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Wildlife Viewing Ethics

It's a tremendous privilege to observe wild animals in their natural environment. In return for that privilege, it's your responsibility to be respectful of both wildlife and habitats.

- **Give wildlife plenty of space.** Binoculars and spotting scopes allow you to view wildlife without getting too close. Approach animals slowly, quietly, and indirectly. Always give them an avenue for retreat, and never chase an animal.
- **Learn to recognize signs of alarm.** These are sometimes subtle, and they vary between species, but may include increased movements such as agitated flapping or pacing, heightened muscle tension, staring, or frequent vocalizations. If you sense that an animal is disturbed by your presence, back off. If it still does not resume its normal behaviors, leave it alone.
- **Be respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries, and calving grounds.** Well-meaning but intrusive visitors may cause parents to flee, leaving young vulnerable to the elements or to predators. Stay on designated trails whenever possible.
- **Leave "orphaned" or sick animals alone.** Young animals that appear alone usually have parents waiting nearby.
- **Restrain pets or leave them at home.** They may startle, chase, or even kill wildlife.
- **Let animals eat their natural foods.** Sharing your sandwich may get animals hooked on handouts; it may even harm their digestive systems. Feeding bears, moose, and some other wildlife is illegal in Alaska except under terms of a permit issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
- **Tread lightly.** If you choose to go off-trail, remember that you are a guest in the homes of the animals you seek. Try to avoid disturbing sensitive habitats such as wetlands, riparian zones, and fragile tundra.
- **Share the Experience.** Respect the experience of other human users of these lands and waters. Be aware of other wildlife watchers and avoid unnecessarily marring their enjoyment of the animals. Respect the culture and privacy of Alaska Native peoples and their land—recognize that fishing and hunting camps you may come across are essential to local residents' subsistence way of life. Respect those lawfully hunting and fishing within these multiple use lands.