space.

Birds



Bald Eagles

One of Alaska's most recognizable animals.

Best locations:

- Ketchikan
- Haines
- Juneau

You'll likely see dozens during your trip.

Puffins

These colorful seabirds nest along coastal cliffs.

Best locations:

- Kenai Fjords
 - Resurrection Bay
 - Gulf of Alaska
-

Other Birds

You may also spot:

- Ravens
- Trumpeter Swans
- Sandhill Cranes
- Ospreys
- Gulls
- Cormorants

Mountain Wildlife



While traveling inland, watch for:

Mountain Goats

Often seen high on rocky cliffs near:

- Skagway
- Glacier Bay
- Seward

Dall Sheep

Most common in:

- Denali National Park
- Interior Alaska

Recognizable by their bright white coats and curled horns.

Caribou

Often found roaming Alaska's tundra.

Most commonly seen in:

- Denali
 - Arctic regions
 - Interior Alaska
-

Salmon



Salmon are the lifeblood of Alaska's ecosystem.

The annual salmon runs attract:

- Bears
- Eagles
- Seals
- Wolves
- Fishermen

Peak salmon season varies by species but generally occurs between June and September.

Best Wildlife Viewing Destinations

Glacier Bay National Park

Excellent for:

- Whales
- Sea otters
- Harbor seals

- Bald eagles
 - Mountain goats
-

Icy Strait Point

One of the best ports for:

- Humpback whales
 - Brown bears
 - Bald eagles
-

Denali National Park

Ideal for spotting:

- Moose
 - Bears
 - Caribou
 - Dall sheep
 - Wolves (rare)
-

Juneau

Famous for:

- Whale watching
 - Bald eagles
 - Black bears
-

Sitka

Known for:

- Sea otters
 - Eagles
 - Whales
 - Marine wildlife
-

Best Time for Wildlife

Animal	Best Time
Humpback Whales	May – September
Orcas	May – August
Brown Bears	July – September

Animal	Best Time
Black Bears	May – September
Moose	All summer
Bald Eagles	All season
Salmon Runs	June – September
Puffins	May – August



Wildlife Photography Tips

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Zoom lens
- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Extra memory cards
- ✓ Lens cloth

Keep your camera ready—wildlife often appears without warning.



Wildlife Safety

Remember:

- Never feed wildlife.
- Stay a safe distance away.
- Follow your guide's instructions.
- Never approach bears or moose.
- Keep food secured during land adventures.
- Respect the animals and their habitat.

You're visiting their home.



Premium Travel Group Tip

If wildlife is one of your main reasons for visiting Alaska, consider booking at least one dedicated wildlife excursion. While you may spot whales from the ship or eagles from shore, guided tours dramatically increase your chances of seeing bears, whales, sea otters, and other incredible animals up close.

Morning excursions often provide calmer water and excellent viewing conditions, while late summer offers some of the best opportunities to watch bears during the salmon runs.



Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Vacation Planning Guide
- Alaska Packing Guide
- Best Time to Visit Alaska
- Alaska Cruise vs. CruiseTour Guide
- Glacier Viewing Guide
- Denali National Park Guide
- Alaska Railroad Guide
- Juneau Cruise Port Guide
- Ketchikan Cruise Port Guide
- Skagway Cruise Port Guide
- Sitka Cruise Port Guide
- Icy Strait Point Cruise Port Guide



Why Alaska is a Wildlife Lover's Paradise

Few places on Earth offer the opportunity to experience wildlife on the scale that Alaska does. From breaching whales and soaring eagles to fishing bears and grazing moose, every day brings the possibility of an unforgettable encounter. Whether you're watching from the deck of a cruise ship, riding a scenic train, or hiking through a national park, Alaska reminds us how incredible the natural world truly is.



Joe's Logbook

One of my favorite things about Alaska is that you never know when the next wildlife encounter will happen. I've learned that the best advice is simple: **always keep your eyes open.**

I've seen people walk inside for lunch just moments before a humpback whale surfaced next to the ship or an eagle flew overhead. Alaska rewards those who slow down and pay attention to their surroundings.

If wildlife is high on your bucket list, bring a good pair of binoculars and spend as much time on deck as you can while cruising through scenic areas. Even if you book an incredible whale watching or bear viewing excursion, some of the most memorable sightings happen when you least expect them.

One final reminder: these animals are wild, and that's what makes seeing them so special. Respect their space, follow your guides' instructions, and enjoy the privilege of observing them in one of the last truly wild places on Earth.