



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Watchable Wildlife

Viewing Alaska's Species and Habitats on Your Public Lands



Field Guide

Watchable Wildlife in Alaska

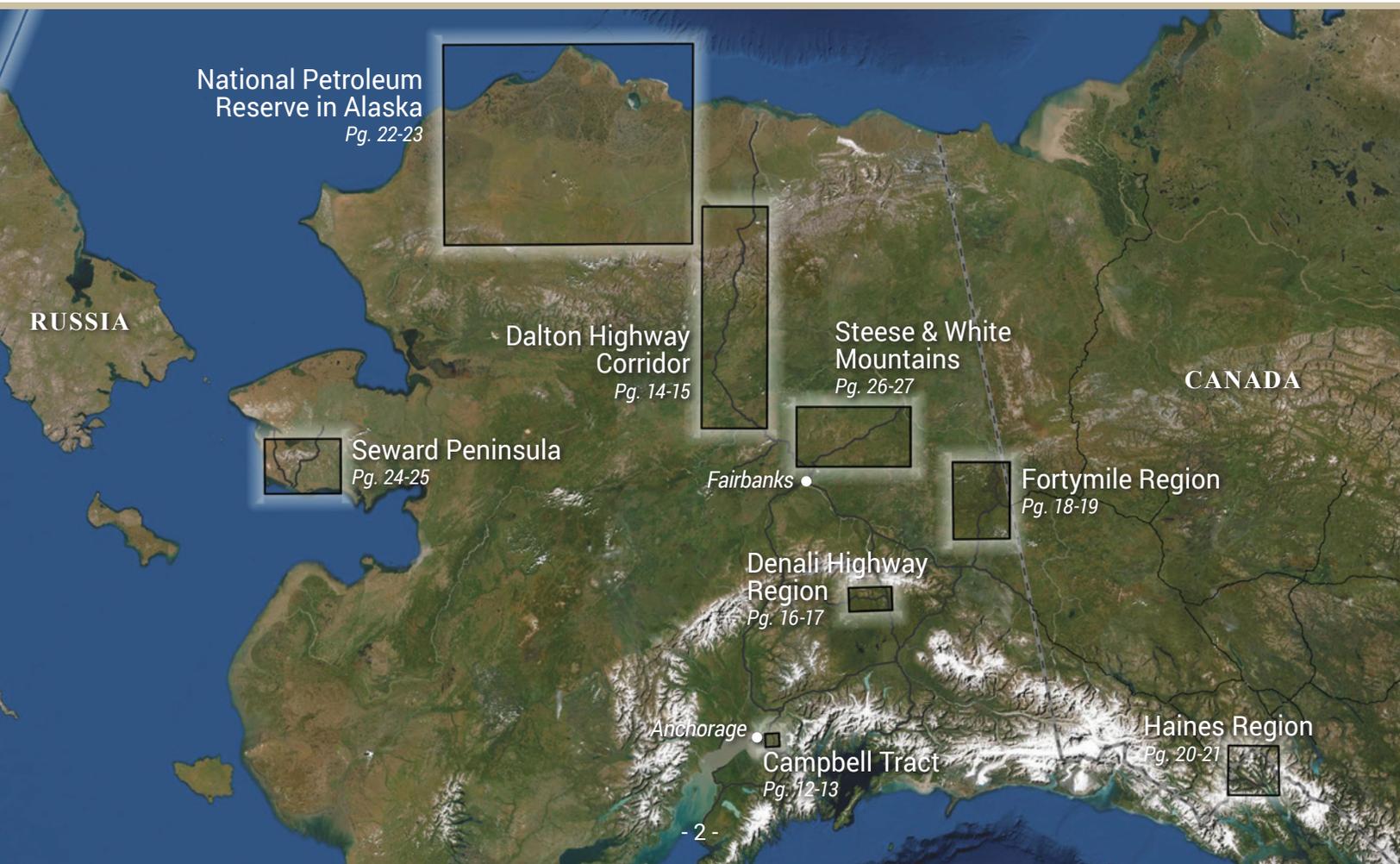
Experience wild Alaska, where caribou migrate in herds that number in the tens of thousands. Do you know where the best places are to see them? Bears and moose live nearly everywhere in the state, but how can you observe them safely? Hundreds of bird species fly to Alaska from across the world every spring. When is the best time of year to watch them?

Learn where, when and how to look for Alaska's abundant and iconic species. This field guide directs you to some of the best wildlife viewing locations on BLM-managed public lands. Use it to plan your journey, and learn about Alaska's diverse habitats and wildlife.



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How to Respectfully Watch Wildlife

- **Leave no trace.** Be considerate of people, animals, and the environment by minimizing your impact on the land. Pack out all trash, walk on trails in high use areas, and respect wildlife.
- **Leave pets at home.** Having a pet around may either scare animals away or attract an animal you wish to avoid.
- **Keep your distance.** Avoid disturbing animals in their habitat. Getting too close to an animal causes it unnecessary stress. Repeated disturbances may cause harmful changes in behavior.

You are too close to a mammal if it...

- ▶ Raises its head high with ears pointed at you
- ▶ Raises the hairs on the back of its neck and shoulders
- ▶ Exhibits signs of skittishness, like jumping at sounds or movements
- ▶ Lowers its head with ears back in preparation for a charge
- ▶ Displays aggressive or nervous behavior

You are too close to a bird if it...

- ▶ Seems skittish
- ▶ Raises its head to watch you
- ▶ Preens excessively
- ▶ Gives alarm calls
- ▶ Gives distraction displays, such as feigning a broken wing

Wildlife Viewing Tips

- **Take your time.** Stop at watchable wildlife viewpoints and spend time exploring. The more time you take, the more likely you are to observe wildlife.
- **Bring binoculars.** View large expanses of terrain with binoculars to increase your chances of spotting animals. Use binoculars to notice small details.
- **Time viewing.** Wildlife are most active at dawn and dusk. Certain tides can be important for viewing marine birds and mammals. Learn which months or seasons you can expect to see different wildlife.
- **Click.** Use a telephoto lens and a tripod to get good closeup photos. You are too close to an animal if you can get a good closeup on a cellphone camera.
- **Find evidence.** Animals leave clues behind that tell you they were there. Look for scat and tracks in the dirt and snow. Watch for bark, branches, or leaves that were munched on by herbivores.
- **Learn more.** Read field guides and other informational booklets. Study how to recognize animals by their tracks, scat, and vocalizations. Research traditional knowledge, subsistence use of wildlife, and habitat management by Alaska native peoples.



Safety

- **Give wildlife space.** For your safety, and for the safety of the animals, give them lots of room. It is recommended to stay at least 75 feet away from animals. Many animals are protective of their young and may be aggressive if they feel threatened.
- **Stay bear aware.** If you are in Alaska, you are in bear country. Make noise, travel in groups, stay vigilant, and carry bear spray. Never run from a bear. Learn more at www.alaskabears.alaska.gov
- **Prepare for the weather.** Alaska can be bitterly cold or unexpectedly hot. Blue skies can turn into rain or snow. Travel with what you need to be comfortable in changing conditions.
- **Bring the essentials.** Alaska is notoriously remote. Pack anything you may need ahead of time, including a first aid kit, navigation tools, extra gas and food, and emergency plans.
- **Inform.** Do not plan on having cellphone service. Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to be back.

Alaska's Habitats

Alaska's landscape is tremendously varied and mostly undisturbed, creating a natural mosaic of habitats across the state. Within each habitat type, there is a great diversity of features, such as water, wetlands, and cliffs. These habitats provide food, water, shelter, and space for a wide variety of animals. Improve your chances of viewing wildlife by learning about the areas they inhabit.

Arctic Tundra

North of the Brooks Range and in coastal areas of western Alaska, cold temperatures, permafrost soils, and short growing seasons limit plant growth. Low shrubs, sedges, mosses, lichens, and wildflowers grow here. This vast, treeless area is a good place to look for muskoxen, grizzly bears, caribou, lemmings, and raptors, such as peregrine falcons and snowy owls.

Traversing the tundra is difficult due to the tussock (mounded) vegetation and boggy conditions common during the brief summer. Arctic tundra is dotted with ponds and lakes of many sizes. These waters are excellent places to observe migratory ducks, loons, cranes, geese, and other waterbirds.

Alpine Tundra

This is the habitat above tree line. Vegetation consists mainly of slow-growing, low plants and shrubs interspersed with rocks. Common wildflowers include mountain avens, heather, and moss campion. Low-growing shrubs, such as blueberries and cranberries, along with willows, sedges, grasses, and lichens also grow here.

Hikers enjoy alpine tundra because of its opportunities for berry picking, relatively easy walking, and panoramic views. Watch for Dall sheep, caribou, marmots, pikas, and ptarmigans. The long views and open terrain also make alpine tundra one of the best places to see wolves, wolverines, and red foxes.

Boreal Forest

The boreal forest circles the northern part of the globe. In Alaska, it is dominated by black and white spruce. Black spruce grows on colder, wetter sites, and its growth is often stunted due to the harsh conditions. The larger white spruce grows on warmer and drier sites (such as south-facing slopes) and may have trunk diameters greater than 12 inches. Deciduous birch, aspen, poplar, and various willows may also grow alongside the evergreen spruces.

Muskegs occur throughout the boreal forest. Find these bogs in low, flat areas where water cannot drain, usually due to underlying permafrost. Sphagnum mosses, sedges, lichens, Labrador tea, willows, cranberries, and blueberries grow in muskegs. Muskegs are habitat for moose, beaver, muskrat, weasels, mink, American wigeon, grebes, and Bohemian waxwings.

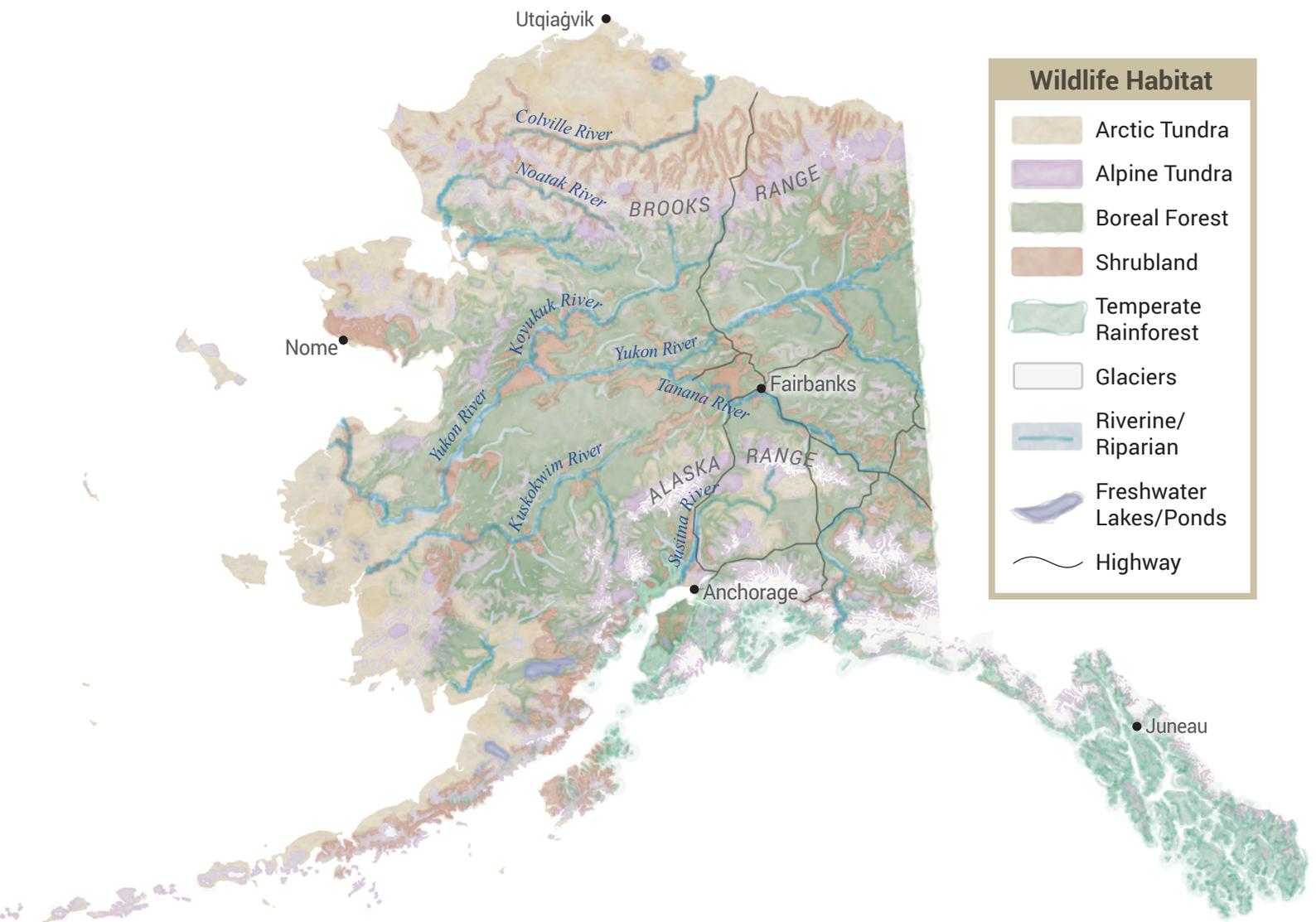
Shrubland

Multi-stemmed woody plants known as shrubs dominate this habitat. Throughout Alaska, the common shrubs are dwarf birch, alders, and willows. Moose thrive in this habitat and rely on the woody stems of shrubs as food in the winter. Birds, such as ptarmigan, hide in the dense cover provided by shrublands. Viewing and walking can be difficult. Remember to stay moose and bear aware.

