

Wildlife Viewing Tips

Keep a Low Profile. Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors. Resist the temptation to try to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas.

Time it Right. Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidepools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.

Look for Clues. Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife in the area - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you.

Help Keep Wildlife Wild. Never feed wild animals. Doing so can cause them to associate people with food, which can cause trouble. Human food can also make them sick.

Be Considerate of Others. People use and enjoy Alaska's wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.



Sea otters are sometimes seen in groups, commonly called rafts, of two or more animals.



Gustavus: Gateway to Glacier Bay

Thousands of visitors come to Glacier Bay National Park each summer, attracted by the astounding scenery and thriving wildlife populations. Those who spend a few days in the town of Gustavus, which sits comfortably on the doorstep of Glacier Bay, find additional surprises and delights. Wildlife viewing opportunities, beautiful surroundings, range of accommodations and gracious residents (population about 400) make the town of Gustavus an excellent addition to any trip.

Marvel at the glaciers and wildlife on a boat tour into the heart of Glacier Bay. Listen for migrating sandhill cranes at the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area. Stay in a comfortable bed and breakfast or lodge, enjoying delicious meals and sharing stories with the owners and other guests. Keep your eyes open for wildlife while paddling the sheltered waters of the Beardslee Islands. Take a wildlife cruise to Point Adolphus in Icy Strait. Whether you stay for a few days or a few weeks, you'll find a wealth of wildlife viewing opportunities while enjoying the warm and friendly community of Gustavus, the gateway to Glacier Bay National Park.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Gustavus Visitor's Association. Visit <http://www.gustavusak.com> or call 907-697-2854. For information on Glacier Bay National Park, visit the National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/glba/> or call (907) 697-2230. Visitor services in Glacier Bay are available from mid-May through mid-September. A few services in Gustavus are available year-round.



Watchable Wildlife "Fun Facts"

Making a Comeback: Sea otters began recolonizing Glacier Bay in the mid 1990's after at least 150 years of absence. Scientists observed over 2,000 otters in the park in 2004. Otters eat up to 25% of their body mass each day and during their absence the populations of many of their favorite foods, including clams, crabs and sea urchins, rose significantly. With sea otters now established in the park the decline of these invertebrate populations could have wide-ranging effects, including pressures on other predators including sea stars, octopus and several bird species. Another possible impact is an increase in the number and size of undersea kelp "forests" in Glacier Bay, caused by reduced numbers of kelp-grazing urchins. These kelp forests are good habitat for a variety of small fish and invertebrates that are a primary food source for birds and mammals in Glacier Bay.



To Calve or Calve Not: One highlight of a trip to Glacier Bay is watching a tidewater glacier "calve" - when enormous chunks of ice fall off a glacier's face and crash dramatically into the water below. When a large piece of ice calves off a glacier, the impact stirs nutrients, stunned crustaceans, krill and small fish to the surface. Black-legged kittiwakes circle and plunge dive for this prey. Fish also come to feed on the small organisms that well up near the face of a glacier. These fish are vital food for birds and marine mammals, making glacial calving an integral part of the food chain of Glacier Bay National Park.

Traveling Safely in Bear Country (All of Gustavus is bear country)

Making noise (sing, clap, talk) while you travel will reduce your chances of surprising a bear. Be alert along noisy streams, in thick brush, and when visibility is poor. Always keep your belongings (backpack, food, fish, etc.) with you or in bear-proof storage.

If you see a bear, **stay calm**. If the bear does not notice you, quietly leave, keeping your eyes on the bear. If it does notice you, face the bear, wave your arms and talk to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground. **Never run from a bear.**

If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food. **Stand your ground!** If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck and remain still. In rare instances, bears may be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged.



STAY SAFE!

The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. For safety, take a guided tour or take a companion, let someone know your plans and be prepared for emergencies with spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication. Visit the Alaska State Parks' Staying Safe web page for details: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/safety.



From Ketchikan to Yakutat, the **Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail** will incorporate about 100 of the best wildlife viewing sites. Under the leadership of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, with support from many partners, the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail is being developed in the summer of 2005.

We invite input, suggestions, stories, and partners. E-mail karla_hart@fishgame.state.ak.us with ACWVT in your subject line or call 907-465-5157.

Photo credit text will go here.



All public partners are equal opportunity providers and employers.

GUSTAVUS

Wildlife Viewing Guide

www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Watch Our Wildlife

Wildlife Viewing Sites



Most of Glacier Bay National Park's administrative and visitor services infrastructure, including the Glacier Bay Lodge, are located at **Bartlett Cove**, ¹ about 10 miles from the Gustavus airport. The trails in the area allow you to explore a variety of ecosystems. The **Beach Trail** follows the shore for one mile from the lodge along beach meadows and forest habitats, which are home to porcupine, bear and moose. A variety of birds spend the summer in the area, including blue grouse, dark-eyed juncos, orange-crowned warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, three-toed woodpeckers, Pacific-slope flycatchers, hermit thrushes, winter wrens and yellow-rumped warblers. Watch for harbor seals, Steller sea lions and humpback whales in the water, especially at the entrance to Bartlett Cove. Ranger-led walks along the one-mile **Forest Loop Trail** are offered daily throughout the summer. Park rangers can help you decide which of these and other trails are best for you.

