

WILDLIFE VIEWING TIPS

The goal of a wildlife viewer is to watch wildlife without bothering their normal activities.

- Be early, quiet, and patient. Not much else you do will enhance your opportunity to see and hear wildlife more.
- Remember that wild animals do their best to remain hidden. You may need to wait a while to see some wildlife species.
- Moving slowly and quietly will allow you to see wildlife displays you'll miss otherwise.
- Getting there before dawn is often necessary, but don't forget dusk too. Most animals are more active at twilight and dusk than in the middle of the day. When visiting an area, allow plenty of time. Don't rush from one site to the next.
- Check with wildlife agencies for help. Stop at the nearest area office or interpretive center to pick up brochures, maps, and wildlife checklists. Ask about any recent wildlife sightings, conditions, etc. Check with local and regional conservation groups for wildlife-viewing areas and tips.
- Use field guides to help identify your discoveries. They cover most options (animal ID, droppings, nests, eggs, holes, etc.) and can be found at many bookstores or online.
- Explore all the roads, trails, and habitats. Seldom are all of an area's interesting features clustered around the main entry road or trailheads.
- Drive or hike slowly, stop often, shut off your engine if you're driving a route and listen and look more carefully.
- Use binoculars and spotting scopes to view wildlife from a distance that will not disturb them.
- Film and photograph wildlife responsibly. Use a telephoto lens to photograph from a distance.
- Learn to interpret animal signs. Tracks, trails, nests, dens, droppings, and partially eaten plants are among the many clues to what animals may live in the area.
- Pay close attention to "edge", the area where different habitat types meet.
- After animals are spotted, don't alarm them. Talk quietly; move slowly and never directly toward an animal.
- Try to stay downwind of mammals.
- If the animal is looking directly at you and appears alert and nervous, remain motionless or move slowly away until normal behavior returns. Learn to heed other wildlife behavior that tells you they know you are there and you are too close.
- Stay away from animals that behave strangely or appear sickly.
- Leave pets at home. Nothing will scare animals away more quickly than a dog. Many wild animals can harm pets.
- Allow animals to eat their natural foods - don't feed them.

WILDLIFE VIEWING ETIQUETTE

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- People who enjoy wildlife sometimes unknowingly harm the animals. If disturbed too often, both birds and mammals may abandon their nests, dens, or feeding areas. Use good judgment in viewing wildlife.
- Avoid excess use of tape players in attracting birds during their nesting season.
- Try to observe wildlife from a distance that will not force the animals to alter their normal behavior. Never chase wildlife.
- Limit the time you spend closely viewing an animal.
- Do not pet or rescue young animals. If the parent is not visible, it may be because you are present. Many birds and mammals leave young while feeding or during certain parts of the day.
- Become familiar with responsible watching behavior and help others be responsible wildlife watchers.
- Leave feathers, eggs, nests, dead animals, and live animals where you find them. It is illegal to possess them without proper permits.
- Do not flush birds from their nests in order to view their eggs or watch them fly.
- Respect private property. Always get permission before entering.
- While driving on private or public lands, always keep your car on designated roads.
- Think about the cumulative affect of the visits to your site before you, and the visits after you leave. The total can have negative impacts on wildlife behavior and sometimes survival.

Many of Arizona's top wildlife watching areas are accessible to those in wheelchairs or walkers including national, state, county and city parks. Visit the [Accessing Arizona website](#) for realistic information about wheelchair accessible places to visit in Arizona.