Temperate Rainforest

Temperate rainforests line the Pacific coast of North America, from northern California to Alaska. These rainforests receive up to 200 inches of rain per year. In Alaska, Sitka spruce, mountain hemlock, and western hemlock are the dominant trees. Due to the moisture and moderate temperatures, the trees of the temperate rainforest grow much taller than those in the boreal forest. The undergrowth is thick with devil's club, ferns, salmonberries, and mushrooms.

Salmon swim from the ocean up streams, providing food for bears and other scavengers. Marbled murrelets nest high up in the trees of the old growth forest. Many woodpecker and owl species excavate old tree cavities for nesting and roosting. The rufous hummingbird builds nests from lichen and moss.



Riverine/Riparian

Rivers and streams cut through all terrestrial habitat types in Alaska and provide habitat for fish, birds, beavers and otters, and often function as travel corridors for fish and wildlife. River flooding creates erosion and deposition on the surrounding landscape, which changes plant communities and increases species diversity.

Riparian refers to the habitat along riverbanks and lakeshores. The vegetation in these areas is usually lush because it receives plentiful water and is less likely to be affected by permafrost. Wildlife depend heavily on riparian habitat because there is a variety of food and ample water and cover. White spruce, cottonwoods, tall willows, and dense woody shrubs are common. These plants provide food for moose and homes for voles and shrews, as well as their predators. Along the water's edge, bald eagles, osprey, and cavity-nesting waterfowl, such as goldeneyes and mergansers, nest in mature trees, while migratory songbirds nest in tall shrubs.

Freshwater Lakes/Ponds

Lakes and ponds typically thaw in May and freeze in October. Wildlife use is affected by a variety of conditions, including the size, depth, chemical composition, winter ice thickness, and temperature of the water. Lakes abundant in plants and plankton support more wildlife. Alaska has more than 12,000 rivers and streams winding through the state.

These freshwater habitats support fish species such as salmon, Dolly Varden, Arctic grayling, and sheefish. Bald eagles and osprey come to these productive areas to prey on birds and fish. Hordes of insects bring hungry songbirds, and salmon are a famous draw for hungry bears.

Other Habitat Types

Other habitat types include glaciers and various coastal and marine habitats. These habitats occur in more limited distributions on BLM-managed public lands, and have unique wildlife associated with them, such as glacial ice worms.

A Changing Landscape

Alaska is a young, evolving landscape. Until about 12,000 years ago, Alaska was significantly colder and covered by widespread glaciers. An array of giants, such as woolly mammoth, Beringian lion, short-faced bear, horses, and steppe bison, inhabited the state. As the climate warmed, many changes occurred: glaciers receded and rivers formed, large lakes drained, vegetation grew larger and woodier, and humans moved into the newly accessible land with its large wildlife to hunt. Today, many of the largest wildlife species are gone, and the vegetation and the landscape are still adjusting to these changes. You can see evidence of the past throughout Alaska, including fossils and frozen remains of ice age wildlife, glacially-carved valleys and moraines.



When Lightning Strikes

Lightning-caused wildland fires are a natural component of the boreal forest and create a mosaic of plant communities on the landscape. Recently burned areas often see eruptions of wildflowers, such as fireweed, and mushrooms, such as morels, the year following the fire. As the forest grows back, you can anticipate the types of animals you are most likely to see based on the vegetation. If there are many shrubs and saplings present, watch for moose, foxes, and bears. If the forest has not burned recently and the vegetation is mature and dense, look for Northern flickers, Lincoln and American tree sparrows, and Northern flying squirrels.



Common Wildflowers of Alaska



Background photo: Utukok River Uplands in NPR-A with a shed caribou antler, avens (white flower), and lupine (purple flower).

A Hidden Landscape of Ice

Permafrost, or permanently frozen ground, underlies much of Alaska and creates many unique landscape features. In Northern Alaska, small hills with cores of ice known as pingos protrude from the earth and thermokarst lakes dot the landscape. Thermokarst lakes form in summer when permafrost thaw water collects on top of still-frozen ground. Permafrost is continuous in the northern portion of the State and generally becomes discontinuous and then sporadic as the distance from the Arctic increases (see map).



**Common
Mushrooms
of Alaska**



**Mushrooms
(clockwise from top):**

- Fly agaric*
- Black morel*
- Chicken of the woods*
- Angel wings*
- King bolete*

**Wildflowers
(left to right):**

- Fireweed*
- Labrador tea*
- Wild rose*
- Mountain harebell*
- Arctic lupine*
- Moss campion*
- Alpine arnica*
- Forget-me-not*
- Wild geranium*
- Dwarf dogwood*



Alaska's Wildlife

Alaska's nearly 1,100 vertebrate wildlife species are typically seen in the habitats that meet their specific needs. Learn the behavior patterns and habitat types of Alaska's most sought-after wildlife. Apply this knowledge as you adventure across the state, and you will increase your likelihood of seeing wildlife.

Mammals: Carnivores and Omnivores



- **Brown bear.** Distinguish the brown bear from the black bear by its longer claws and large shoulder hump. Brown bears use a variety of habitats but watch for them in summer fishing along streams for spawning salmon. Grizzly bears are the same species as brown bears, but the name grizzly is often used for inland populations with less access to salmon and other coastal food.
- **Black bear.** This is the smallest of Alaska's three bear species and, despite their name, they generally range in color from black to brown. Black bears primarily eat vegetation in the spring and add a diet of berries and salmon in summer and fall.
- **Polar bear.** Polar bears have a narrow head and non-pigmented fur, which appears as a yellowish white coat. They inhabit the sea ice of northern Alaska, along the Southern Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, visiting land to scavenge, den, and rest.
- **Gray wolf.** Although wolves can be found in a variety of habitats, they are usually quite elusive. The luckiest viewers tend to see wolves moving across open areas.

- **Foxes.** The red fox is adapted to a wide range of habitats and can even be seen darting across roads and trails in woody, brushy areas. The Arctic fox is white in winter and gray or brown in summer. Look for it north of the Brooks Range and along Alaska's western coastline.
- **Canada lynx.** The lynx is the only cat native to Alaska. Look for it in spruce and hardwood forests, particularly in spots where young vegetation attracts their preferred food, snowshoe hare.
- **Wolverine.** The largest member of the weasel family lives throughout Alaska and travels great distances in search of food. Sightings are rare but are most likely in the open expanses of alpine tundra.

Mammals: Herbivores

- **Moose.** These brown giants are well-adapted to living in Alaska and can be found across most of the state. Look for them eating shrubs in the boreal forest, riparian areas, and shrublands.
- **Caribou.** Caribou travel in large herds during spring and fall migrations but are often seen in small bands during the summer. On warm, still days in the summer, caribou are often found up in the mountains seeking relief from biting insects.
- **Mountain goat.** Goats move through precarious mountain terrain using their sure-footed hooves. Look for them in the rocky slopes above the coastal regions of Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. They are more tolerant of wet weather than Dall sheep.
- **Dall sheep.** Dall sheep prefer rocky alpine tundra regions. In spring and fall, sheep tend to move to lower slopes in search of accessible plants.
- **Muskox.** These large creatures are found in only a few Alaska locations: along the Dalton Highway north of the Brooks Range, along the road system on the western Seward Peninsula, and in various other pockets of western Alaska.



Did you know?

In Alaska's 32 caribou herds, there are more combined animals (approximately 950,000) than the human population of Alaska (approximately 729,000).



Caribou

Small Mammals

- **Weasels.** In addition to the wolverine, Alaska is also home to many smaller members including marten, ermine, mink, river otter, and sea otter. These animals do not hibernate in winter. They will eat whatever they can find, such as voles, mice, bird eggs, clams, to insects and even vegetation.
- **Collared pika.** Listen for the high-pitched chirps of pikas in the alpine tundra. Look for this hare relative dashing through the rocks with bunches of plants in its mouth.
- **Hares.** Snowshoe hares are widespread through forested and brushy areas across the state. Alaska hares prefer the open tundra found in the western region of the state. Both hare species turn from brown to white in winter for camouflage.
- **North American beaver.** Beavers are most active in the early morning, late afternoon, and evening. Look for them near freshwater lakes and ponds as they gather food and repair their dams and lodges.
- **Porcupine.** See porcupines walking through the forest or up in trees across the state. These prickly rodents eat the green leaves of deciduous trees in summer and the inner layers of tree bark and spruce needles in winter.
- **Marmots.** Marmots live among the large rocks of alpine tundra. Watch for them sunning themselves on warm summer days, and listen for them whistle in alarm at passing hikers. Alaska has 3 species of marmot: hoary marmots, Alaska marmots, and woodchucks.
- **Squirrels.** Find red squirrels stockpiling spruce cones in the boreal forest. Look for Arctic ground squirrels and their burrows in tundra regions and meadows across much of the state. Northern flying squirrels glide between old growth trees in Interior and Southeast Alaska.
- **Other rodents.** Small mammals such as voles, lemmings, shrews, and mice are at the heart of many of Alaska's food webs. They can be seen running through the underbrush and eating vegetation, seeds, and invertebrates. Small mammals are a vital food source for owls, many hawks, and foxes.



Collared pika

Birds

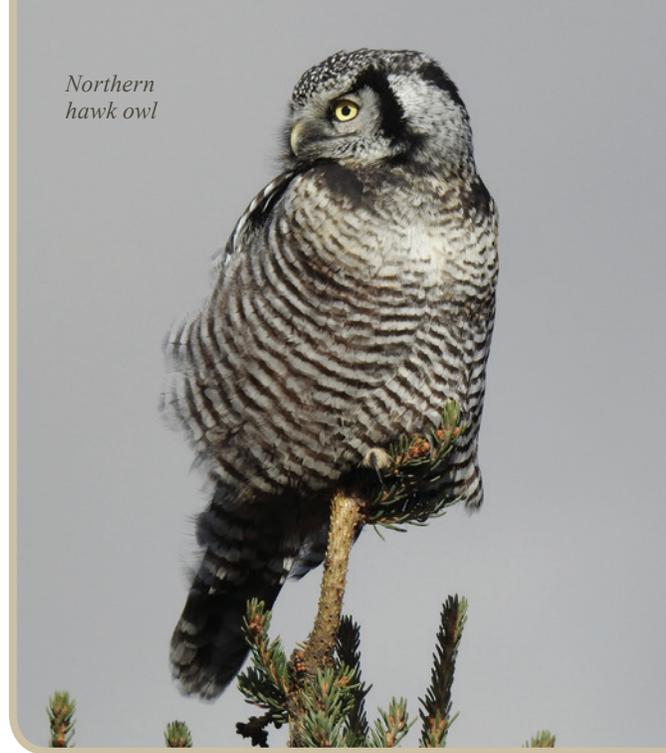
Alaska has records of more than 528 bird species, including many unique northern-dwelling species not found in the rest of the United States. Additionally, many Asian species often accidentally cross the Bering Strait and appear in Alaska to the delight of wildlife viewers. For more information, visit the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Alaska Migratory Bird webpage](#).

- **Waterbirds.** Waterbirds thrive in Alaska's 174 million acres of wetlands. These areas provide breeding habitat for a huge quantity of waterbirds: more than 1.5 million geese (6 regularly occurring species), 150,000 tundra swans, and 20,000 trumpeter swans. Many other species breed across the state, such as loons (all 5 species), grebes (3 species), and ducks (27 species).
- **Shorebirds.** Alaska is breeding habitat for 7 to 12 million shorebirds representing 37 regularly breeding species. That's more than in any other state! Migratory shorebirds rest at critical stopover points across Alaska before making incredible long-distance migrations across the globe. Notable species include godwits, various sandpipers, and numerous plovers.