Watch wildlife from the water's surface on a kayak trip into the **Beardslee Islands**. ² Humpback whales, sea otters and harbor seals are scattered throughout the Beardslees, with whales and otters most likely to be seen on the western side of the islands. Watch the shore for black bears and moose. Black oystercatchers - a black shorebird with a bright red-orange bill - nest on the islands. Harlequin ducks, pigeon guillemots, pelagic cormorants and large flocks of molting mergansers may be seen as well. A few arctic terns might be spotted.

Look for marbled murrelets in the northwest corner of the area. Guided trips and kayak rentals are available. Before heading out on your own, check with a park ranger about permits (required), tides, maps and areas closed for the protection of wildlife. Multi-day campers must attend an orientation and check out bear-resistant food containers. The Beardslee Islands are closed to motorized vessels, and the calm waters make this ideal for kayakers of all skill levels.

An eight-hour **boat tour** ³ takes visitors into the heart of Glacier Bay for dramatic views of tidewater glaciers. Look for humpback and killer whales along the way. Sea otters are often seen floating on their backs feeding on shellfish. Tours stop near **South Marble Island**, an important seabird colony that includes pelagic cormorants, common murre, black-legged kittiwakes, pigeon guillemots and tufted puffins. Watch and listen to the Steller sea lions hauled out at the north end of South Marble Island. Elsewhere in the park, mountain goats and brown bears might be spotted. Harbor seals haul out on the icebergs that calve off tidewater glaciers. The tour includes narration from a park ranger, kayak drop-off service, on-board lunch and other amenities.

The **Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area** ⁴ is one of the largest expanses of undisturbed wet meadow habitat in Southeast Alaska. This is an important resting spot for sandhill cranes during fall migration, when numbers at the refuge can reach into the thousands. Crane viewing is best in September, especially on clear, sunny days. The meadow provides cranes with an abundant food source and good places to roost with the ability to see predators at a distance. Other birds that use the area for part or all of the year include short-eared owls, Canada geese, Wilson's snipe,



Black oystercatchers nest on islands in Glacier Bay National Park

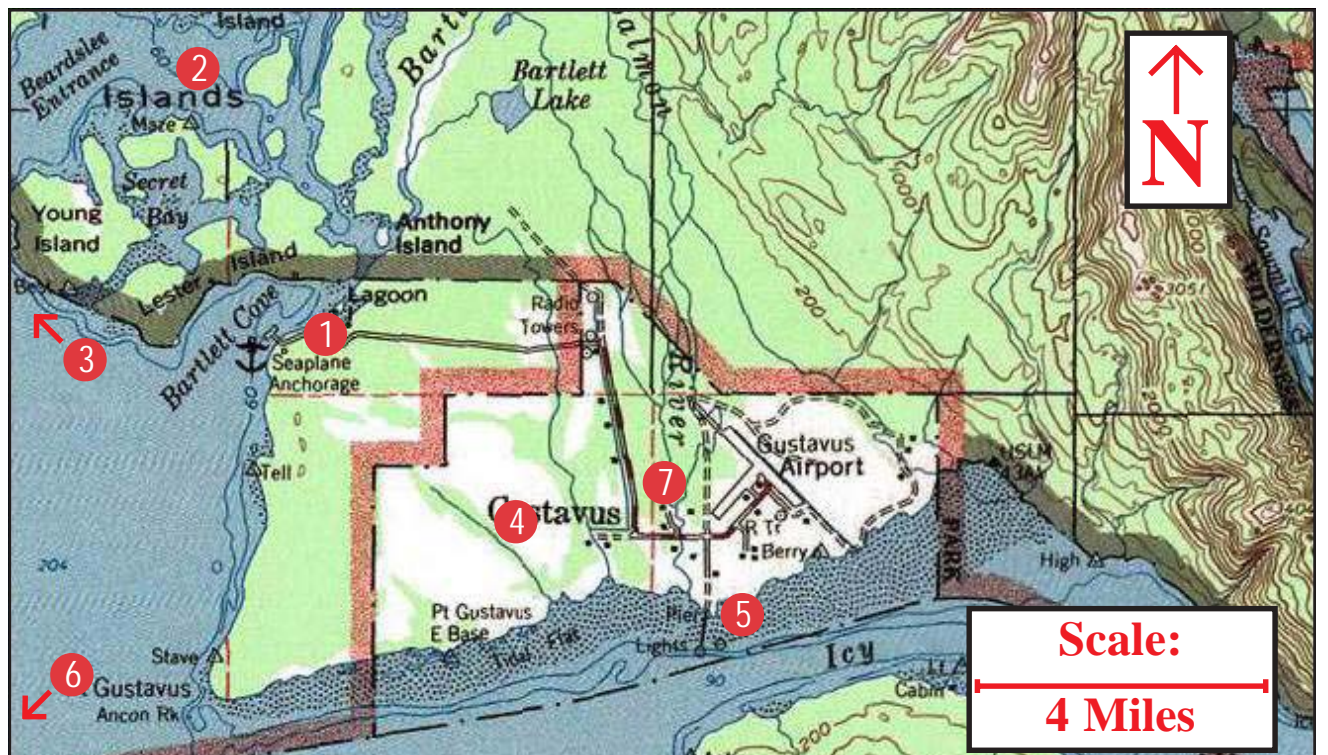
trumpeter swans and mallards. Moose also feed here, with sightings of moose on the rise as the population continues to grow in the Gustavus area. You might also see marten, weasels and coyotes. The eastern boundary of the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area is at the end of Good River Road, which heads west out of the center of Gustavus. There are no public use facilities or developed trails. Be prepared for any conditions and wear appropriate footwear. Much of the land east of the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area is private. Respect property boundaries when approaching the area, and stay on the refuge while visiting.