Spotted sandpiper

- **Raptors.** These large birds have hooked beaks and sharp talons for hunting other birds, mice, voles, and fish. Look for bald and golden eagles, osprey, peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, and numerous owl species, such as snowy, great gray, great horned, and Northern hawk owls.
- **Landbirds.** View songbirds such as corvids (raven, jays, magpies), sparrows (white-crowned, fox, junco), warblers (yellow, Wilson's, Arctic), thrushes (varied, robin), and more. Look for woodpeckers (6 species), swallows (5 species), grouse (4 species), and ptarmigan (3 species) across the state.
- **Seabirds.** Alaska's species include gulls (13 species), terns (2 species) and jaegers (3 species), many of which can be found well inland, as well as marine-associated murrelets, murres, auklets, and cormorants.



Northern hawk owl

Invertebrates: Inverte-whats?

Invertebrates may be small, but they play a big role in Alaska's ecosystems, from pollinating plants to being an important food source for many fish, birds, and mammals. Bee-mimicking hover flies, dance flies, and even mosquitos are important pollinators, especially in the tundra. Mayflies and stoneflies feed fish during their aquatic larval phase and, in their short aerial phase, form clouds of adults that feed many bird species. There's also tremendous diversity in Alaska's invertebrates, including at least 374 species that have yet to be found anywhere else on Earth. Look for Alaska's approximately 80 butterfly species on warm, sunny days in flowering meadows. Listen for the buzz of one of Alaska's 22 species of bumblebees or 70 other native bee species.



Wolf spider



Bumblebee



Canadian tiger swallowtail



Blubber and Blowholes

While primarily thought of as a terrestrial and freshwater land management agency, BLM Alaska manages important coastal and shallow marine habitats for seals, whales, and marine fishes. Due to a recent lack of sea ice, coastal Arctic beaches provide valuable areas for walruses to haul out and rest. These creatures are especially sensitive to disturbance while lumbering on land. Ringed and bearded seals use the sea ice to lounge in relative safety during annual molting and create pupping lairs (dens) when the ice is covered in snow. To get the oxygen they need, these blubber-laden “ice seals” use cracks in the sea ice or maintain open breathing holes. Pure white beluga whales can be spotted hunting for fish, in the shallow lagoons and nearshore areas most larger whales avoid.

Fishes

- **Salmon** (5 species). King (Chinook), red (sockeye), silver (coho), pink (humpy), and chum (dog) salmon travel from the ocean to freshwater rivers and streams across Alaska. Their return to spawn each summer attracts many mammals and birds that feed on them or their eggs.
- **Char** (2 species). The colorful Dolly Varden is widely distributed across the state, often in small streams, and some may migrate to lakes or the ocean. The Dolly Varden received its name from a brightly-dressed character in the 1841 Charles Dickens novel, *Barnaby Rudge*. Arctic char most often inhabit deep lakes, but also are found in rivers and the ocean. Found in all Arctic countries, the Arctic char is the northernmost freshwater fish in the world.
- **Arctic grayling**. Arctic grayling thrive in freshwater rivers and lakes across Alaska. Like salmon species, they prefer areas with clear, cold waters with lots of oxygen.
- **Other fishes**. Numerous other species swim in Alaska’s rivers, lakes, and freshwater sloughs, including blackfish, whitefishes (7 species), steelhead/rainbow trout, sheefish, and northern pike.



Arctic char

Amphibians in Alaska?

People often overlook Alaska’s amphibians. However, there are at least six species of frogs, toads, and salamanders in the state, most of them in the southeast. The most famous may be the wood frog. It can be found as far north as the Arctic Circle, making it the northernmost amphibian on the continent.



Wood frog

Did you know?

There are no confirmed native reptiles in the state, aside from occasional sea turtles observed well offshore.

For in-depth information on most Alaska vertebrate species, visit: [Alaska Department of Fish and Game Animal webpage.](#)

Campbell Tract

This 730-acre area is a wildlife oasis in the middle of Anchorage. Walk, jog, bike, ski, dog mush, or ride horses on trails that wind along Campbell Creek and through bright white birch trees and dark evergreens. Look for evidence of the many animals that call this place home.



Habitats Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian

Species to See



Salmon - Every year, adult salmon return from the ocean and swim through the city of Anchorage to spawn. King (Chinook), red (sockeye) and silver (coho) salmon all spawn in Campbell Creek. The young that hatch from these eggs stay in the creek until they are big enough to swim to the ocean. Approximately 3,800 silver salmon return to Campbell Creek each year, making them the most abundant salmon in the creek.



American dipper - Find North America's only aquatic songbird hunting for aquatic invertebrates in the clear, fast-moving Campbell Creek. This bird hunts underwater by grabbing and walking on the stream floor with its feet, or swimming upstream with its wings. The dipper is named for the up and down bobbing movement it makes when it perches.



Red squirrel - This small, rust-colored rodent lives in spruce forests around Alaska, munching on spruce cone seeds. Red squirrels spend their days collecting green spruce cones and storing them in large piles, called middens, so that they have food all winter long. Squirrels release sharp, chattering alarm sounds when intruders enter their territory.



Moose - The moose that live in Alaska and the Yukon are the biggest moose in the world. These giants munch on all sorts of leafy vegetation in the summer and then switch to eating the woody twigs of willow and birch in winter. Male moose are identifiable most of the year by their antlers, which they shed and regrow seasonally. Look for females with small calves beginning in mid-May.

Other Resources

[Campbell Tract Georeferenced Map](#) | [Campbell Tract Trail Map](#)



Brown bear
Black bear
Canada lynx
Coyote
Porcupine
Snowshoe hare
Boreal chickadee
Great horned owl
Hermit thrush
Ruby-crowned kinglet
Slate-colored junco
Spruce grouse
Varied thrush
Yellow-rumped warbler



Wildlife Viewing Tips

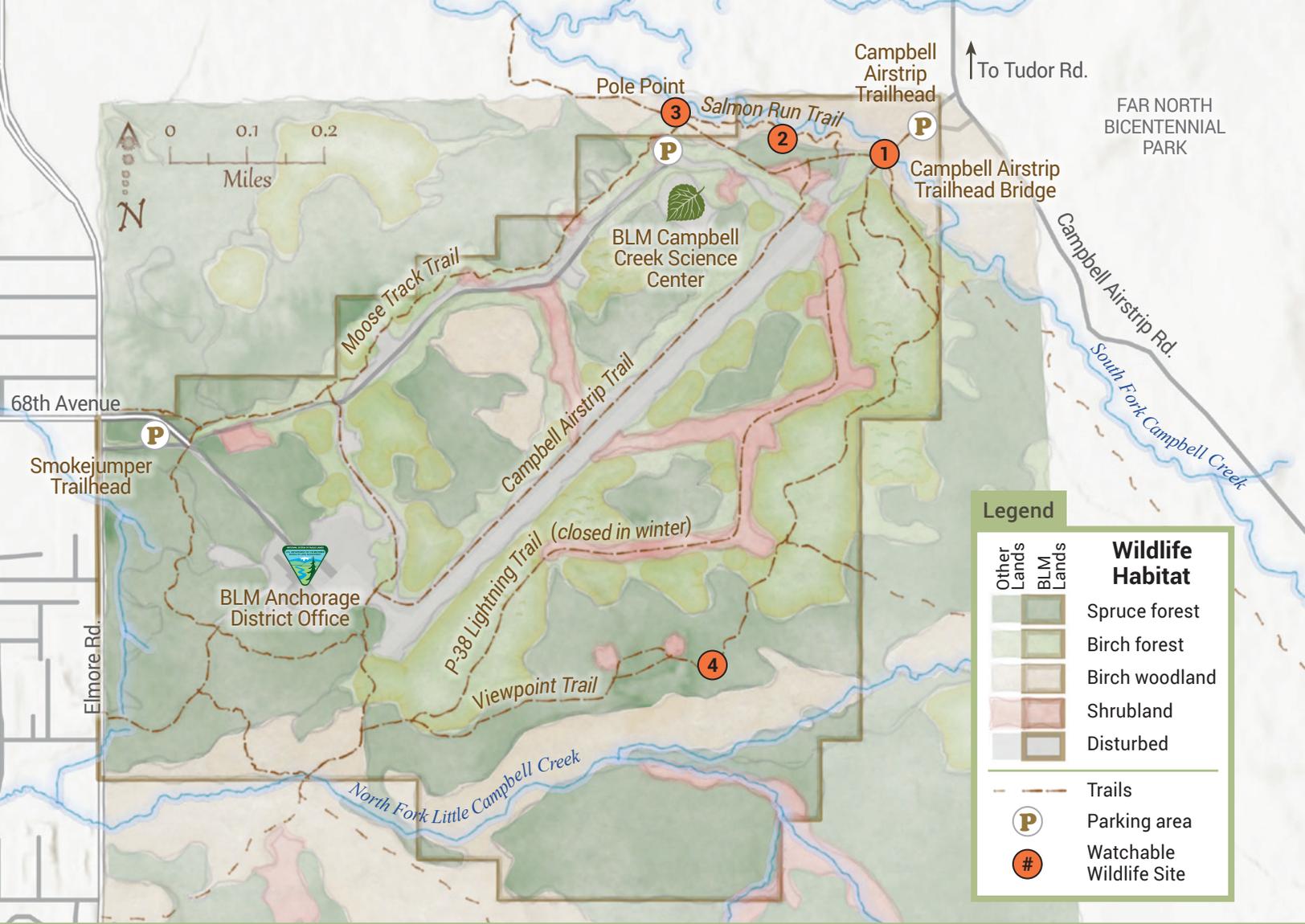
Visit the Campbell Creek Science Center to learn more about Alaskan wildlife, the Campbell Tract, and more. Find out about the Science Center and its educational programs at blm.gov/ccsc.

Though it is on the edge of the city, Campbell Tract is still quite wild. Be wildlife safe and bear aware. Salmon runs bring brown bears to the creek from June – October. Use caution when visiting the creek in summer, and practice bear aware techniques: travel in groups, make noise, and carry bear spray.

Butterflies: An Ongoing Study

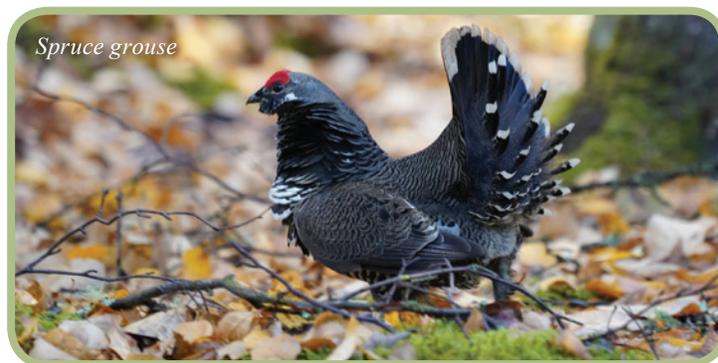
For over 20 years, the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center has been leading a butterfly survey. The survey documents species to help determine long-term trends. Butterflies are valuable pollinators, and both the adults and caterpillars are important food sources for birds. Look for these and other butterflies on Campbell Tract: Canadian tiger swallowtails, mourning cloaks, and Milbert's tortoiseshells.

Arctic skipper



Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Campbell Airstrip Trailhead Bridge** - Gaze down at the creek and look for salmon in the clear water. Spot American dippers bobbing on the rocks and looking for food.
- 2 **Salmon Run Trail** - Follow this winding trail along Campbell Creek. Stop and look for salmon in the creek and pollinators flying from flower to flower. Listen and look for migratory songbirds such as the yellow-rumped warbler, Wilson's warbler, varied thrush and more.
- 3 **Pole Point** - Relax and listen to the sounds of the creek at this shallow gravel bar. Turn over rocks in the water and look for macroinvertebrates, such as mayflies and caddisflies. Watch for salmon and Dolly Varden in the water.
- 4 **Viewpoint Trail** - Take this trail through dense spruce forests and open birch forests. Listen for the whoosh of spruce grouse and chatter of red squirrels. Watch for moose. In the winter, search for snowshoe hare, moose, and red squirrel tracks in the snow.



Spruce grouse

Other Notable Locations

- **Potter's Marsh**, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Walk the boardwalk in the summer for a chance to see moose, salmon, and a variety of migratory birds, including Arctic terns, trumpeter swans, and lesser yellowlegs.
- **Beluga Point**, Alaska State Parks. This rocky outcrop on Turnagain Arm provides viewing opportunities for beluga whales, Dall sheep, and bald eagles.

Dalton Highway Corridor

Driving north from Fairbanks on the Elliott and Dalton Highways offers a unique opportunity to experience Alaska's variety of habitat types. Begin your journey in the largest terrestrial biome on earth: the boreal forest. Weave through birch woodlands and spruce forests, pass freshwater ponds and expansive wetlands, and follow the Koyukuk River valley into the alpine tundra of the Brooks Range. Eventually, rocky peaks and high mountain passes give way to the expansive Arctic tundra.



Habitats Arctic tundra | Alpine tundra | Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Muskox - These robust creatures are well adapted to survive the harsh arctic weather. In winter, they grow a soft dense undercoat of hair called qiviut, a highly sought-after material used for knitting. Muskox were hunted to extinction in Alaska by the 1920s. In 1930, a group of 34 muskox were transplanted to the state from Greenland. View the descendants of these animals in small bands north of the Brooks Range.



Upland sandpiper - Look for upland sandpipers in open areas within the boreal forest, such as grassy fields, clearings, regenerating burn areas, and shrublands. Though most birds of this species breed in the contiguous United States, a portion of the population flies all the way to Alaska to breed. Upon arrival, male sandpipers may display to females by circling in the sky and whistling a song. After pairing, the couple may circle together.



Arctic ground squirrel - These burrowing animals are the largest species of ground squirrel in North America. They are native to the Arctic and are often observed feeding, defending their territories, and watching for the many predators that rely on them as food. Arctic ground squirrels hibernate up to eight months a year, which is considered the longest hibernation period on earth. They compress all their feeding, reproduction, and fattening up for winter into the brief months of the Arctic summer.



Dall sheep - Spend time looking closely for these white sheep foraging in steep, rocky areas with good access to "escape terrain." If Dall sheep feel threatened, they will quickly scramble up cliffs to safety. During winter, they survive by eating dry grasses, sedges, and lichens in exposed, windswept areas.

Other Resources

[Dalton Highway Visitor Guide](#) | [Toolik Field Station Bird Species List](#) | [Arctic Interagency Visitor Center](#)



Brown bear
Black bear
Gray wolf
Canada lynx
Moose
Caribou
North American beaver
Alaska marmot
Bluethroat
Golden eagle
Northern wheatear
Peregrine falcon
Rusty blackbird
Arctic char



Wildlife Viewing Tips

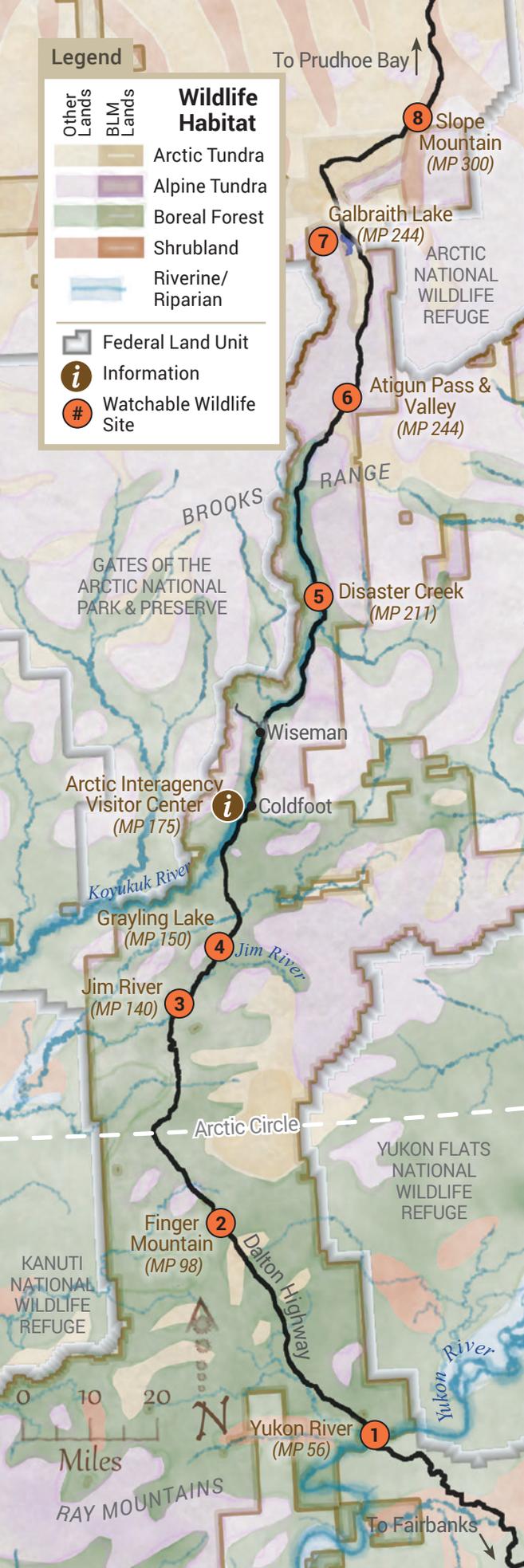
The Dalton Highway is an industrial road. Be alert to truck traffic. Do not stop on the road or on bridges.

Review the Dalton Highway Visitor Guide for safety tips and recommended equipment when traveling on this road.

Where the Forest Ends

As you head north up the Dalton Highway Corridor, watch as the boreal forest gradually fades away into tundra. The forest is limited by the extremely cold and dry conditions of the North. Many animals, such as the great-horned owl, depend on the forest for food and shelter. This place, where the forest ends, is the northern limit for these forest dwelling animals. However, the tundra provides opportunities to see a host of unique species not found in the boreal forest.





Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Yukon River** (Dalton Highway (DHW) MP 56) - The Yukon River flows west for more than 2,000 miles from Canada to its delta in the Bering Sea. Its extensive lowlands are prime riparian habitat for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, and fish. Spend time reading the interpretive panels and stop in the visitor station on the north side of the river.
- 2 **Finger Mountain** (DHW MP 98) - This alpine tundra ridge offers impressive vistas to look for peregrine falcons, northern harriers, caribou, and wolves. In the summer, learn more about the landscape by following the short interpretive trail to Finger Rock. Look for tracks and trails left by voles, shrews, and other small mammals.
- 3 **Jim River** (DHW MP 140) - See Arctic grayling and salmon in the river during the brief summer. Watch for lesser yellowlegs feeding on aquatic insects along the water's edge. Canoe the river or eat lunch on its bank for a greater chance of seeing wildlife up close. You may be serenaded by a Swainson's thrush or look up to see a moose walking slowly through the thick riparian vegetation.
- 4 **Grayling Lake** (DHW MP 150) - Visit these freshwater lakes for a chance to see moose and waterfowl, such as trumpeter swan, northern shoveler, American wigeon, and northern pintail. In May through early July, listen for savannah sparrow singing in open areas and the distinct song of the white-crowned sparrow along the road.
- 5 **Disaster Creek** (DHW MP 211) - Stop at the pull-off near Disaster Creek and look for tracks. In the winter, watch for lynx, snowshoe hare, moose, and red fox tracks.
- 6 **Atigun Pass and Atigun Valley** (DHW MP 244) - Scan the hillsides for bands of Dall sheep foraging in alpine meadows and golden eagles soaring high above the valley. Look for caribou from the Central Arctic Herd anywhere from Chandalar Shelf northward.
- 7 **Galbraith Lake** (DHW MP 275) - Galbraith Lake, Tea Lake, and a few smaller lakes are all that remain of a large glacial lake that once occupied the entire Atigun Valley. Lake trout, grayling, Arctic char, and burbot swim in their cold waters. Watch for long-tailed jaegers coursing the tundra for a meal. Listen for yellow-billed loons and upland sandpipers.
- 8 **Slope Mountain** (DHW MP 300) - Look for grizzly bears digging up roots and feeding on vegetation in the open country around Slope Mountain and for colonies of Alaska marmots in the rocky habitat on its slopes. Listen for the cackling of willow ptarmigan and look for their footprints in the soil and snow.

Other Notable Locations

- **Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve**, National Park Service. This rugged 8.4-million-acre park spans much of the central and western Brooks Range and is home to beaver, caribou, Dall sheep, migratory birds, grizzly bear, wolverine, mink, river otter, and more.
- **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Often called "the last great wilderness," Arctic Refuge encompasses the dramatic, sparse landscape of Alaska's eastern North Slope. This area contains a high density of polar bear dens and is calving habitat for the Porcupine caribou herd.
- **Dalton Highway Milepost 300 to Prudhoe Bay**, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Wide expanses of Arctic tundra provide viewing opportunities for wolves, muskox, bears, caribou, and over 200 bird species.

Denali Highway Region



This rugged 135-mile stretch of primarily gravel highway offers a taste of wild Alaska with its wide-open vistas of mountains, glaciers, tundra, forests, lakes, and rivers. Visitors may see grizzly bear and moose throughout the journey between Cantwell and Paxson. In August, large numbers of migrating caribou may be visible from the many waysides and pullouts.

Habitats Arctic tundra | Alpine tundra | Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Northern flying squirrel - In the nighttime hours, this small, quarter-pound mammal glides from tree to tree using lateral skin folds called patagia. Alaskan subspecies of flying squirrel prefer to live in old growth forests where they find cover from predators, nest in tree cavities, and raise their young. They survive the winter months by entering torpor, a state similar to hibernation.



Arctic warbler - Listen for the loud trill of an Arctic warbler singing from willows near streams. This warbler is one of the few birds that flies to North America from Asia. Most of the individuals of this species breed in northern Asia and Europe, but a small population flies from Asia to breed in Alaska each summer. Watch for them flitting from bush to bush along the Denali Highway.



North American beaver - Look for this distinct reddish-brown rodent swimming through streams and ponds. Beavers are the largest rodents in North America and are known as “ecosystem engineers” for their environment-altering lifestyle. Beavers use their large teeth to cut down trees and place them to build lodges and dam rivers, creating new still-water pools that provide habitat for many other species.



Trumpeter swan - This graceful white bird is the largest waterfowl species in the world, with a typical weight of 21-30 pounds and a wingspan of up to six feet. Their huge mass requires a long, approximately 300-foot, “runway” for them to take off from water. Mating pairs of swans pluck aquatic plants to build nests in the marshes adjacent to freshwater lakes. These nests can be up to 12 feet in diameter and two feet above the water.

Other Resources

[Denali Highway Georeferenced Map](#) | [Denali Highway Brochure](#) | [Gulkana Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Tangle Lakes Archaeological District Brochure](#) | [Delta Wild and Scenic River Guide](#)



Grizzly bear
Gray wolf
Wolverine
Red fox
Moose
Caribou
River otter
Hoary marmot
Muskrat
Common loon
Long-tailed jaeger
Willow ptarmigan
Salmon (*5 species*)
Arctic grayling



Wildlife Viewing Tips

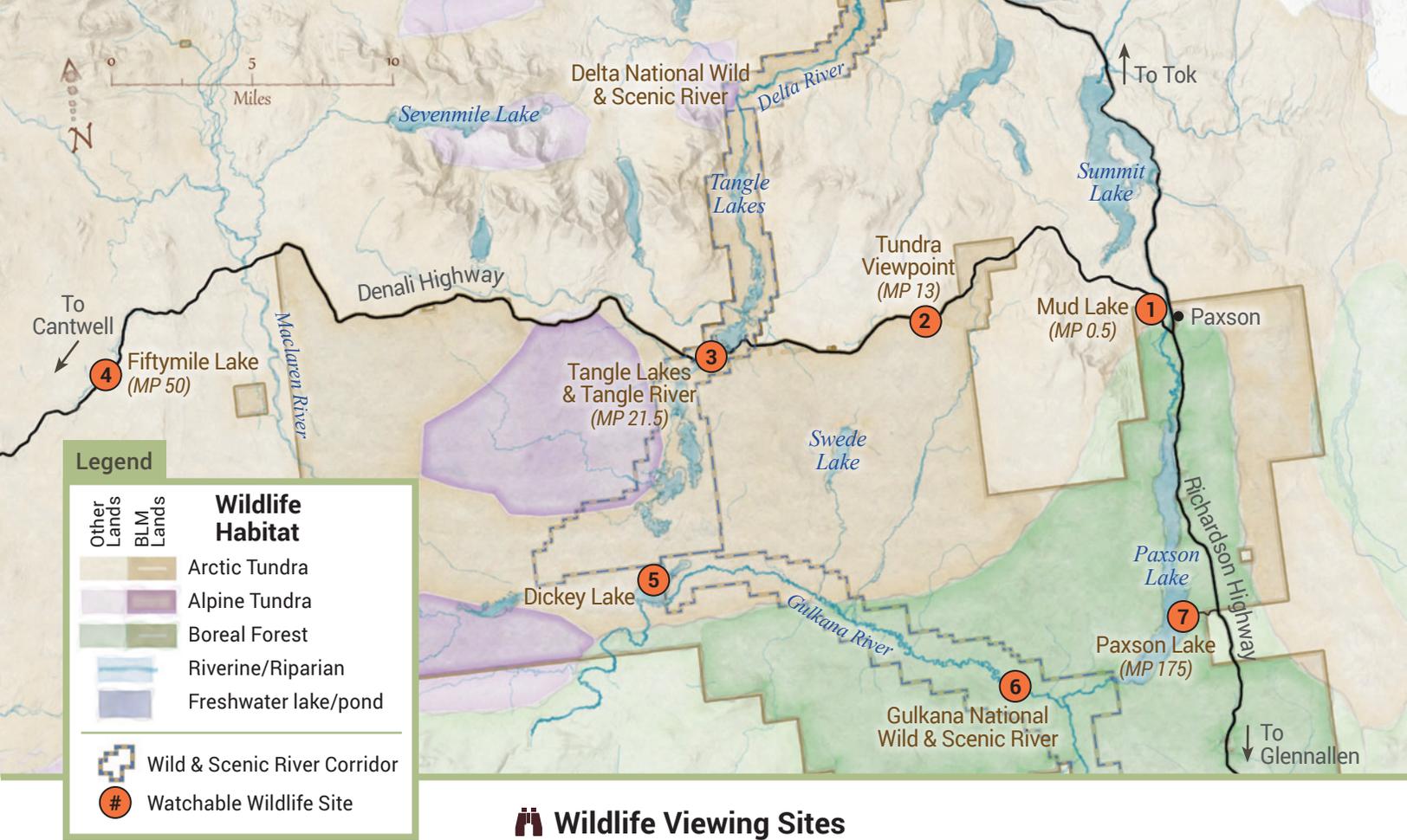
The Denali Highway is open mid-May to October 1. It is gravel most of the way and has very limited services. Prepare to be self-sufficient.