Stand on the **Gustavus dock** ⁵ and scan the water for the blows of humpback or killer whales in Icy Strait. Closer to the dock, look for Steller sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters, marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots and several species of loons. Bald eagles perch on the dock and along the shore. Northern harriers and short-eared owls can be seen hunting over the grasslands along the beach and around the dock. The **Salmon River estuary**, a five-minute walk along the beach to the west is a good spot to look for wildlife. In May sand lance (a slender, five to eight inch fish) draw large numbers of bald eagles, harbor seals and other predators. Throughout the year, this nutrient-rich estuary is a good place to look for birds and mammals. The beaches around the dock and near the estuary are good spots to see black-bellied plovers, western sandpipers, dunlin, whimbrels and short- and long-billed dowitchers in May and August, when these migrating shorebirds stop to refuel on their long journeys to and from their breeding grounds farther north. The Gustavus dock is located south of the main intersection in town, at the end of Gustavus Dock Road. The tides here can change up to twenty vertical feet between high and low, and it is advisable to consult a tide table before wandering too far along the beach. Kayak and boat tours depart from the Gustavus dock to explore the waters of Icy Strait (see site 6).

Icy Strait ⁶ is the primary passage for water flowing between the open Pacific Ocean and the northern Inside Passage. Humpback whales, sea otters (in the kelp beds near islands), Steller sea lions, Dall's porpoises and killer whales are drawn to Icy Strait by the abundant marine food. **Point Adolphus** on the southern shore of Icy Strait is especially well known for whale watching. Marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots, Pacific loons, pelagic cormorants, black-legged kittiwakes and surf scoters are often seen in Icy Strait throughout the summer. Boat tours to Icy Strait depart from the Gustavus dock daily in the summer. Guided multi-day kayak tours also explore Icy Strait and Point Adolphus. Many accommodations in town will arrange an Icy Strait wildlife tour, or you may check with the Gustavus Visitor's Association.

The community of Gustavus rests on the broad, flat expanse of the **Gustavus forelands**, ⁷ the largest flat plain in Southeast Alaska. Each winter, as the snow pack grows, moose concentrate on the flats to browse on willow and other low-lying plants near the beach, where the snow is not as deep. Moose are a relatively new member of the Gustavus community, with the first few colonizers arriving in the mid 1960's. By the mid 1980's they were common, and the Gustavus forelands now has one of the highest densities of moose in Alaska. Common winter birds include chestnut-backed chickadees, golden-crowned kinglets, pine siskins and white-winged crossbills. Horned Grebes, red-breasted mergansers, common loons and all three scoter species are easily seen in the waters off Gustavus in the winters.

Looking for more? Check with the National Park Service or the Gustavus Visitor's Association for details on **other tours** that operate in Glacier Bay. Local operators offer **extended charters** that combine kayaking, backcountry camping, overnight boat tours and other experiences into a multi-day adventure. Packaged and individualized trips are available, tailored to a range of ability levels. Check with the Gustavus Visitor's Association for more information about these and other additional wildlife viewing opportunities in Gustavus and Glacier Bay.



1. Bartlett Cove	h	,	<	1 - 4 hours
2. Beardslee Islands	\$;	È	<	2 hours - full day+
3. Day Boat Tours	h \$;	È		8 hours
4. Dude Creek				2 hours - half day
5. Gustavus Dock	h			1 - 2 hours
6. Icy Strait	h \$	È	<	4 - 6 hours
7. Gustavus Forelands				2 hours - full day +

Not all boats are wheelchair accessible, ask when booking.
+ Multi-day trips allow for the richest experience.

Scale:
4 Miles

h Partial wheelchair access
\$ Entry or tour fee
; Interpretive signs
, Hiking trails
È Boat access only
< Camping in area