Hunting season in September and October brings crowds to the area, especially near the road system. Wear bright clothing.

Berries by the Bushel

Approximately 40 different types of edible berries grow in Alaska. These fruits are an important source of nutrients, such as antioxidants and vitamin C, for wildlife and people across the state. Search for common berries such as blueberries, salmon berries, low and highbush cranberries, and raspberries while travelling the state. The Tangle Lakes area is an especially productive berry picking destination.





Wildlife Viewing Sites



1 Mud Lake (Denali Highway (DNHW) MP 0.5) - Walk the short trail to this shallow lake for a chance to see moose, trumpeter swans, and bald eagles. Look in the water for brightly colored red salmon.

2 Tundra Viewpoint (DNHW MP 13) - As you head west, the land around the highway opens into expansive tundra. Watch carefully for moose, caribou, wolf, ptarmigan, long-tailed jaegers, fox, and bear.

3 Tangle Lakes & Tangle River (DNHW MP 21.5) - Trumpeter swans, long-tailed ducks, common mergansers, common loons, and Arctic terns splash in this network of lakes and rivers all summer while songbirds nest in the surrounding shrubs. Launch a boat to explore the **Delta National Wild and Scenic River**. Watch for grizzly bear, moose, and caribou in the surrounding alpine tundra.

4 Fiftymile Lake (DNHW MP 50) - Bald eagles, trumpeter swans, moose, caribou, and grizzly bear roam nearby. Beavers swim and build in the waters. This lake can be viewed from the Denali Highway.

5 Dickey Lake - Visit this pristine lake south of the Denali Highway. Careful wildlife observers may see ptarmigan, bald eagle, moose, bear, and a variety of waterfowl.

6 Gulkana National Wild and Scenic River - This large system of lakes connected by the West Fork of the Gulkana River, part of the Copper River Watershed, offers nesting habitat to about 30% of the world's trumpeter swans. Extended canoe trips through this seldom-visited area reward the adventurer with numerous opportunities to view wildlife.

7 Paxson Lake (Richardson Highway MP 175) - Camp, launch a boat, or just relax at this large scenic lake. Eagle nests and eaglets are common in the area, while moose or caribou may be seen near the water.

Other Notable Locations

■ **Wrangell St. Elias National Park**, National Park Service. The largest national park in the United States offers the opportunity to see many different animals, including caribou, moose, mountain goats, and Dall sheep.

■ **Copper River**, multiple land managers. Flowing from interior to the Gulf of Alaska, the Copper River is famous for its salmon runs and the bears that feed on the fish.

■ **Susitna River**, multiple land managers. Moose, beavers, waterfowl, and all five species of salmon thrive in this large glacially fed river.

■ **Lake Louise**, Department of Natural Resources. The 37 square miles of this state recreation area provide the opportunity to see bear, fox, Dall sheep, trumpeter swan, and gulls.

Fortymile Region



In the boreal forest and rolling alpine ridges of eastern interior Alaska, the many forks of the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River create a tangled web. These numerous clear-water streams converge and flow to the Yukon River, carving cliff faces and steep bluffs. Visitors can enjoy quiet trips full of opportunities to view wildlife in the many habitats of the region.

Habitats Alpine tundra | Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Caribou - The thousands of animals in the Fortymile caribou herd migrate between Alaska and Canada. They have adapted to life on the move, constantly in search of food. Their large concave hooves act like snowshoes in the winter and work as paddles to cross rivers in the summer. Look for their tracks stamped into the mud on the banks of the Fortymile River.



Arctic grayling - Distinguish this freshwater fish by the large dorsal fin waving down its back and its colorful markings. Some grayling migrate into small headwater streams in summer and move to different sections of stream with the seasons, while others spend their whole life in a singular stretch. Grayling take advantage of the abundance of food in summer and eat anything they can, from flies to voles.



Peregrine falcon - The word “peregrine” derives from a Latin word meaning traveler. This species migrates to Central or South America each winter and returns to Alaska to breed. Watch for this fast-flying raptor hunting other birds and look for peregrine falcon nests on the cliffs towering along the Fortymile River. A float down the river will bring you by over a dozen peregrine nests.



Moose - World-record size moose roam through the wilderness of the Fortymile Area. They can grow to be six feet tall and weigh 1,600 pounds. Males grow large antlers that average five feet across and weigh 45-50 pounds. Moose antlers regrow each year, making it the fastest growing tissue of any mammal. The Mosquito Flats area is valuable moose calving and summer habitat.

Other Resources

[Fortymile Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Fortymile/Taylor Highway Digital Public Information Map](#) | [Taylor Highway Guide](#)

Rare Plants and Pollinators

Steep, south-facing slopes carved out by the Fortymile River create unusually warm and dry soils. These soils support grassland and sagebrush habitat known as the steppe-bluff. Many rare plants and a high diversity of insects, especially bees, live in the steppe-bluff habitat. Scientists recently found eight native bee species new to Alaska in this area. Keep your eyes out for pollination in action.



Grizzly bear
Black bear
Gray wolf
Canada lynx
Red fox
North American beaver
Alaska marmot
Harlan's red-tailed hawk
Harlequin duck
Sharp-tailed grouse
Short-eared owls
Swainson's thrush
Sheefish
Hawkmoth

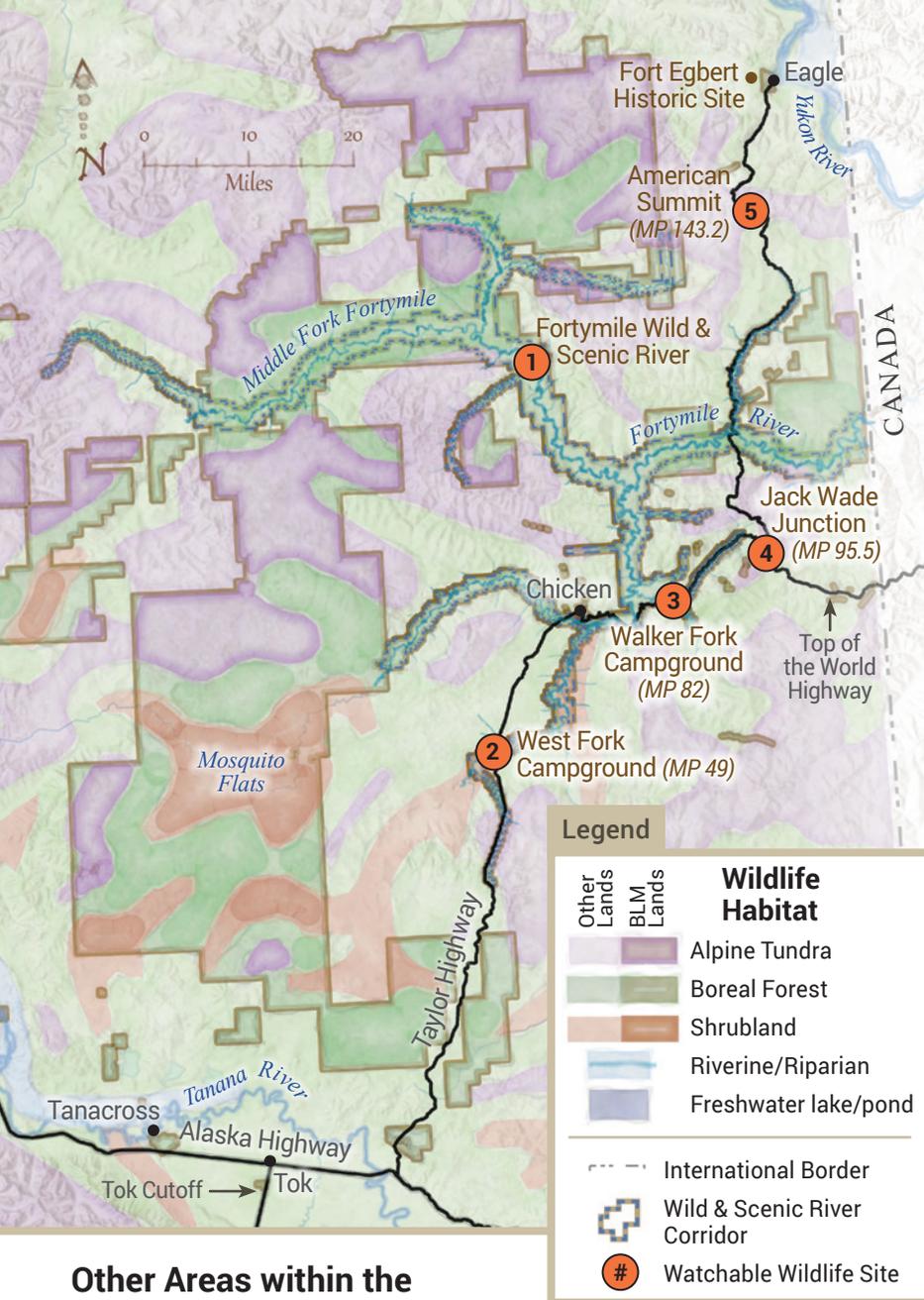


Wildlife Viewing Tips

Much of this area is accessible only by air or by boat. However, you can access a portion of the region from the Taylor Highway, which ends at the Yukon River in the small town of Eagle, Alaska.

The Taylor Highway is a combination of gravel and sealed surfaces and is generally open from May to early October, weather permitting.





Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River** - Float the river and look for sheefish and Arctic grayling in the clear waters. Caribou or moose may cross the river. Look for nesting peregrine falcons along the canyon walls and waterfowl in the river.
- 2 **West Fork Campground** (Taylor Highway (THW) MP 49) - Set up camp and spend time in the area. Look for moose and trumpeter swans in the pond, or peregrine falcons nesting in the cliffs. In June, the forest is filled with the songs of breeding birds, including various warblers, thrushes, sparrows, and flycatchers.
- 3 **Walker Fork Campground** (THW MP 82) - Once the site of a 1930s airstrip, today careful observers may see red-backed vole and red fox running through meadows. Arctic grayling hunt for food in the river, grabbing the insects that have fallen into the water. Caribou and bear roam through the area.
- 4 **Jack Wade Junction** (THW MP 95.5) - Whether you stay on the Taylor Highway or head east on Top of the World Highway, the road follows high open ridges offering great opportunities to see wildlife. Travelers often see caribou in small groups, or even running along the road! In August, when the Fortymile caribou herd begins to group up for migration, you may be fortunate to witness hundreds of animals moving across the landscape.
- 5 **American Summit** (THW MP 143.2) - Drive through the alpine tundra of this 3,652-foot-high mountain pass. The open landscape provides viewing opportunities for large groups of migrating caribou and fields of fireweed and pollinators.

Other Areas within the BLM Field Office

Fort Egbert Historic Site - At the end of the Taylor Highway, Fort Egbert overlooks the Yukon River and the town of Eagle. Search for raptors and Dall sheep in the rocky Eagle Bluff above the Fort. Nearby, look for fish wheels along the riverbank, evidence of resident's historical and continued dependence on salmon.



Canada lynx

Other Notable Locations

■ **Yukon Charley National Preserve, National Park Service.** Explore the Yukon and Charley rivers for a chance to see peregrine falcons, bald eagles, salmon, black bear, wolves, and more.

■ **Top of the World Highway, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.** Search the alpine tundra for large mammals and the skies above for birds of prey as you drive east toward Canada.

Haines Region

From the ocean to the mountaintops, diverse habitats provide an array of wildlife viewing opportunities in the Haines area. Mountain goats and brown bears roam the Takshanuk Mountains, while bald eagles feast on the hordes of salmon swimming the Chilkat River. Lush green temperate rainforest surrounds Haines, which is habitat for populations of bear, moose, and porcupine.



Habitats Alpine tundra | Temperate rainforest | Glacier | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Mountain goat - Glaciation in the Haines area divided the mountain goat population into unique, isolated groups living on separate mountain ridges. These sure-footed “rock goats” live in rugged terrain where they use their uniquely adapted hooves to forage on extremely steep and slippery cliff faces. Use binoculars to spot goats from pullouts and way points.



Little brown bat - Sit still, look up, and watch for these bats zipping through the dusk sky hunting for their favorite food: insects. Little brown bats hunt all through the night, using echolocation to track down their prey. They send sound waves out and locate insects based on when the sounds echo and return to their large ears. Though little brown bats are the most common, Keen’s myotis, long-legged bats, and silver-haired bats also hunt for insects in this area.



Boreal toad - Aside from the wood frog, the boreal toad is the most wide-spread amphibian species in Alaska. However, it does not venture much beyond southeastern Alaska, making the Haines area a great place to look for this hearty toad. They are most active during the day and can be identified by the white stripe on their back, their bird-like clucking, and their dark warts that secrete bitter toxins to repel predators.



Bald eagle - Alaska is home to over 30,000 bald eagles, the most of any state. The largest-known congregation of bald eagles in the world forms in Haines during early winter to feed on the late season salmon run. This iconic bird preys on a wide variety of fish species, but also feed on birds, small mammals, and carrion. They can grow to a wingspan of up to seven and a half feet, slightly smaller on average than the golden eagle.

Other Resources

[ADF&G Wildlife Viewing Guide](#) | [Haines Bird List](#) | [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)

Salmon... in the Trees?

The migration of salmon from the open ocean, back into the rivers and streams of inland Alaska creates an annual nutrient exchange. When an adult salmon returns to spawn it perishes, leaving behind the nutrients it collected eating marine fish and invertebrates. As the salmon decomposes into the soil, the trees take up these nutrients through their roots. Over time, nutrients seep out of the forest through decomposition and erosion, returning to the water to stimulate the aquatic food web. Tree leaves, for example, drop into the stream and become food for the aquatic macroinvertebrates that juvenile salmon eat.



Brown bear
Black bear
Moose
Humpback whale
Steller sea lion
Harbor seal
Porcupine
Arctic tern
Common merganser
Osprey
Ptarmigan
(willow, rock, and white-tailed)
Rufous hummingbird
Sooty grouse
Salmon *(five species)*

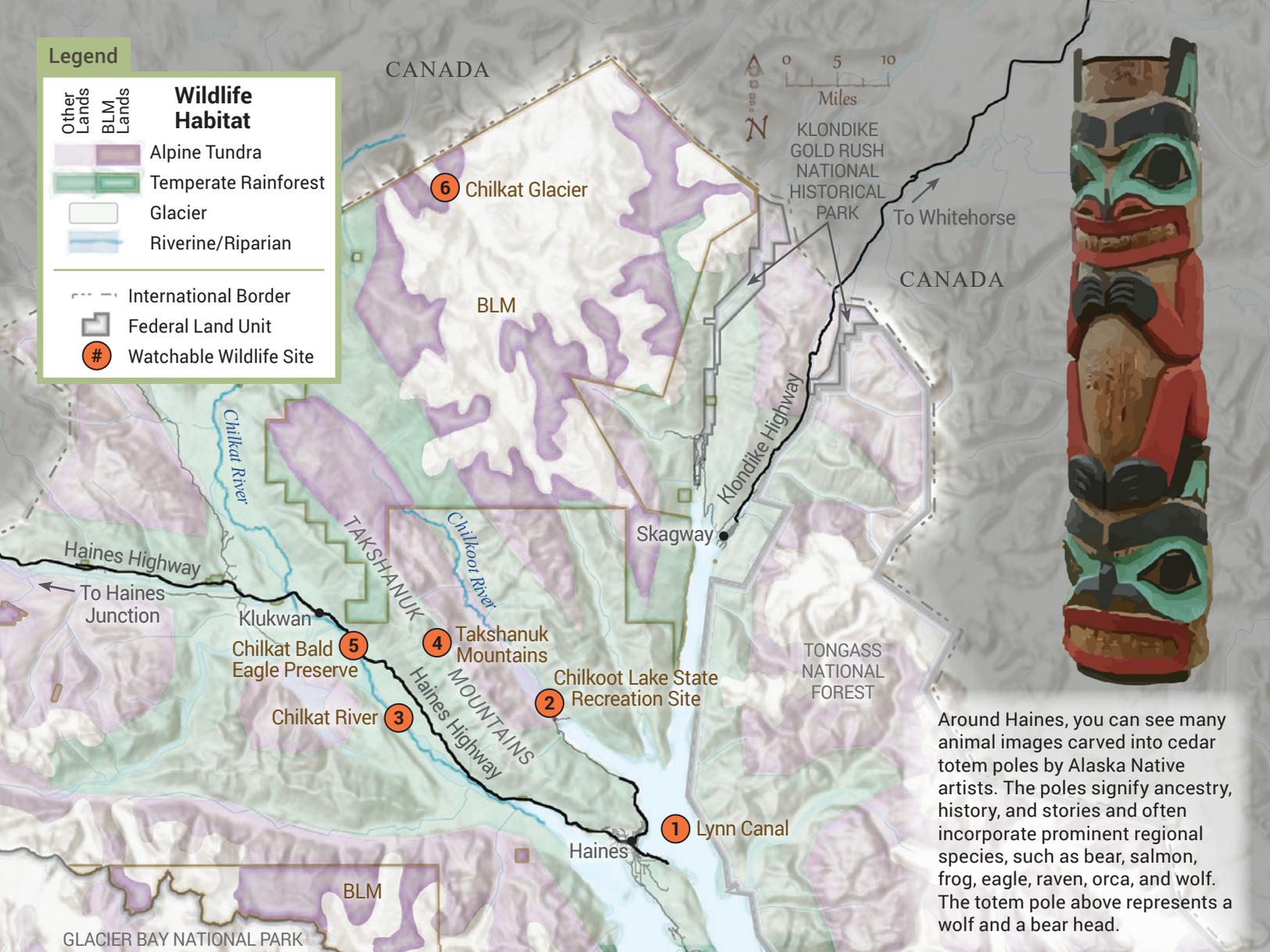


Wildlife Viewing Tips

When arriving by sea or air, keep a look out for whales, seals, and sea birds in the narrow fjords.

Most BLM-managed public lands around the Haines area are difficult to access, with few designated trails.





Around Haines, you can see many animal images carved into cedar totem poles by Alaska Native artists. The poles signify ancestry, history, and stories and often incorporate prominent regional species, such as bear, salmon, frog, eagle, raven, orca, and wolf. The totem pole above represents a wolf and a bear head.

Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 Lynn Canal** - The aquatic habitat of this 90-mile fjord supports rich marine life, including large marine mammals, numerous species of birds, and abundant fish. Keep an eye out from shore, travel by boat, or look down from a plane to see these creatures.
- 2 Chilkoot Lake State Recreation Site** - The lake and river are excellent spots to see dense salmon runs as well as the brown bears and birds that come to feed on them. The adjacent temperate rainforest is filled with colorful mushrooms in the late summer.
- 3 Chilkat River** - Moose, brown bears, and wolves use this river as a travel corridor between coastal and interior lands. Eagles, trumpeter swans, and Arctic terns search for food in the waters.
- 4 Takshanuk Mountains** - This mountain range separates the Chilkat River and Chilkoot River watersheds. Hike or gaze upon the mountain slopes to see mountain goats, ptarmigan, grouse, and bears.
- 5 Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve** - In this state park, over 100 bald eagles may congregate to feed on a late chum (pink) salmon run in October and November.
- 6 Chilkat Glacier** - A behemoth of ice stands at the top of the Chilkat River. The meltwater from this glacier feeds the rivers below. Search the cliffs for mountain goats, or look for tracks of creatures that crossed the glacier.

Other Notable Locations

■ **Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park**, *National Park Service*. Due to its position between the temperate rainforest and interior of northwestern British Columbia, this national park supports a wide array of wildlife.

National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska

Distance has a different meaning in the 23-million-acre National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A), where you can look across the treeless tundra for miles and miles. Caribou dot the landscape, and rivers meander through the coastal plain until they reach the sea. Millions of migratory birds fly here each year from around the world to nest and feed in the region's freshwater lakes, wetlands, and open tundra.



Habitats Arctic tundra | Alpine tundra | Shrubland | Coastal waters | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Snowy owl - White feathers and yellow eyes distinguish the snowy owl. They hunt small rodents using their eyes and ears to locate them in vegetation and under deep snow. In years where prey is scarce, they may migrate far outside of their normal Arctic range, sometimes even traveling to the lower 48 states.



Arctic fox - These animals' long and fluffy winter fur drops off into a short brown coat each spring, only to grow back in the fall. In the coastal plain of the Arctic, they excavate six to twelve-foot deep underground dens. In these dens, a monogamous adult pair raise and feed their young. Arctic foxes may roam long distances in search of food, even far out onto the sea ice.



Caribou - The Western Arctic, Central Arctic, and Teshekpuk Lake caribou herds range through the NPR-A. Combined, these herds currently total over 300,000 animals. Unlike most antlered species, both the male and female caribou are crowned with these rapid-growing bones. These herds migrate across large portions of Alaska to search for food, reach their calving sites, and find protection from insects.



Spectacled eider - Named for the circular white "spectacles" around its eyes, the threatened spectacled eider breeds during the summer in the wet tundra. Nobody knew where this eider spent the winter months until 1995, when researchers discovered the species spends winters hunting in gaps in the sea ice called polynya. The NPR-A is one of the only places in the world where you can complete the "Eider Slam" by seeing all four eider species.

Other Resources

[Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Bird List](#)

[National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Digital Public Information Map](#)

Migration Destination

Plentiful food, endless daylight, and large open spaces make Alaska the perfect haven for many migratory birds. More than 250 species of birds migrate to Alaska for the short summer breeding season. On their journey these birds follow general routes, called flyways, that link their summer and winter homes, which may be on the other side of the planet.



Brown bear
Polar bear
Gray wolf
Ringed seal
Dunlin
Eider
(spectacled, Steller's, common, king)
Greater white-fronted goose
Gyrfalcon
Jaeger
(pomarine, parasitic, long-tailed)
Peregrine falcon
Red-throated loon
Tundra swan
Whitefish
(round, broad, humpback)
Arctic bumblebee

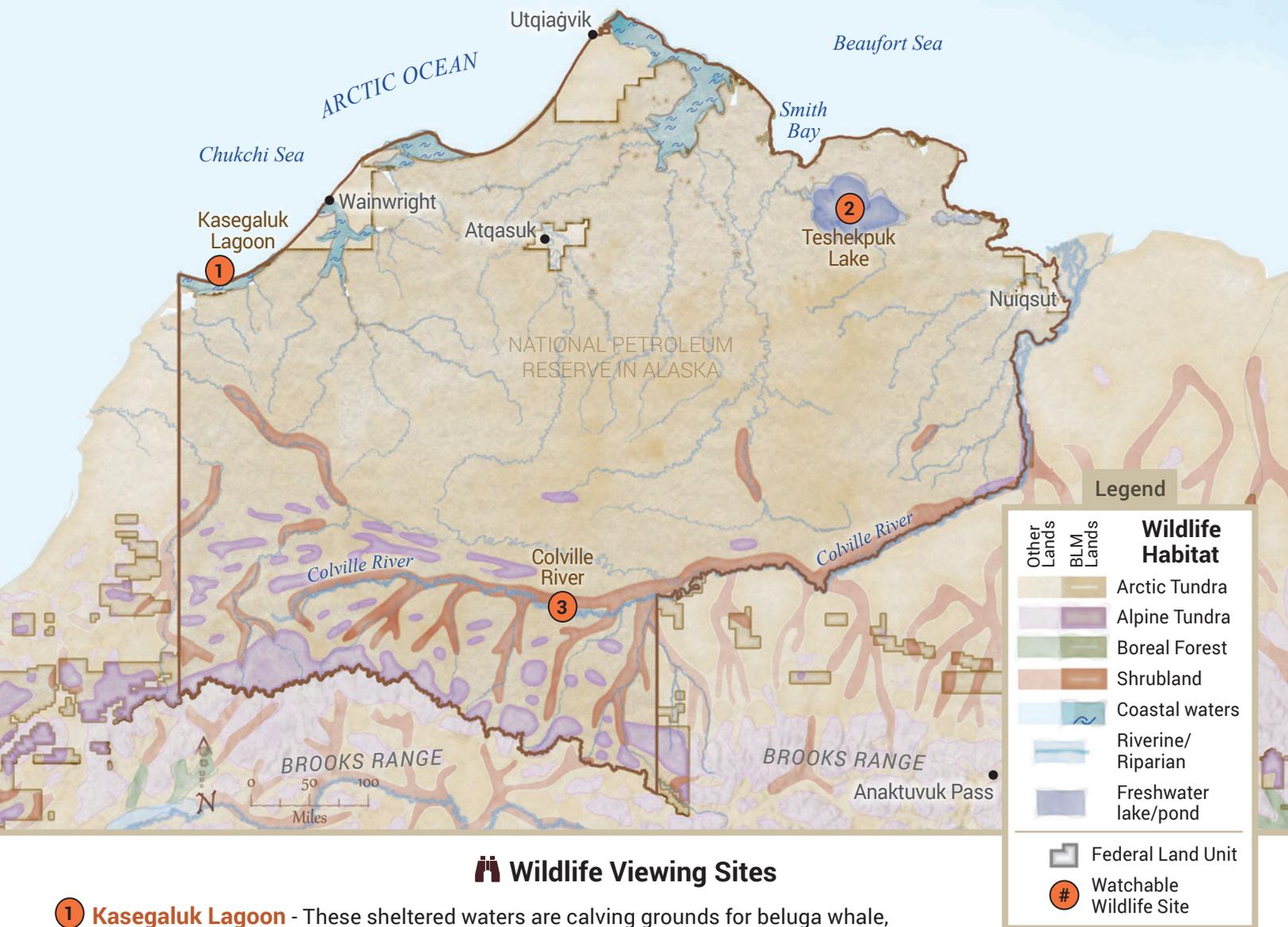


Wildlife Viewing Tips

Travel to this remote area takes thorough planning. Your work will be rewarded with the trip of a lifetime, to a place of abundant wildlife where few visit.

Dunlin





Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 Kasegaluk Lagoon** - These sheltered waters are calving grounds for beluga whale, supporting approximately 3,000 animals each summer. It is also a favorite haul-out spot for ringed and bearded seals and Pacific walrus. Look up to see birds that have migrated from across the world.
- 2 Teshekpuk Lake** - The largest lake in Arctic Alaska, Teshekpuk Lake is adjacent to the calving grounds for the 60,000 animals of the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd. This shallow freshwater lake is habitat for tens of thousands of brant and greater white-fronted geese and an important refuge for them as they molt before flying south again. It is also the breeding area for spectacled and king eiders, red-throated loons, dunlin, and many other birds.



- 3 Colville River** - Float the river and view peregrine falcons, gyrfalcons, golden eagles, and rough-legged hawks nesting on the rocky cliffs. Follow the loops and bends through high-density wolf habitat as the river winds 391 miles to the Arctic Ocean.

Other Notable Locations

■ **Utqiagvik.** This is the largest city in the Alaskan Arctic and the farthest north city in the United States. With commercial flights and a small road system, visiting Utqiagvik is an easier way to access Arctic habitats. Wildlife are plentiful in and near town, where you can see polar bears, beluga, bowhead whales, seals, and migratory birds.

Seward Peninsula

Travel to the Seward Peninsula starts with a flight to Nome, a town on the southwest coast of the peninsula. Pick a direction to travel out of town, and find yourself in unique and expansive terrain. Journey northwest into the Kigluaik Mountains, head north along the Nome River into tundra, or travel east from Nome and parallel coastal beaches and the sand spit and lagoons of Safety Sound. Whichever way you go, keep your eyes open for a wide variety of birds.



Habitats Arctic tundra | Alpine tundra | Boreal Forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Bristle-thighed curlew - The Seward Peninsula is one of the main breeding areas for the bristle-thighed curlew. Distinguished by their long down-curving beaks, these shorebirds nest in the inland tundra, often placing their nests under the protection of dwarf willow shrubs. In the fall, they fly 2,500 miles non-stop to islands in the South Pacific.



Muskox - You could encounter one of these 800-pound herbivores right in the town of Nome! They thrive eating the abundant sedges, wildflowers, and grasses of the tundra. But beware, males are aggressive during the rut. Bulls charge at one another from 50 yards away, colliding squarely on their helmet-like horns. They repeat this battle until one bull runs away.



Dolly Varden - Each spring adult Dolly Varden on the Seward Peninsula migrate from freshwater streams to the ocean to feed, only to return in the fall. After completing this journey multiple times, they return to the same area they were born to spawn. Dolly Varden can grow to lengths of 30 inches and weigh 30 pounds.



Bluethroat - In North America, the tundra of Seward Peninsula is one of the best locations to see this small Eurasian bird. Named for the brilliant blue throat patch on the males, bluethroats spend their summers breeding in Alaska and then fly to southeast Asia for winter. Look for the brightly colored males making territorial displays, singing and spiraling in the air.

Other Resources

[ADF&G Wildlife Viewing Guide](#) | [Bird list for Nome, Alaska](#)



Brown bear
Black bear
Canada lynx
Coyote
Snowshoe hare
Porcupine
Boreal chickadee
Great horned owl
Hermit thrush
Northern wheatear
Ruby-crowned kinglet
Slate-colored junco
Spruce grouse
Yellow-rumped warbler



Wildlife Viewing Tips

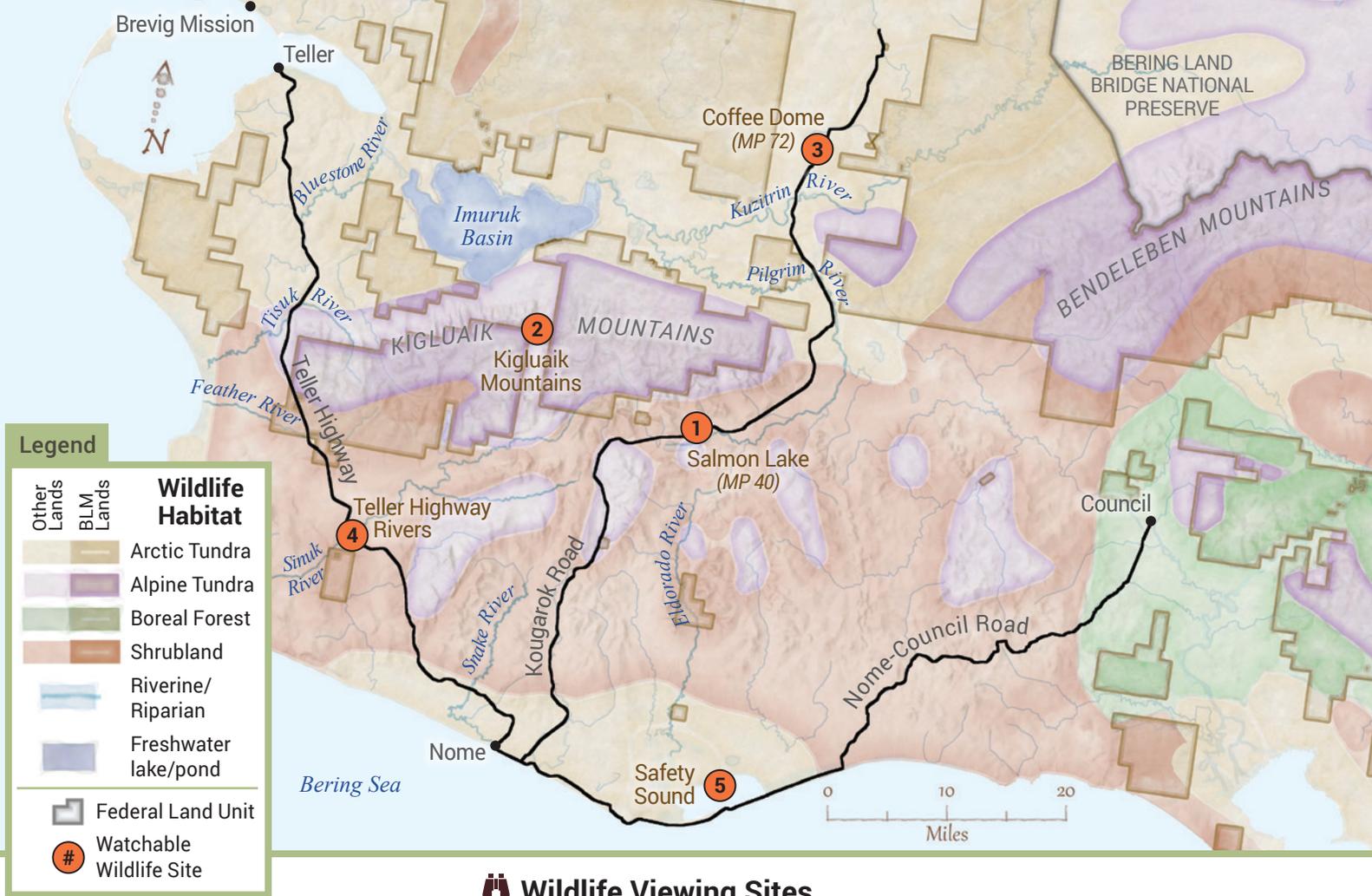
Unlike many locations in rural Alaska, the Seward Peninsula has a well-developed road system. Roads are usually in good condition, but be prepared for washouts and no services outside of Nome.

Peak season for viewing the area's unique and abundant migratory birds is late May to early July.

Reindeer or Caribou?

In North America, the species *Rangifer tarandus* is called caribou, but in Europe and Asia these same animals are referred to as reindeer. In Alaska, domesticated caribou, raised for their meat, are called reindeer. Both caribou and reindeer occupy the Seward Peninsula, but currently reindeer are more commonly seen.





Wildlife Viewing Sites

Kougarak Road - Winding for about 86 miles, this road crosses streams, passes through the sharp peaks of the Kigluaik Range, and travels into glacially carved valleys.

- 1 **Salmon Lake** - Forty miles north of Nome, Salmon Lake is a favorite spot for picnics and camping. Spend time watching red-throated loon, long-tailed duck, and red-necked grebe. Red fox and brown bears come to feed on spawned-out red salmon.
- 2 **Kigluaik Mountains** - Get off the road and hike in the expansive tundra hills and jagged rocky peaks of this mountain range. Brown bears and ground squirrels roam the hills and valleys, while the mountain lakes are home to Arctic char.
- 3 **Coffee Dome** - About 72 miles up the road to the east is Coffee Dome, a common nesting area for bristle-thighed curlew. Hike off the road to see this elusive bird.

Teller Highway - Head northwest out of Nome into expansive tundra with a backdrop of the Bering Sea.

- 4 **Teller Highway Rivers: Snake, Sinuk, Feather, Tisuk, and Bluestone** - River crossings provide opportunities for viewing aquatic and riparian wildlife, such as salmon and American dippers. Scan the hillsides nearby for muskox and nesting American and Pacific golden-plovers.

Nome-Council Road - This 72-mile road takes you east through every habitat type on the Seward Peninsula, reaching the western edge of Alaska's boreal forest.

- 5 **Safety Sound** - The lagoon and the coastal grasslands surrounding it provide feeding, breeding, cover, and nesting space for many species. Look for black brant and common eider nests in meadows, all five North American loon species, and Arctic terns.

Other Areas within the BLM Field Office

Innoko River Bottoms - Located in the floodplains of the Yukon and Innoko Rivers, this wetland-rich area is important breeding and nesting habitat for waterfowl. Many moose also live here and re-introduced wood bison roam the grassland-like areas.

Squirrel River Valley - Located northeast of Kotzebue, a chartered flight to this remote valley rewards you with opportunities to view brown bear, moose, and the fall migration of the Western Arctic caribou herd, the largest herd in Alaska.

Unalakleet Wild and Scenic River - The Unalakleet River flows from the Nulato Hills across a broad expanse of tundra to the coastal village of Unalakleet. Fly to Unalakleet, and float the river to see beavers, bears, moose, and waterfowl.

Steese & White Mountains

View a slice of interior Alaska by visiting the 2.2 million acres of BLM-managed public lands that stretch from Fairbanks to the Yukon River at Circle City. Hike, bike, ski, snowmachine, paddle, or drive through the spruce and birch forests and mountain summits of Steese National Conservation Area and White Mountains National Recreation Area. The region's low, rounded mountain ranges and clear-water river valleys provide important habitat for the Fortymile caribou herd and many other species.



Habitats Alpine tundra | Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

Species to See



Dall sheep - These bright white herbivores roam the Steese and White Mountains searching for food. Ewes (females) and rams (males) look similar with short, slightly curved horns until the age of three years. However, rams' horns continue to grow each year, becoming massive and curled. Remember to give Dall sheep plenty of space if you are lucky enough to see them.



Northern wheatear - The northern wheatear has the longest east to west migration of any bird, flying across Asia to wintering grounds in Africa. They spend summers nesting and raising chicks in the rocky tundra of interior Alaska. Look for their distinct black-and-white tail pattern to identify this bird.



Gyrfalcon - The largest falcon in the world can be seen hunting other birds in the tundra. It is estimated that a breeding pair of gyrfalcons and their chicks require two to three pounds of food per day. This is equal to the whole family sharing about two to three ptarmigan each day.



Collared pika - The quick-moving, skittish pika is closely related to rabbits. They spend the summer darting around the alpine tundra, collecting vegetation they dry into hay for the winter months. These independent creatures do not hibernate and must rely on their hay pile to feed them under the snow all winter. Sometimes they steal from their neighbors to increase the size of their hay pile.



Grizzly bear
Black bear
Canada lynx
Gray wolf
Caribou
Moose
Hoary marmot
River otter
Harlequin duck
Lapland longspur
Peregrine falcon
Rock ptarmigan
Arctic grayling
Wood frog



Wildlife Viewing Tips

The Steese Highway is unpaved after milepost 80.

Other Resources

[Steese and Elliott Highway Travel Guide](#) | [Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail Guide](#) | [White Mountains Winter Trails](#) | [Steese National Conservation Area Digital Public Information Map](#) | [White Mountains National Recreation Area Digital Public Information Map](#)

Landscapes Shaped by Fire

Wildland fires are common throughout interior Alaska, creating a mosaic of burned and unburned land. The boreal forest has adapted, and even come to depend, on fire. Black spruce trees have semi-serotinous cones, meaning they benefit from fire to open the cones and release seeds. Other vegetation pops up quickly after a fire, attracting small mammals that eat the various herbs and wildflowers. In turn, these animals attract predators. Along the Steese Highway, you can see many areas still recovering from the 2004 Boundary Fire.





Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Wickersham Dome & Summit Trail** (Elliott Highway MP 27) - Climb through the white spruce into alpine areas where marmots whistle from the rocky outcrops.
- 2 **Chatanika River** - This river parallels the Highway and contains a series of old mine tailing ponds which draw moose and waterfowl. Fish, such as king (Chinook) salmon, northern pike, least cisco, whitefish, and burbot, swim in the river and attract bears, wolves, and scavenging birds.
- 3 **Cripple Creek Campground** (SHW MP 60) - The short nature trail to the Chatanika River provides opportunity to spot northern waterthrush and various flycatchers and warblers. The sounds of Swainson's and varied thrush fill the air. Otters and ermine may be seen along the river.
- 4 **Mount Prindle & Quartz Creek Trail** - The high peaks, rocky ridges, and glaciated valleys of this area provide ideal habitat for Dall sheep. Bird species such as white-crowned sparrow, hermit thrush, and Wilson's warbler nest in shrubby thickets. Alpine wildflowers and their pollinators add spots of color to the landscape.
- 5 **Twelvemile Summit** (Steese Highway (SHW) MP 85) and
- 6 **Eagle Summit** (SHW MP 107) - Caribou from the Fortymile herd may be seen from the highway or by scanning the alpine tundra during a hike. Caribou feed upon the dense carpets of lichens. These points mark the ends of the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail.

7 **Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail** - Look for gyrfalcon and ptarmigan along this 27-mile trail. Listen for the whistles of marmots and high-pitched pika chirps. Enjoy the breeding calls and displays of the northern wheatear, Lapland longspur, surfbirds, and American golden plovers.

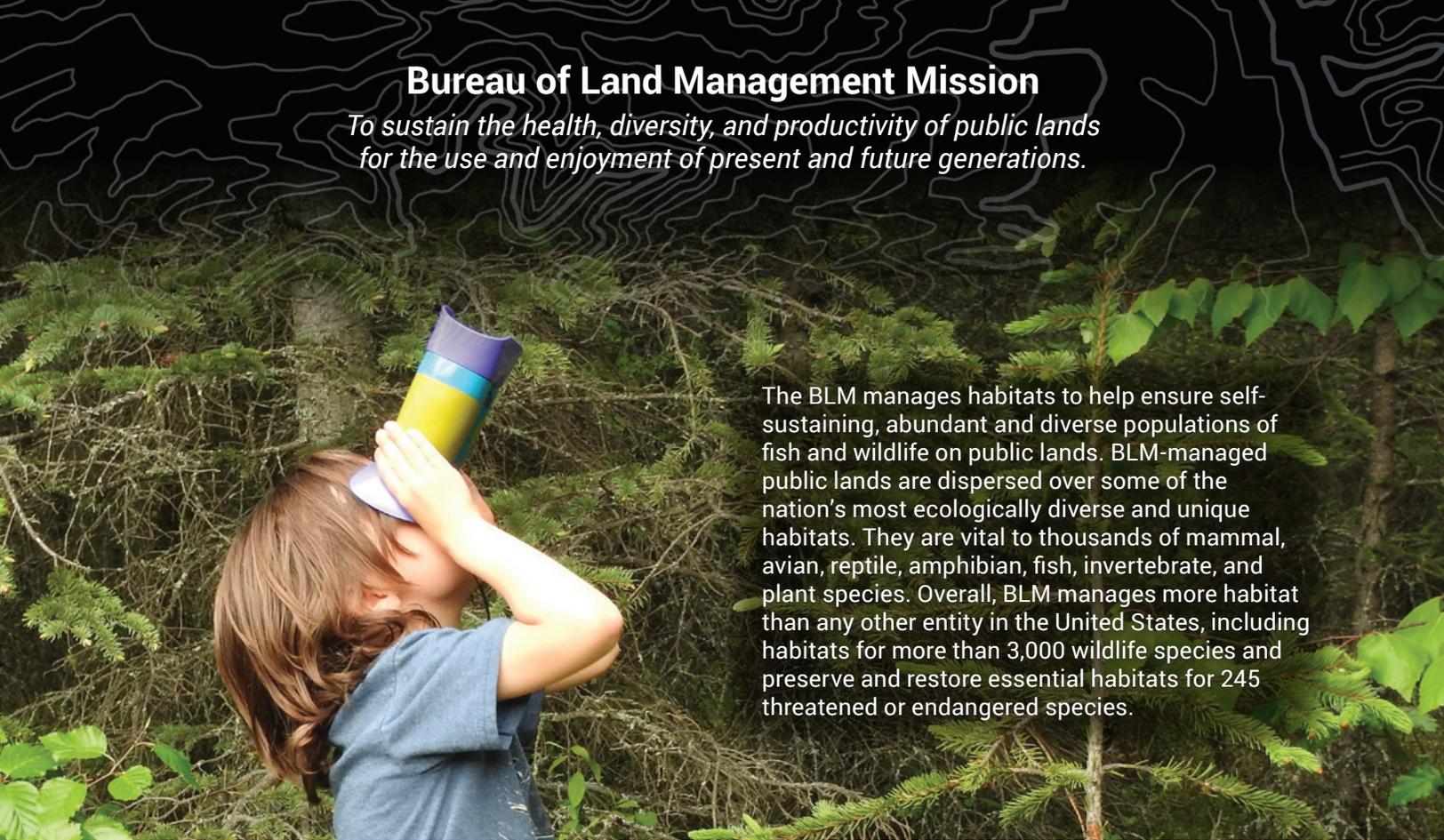
8 **Beaver Creek &**
 9 **Birch Creek National Wild & Scenic Rivers** - A summer float trip down either of these creeks may reward visitors with sightings of beaver, river otter, moose, caribou, black bear, brown bear, and wolves. Watch for the aerial acrobatics of peregrine falcons hunting.

Other Notable Locations

- **Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Alaska's largest boreal wetland basin is essential breeding habitat for millions of waterfowl.
- **Lower Chatanika River State Recreation Area**, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Hike, berry pick, or camp around Olnes Pond, and watch for the moose that frequent the area.
- **Yukon River**, multiple land managers. The bluffs, oxbows, and expansive riparian habitat of the Yukon River attract bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and moose.

Bureau of Land Management Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



The BLM manages habitats to help ensure self-sustaining, abundant and diverse populations of fish and wildlife on public lands. BLM-managed public lands are dispersed over some of the nation's most ecologically diverse and unique habitats. They are vital to thousands of mammal, avian, reptile, amphibian, fish, invertebrate, and plant species. Overall, BLM manages more habitat than any other entity in the United States, including habitats for more than 3,000 wildlife species and preserve and restore essential habitats for 245 threatened or endangered species.

BLM Alaska | 222 W 7th Avenue #13, Anchorage, AK 99513 | 907-271-5960 | www.blm.gov/alaska/wildlife

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Front Cover

Short-billed dowitchers and western sandpipers-
Melissa Gabrielson, USFS Chugach National
Forest

Introduction

Tundra- Martin Robards, WCS
Spotting Scope- BLM

Alaska's Habitats

Antler landscape- Kim Mincer, BLM
Fly agaric- BLM
Black morel- Sabrina Farmer, BLM
Chicken of the woods- Casey Burns, BLM
Angel wings- Maia Draper-Reich, BLM
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Alpine arnica- Kim Mincer, BLM
Forget-me-not- Kim Mincer, BLM
Wild geranium- Kim Mincer, BLM
Dwarf dogwood- Kim Mincer, BLM
When lightning strikes- Craig McCaa, BLM

Alaska's Wildlife

Brown bear- Steve Hillebrand, USFWS
Mountain goat- Ann Claerbout, BLM
Caribou - Craig McCaa, BLM
Collared pika- Jacob W. Frank, NPS
Northern hawk owl- Casey Burns, BLM
Spotted sandpiper- Geoff Walsh, BLM
Wolf spider- Derek Sikes, UAF
Bumblebee- Derek Sikes, UAF
Canadian tiger swallowtail- Casey Burns, BLM

Pacific walrus- Sarah Sonsthagen, USGS
Arctic char- David Parker, BLM
Wood frog- Casey Burns, BLM

Campbell Tract

Campbell Creek- Bob Wick, BLM
King salmon- BLM
American dipper- Brian Gratwicke
Red squirrel- Donna Dewhurst, USFWS
Moose- Bob Wick, BLM
Butterfly survey- Casey Burns, BLM
Spruce grouse- Lisa Gleason, BLM

Dalton Highway Corridor

Dalton Highway- Bob Wick, BLM
Muskox- NPS Public Domain
Upland sandpiper- Krista Lundgren, USFWS
Arctic ground squirrel- Bob Wick, BLM
Dall sheep- BLM
Where the forest ends- Craig McCaa, BLM

Denali Highway Region

Denali Highway- Bob Wick, BLM
Northern flying squirrel- Yumi Kawaguchi
Arctic warbler- Alan Schmierer
North American beaver- Jeremy Matlock, BLM
Trumpeter swan- Donna Dewhurst, USFWS
Highbush cranberry- Terry Smith, BLM
Wolf tracks- Erin Julianus, BLM

Fortymile Region

Fortymile kayak- Craig McCaa, BLM
Caribou- Bob Wick, BLM
Arctic grayling- Jim Mogen, USFWS
Peregrine falcon- Frank Doyle, USFWS
Moose- Bob Wick, BLM
Rare plants and pollinators- Josh Spice, NPS
Canada lynx- ©Ted Swem

Haines Region

Temperate rainforest- NPS
Mountain goat- David Restivo, NPS
Little brown bat- J Jongsma
Boreal toad- NPS
Bald eagle- Bob Wick, BLM
Salmon steam- Casey Burns, BLM
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National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska

Tundra and ice- Craig McCaa, BLM
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Arctic fox- Bob Wick, BLM
Caribou- Bob Wick, BLM
Spectacled eider- USGS
Dunlin- Ryan Askren, USGS
Wildflowers- Kim Mincer, BLM

Seward Peninsula

Seward Peninsula landscape- Laurie Cadzow, BLM
Bristle-thighed curlew- Kristine Sowl, USFWS
Muskox- Brian Ubelaker, BLM
Dolly Varden- Ryan Hagerty, USFWS
Bluethroat- Steve Hillebrand, USFWS
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Steese & White Mountains

Fall mountains- Craig McCaa, BLM
Dall sheep- NPS
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Northern wheatear- Brandon Trentler
Collared pika- NPS Public Domain
Landscapes shaped by fire- Sam Harrel, Alaska
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Back Cover

Young birdwatcher- Casey Burns, BLM