

Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence Background and Interpretation



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Published by Alberta Environment and Parks

Cover photo taken by Gordon Court

Date of publication: December 2020

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Summary

Research Permits and Collection Licences authorize the public handling, disruption, collection or possession of wildlife in research, **which includes, but is not limited to, research, surveying, inventory and monitoring, and education-related activities.**

Environment and Parks wildlife management staff (“Permit Coordinators”) have the legal authority to approve or deny applications. Review and setting of conditions on the Permits/Licences may be involve input from several wildlife management staff members in order to develop the final Permit/Licence. Applications are reviewed for animal care aspects of the proposed work and may be forwarded for review by the Chair of the Animal Care Committee before approval and issuance.

The purpose of this document is to outline the application, review and approval process for provincial Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences

Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system

Links to the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) application system <https://www.opac.alberta.ca>, guidelines for applications, and class protocols are posted on Environment and Parks external web site (<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>). Online application, amendment, reporting and renewal is provided.

Interpretation

Research includes, but is not limited to, research, surveying, inventory and monitoring, and education-related activities. For simplicity, this guideline will refer to this suite of activities as ‘research’.

The Government of Alberta has the responsibility and authority for the protection and management of wildlife on all land in Alberta, irrespective of whether these lands are owned by the Crown or by private interests. Researchers and others collecting information on wildlife should be aware of the requirements for a Research Permit and Collection Licence as outlined in Alberta’s *Wildlife Act* and *Wildlife Regulation*. They should also be aware that Research Permits and Collection Licences are not intended to guide or affect land use decisions.

The Minister responsible for Fish and Wildlife Management has the authority under the *Wildlife Act* to influence and control human activities that may have direct adverse effects on the populations of wildlife species. To that end, the Wildlife Regulation [Sec. 81 and 82] defines a Research Permit as something that authorizes a research plan (we interpret research to include scientific research as well as surveying, monitoring, and inventory, and education-related activities); it also authorizes the Permit Holder to possess live or dead wildlife (in accordance with the described research plan). The *Wildlife Act* [Sec. 1 (1) (p)] defines a “licence” as something that authorizes the holder to “hunt” wildlife. Activities that fit under the definition of “hunt” (see interpretation below) and are related to research are authorized under a Collection Licence.

- “Hunt” is interpreted in the *Wildlife Act* [Sec. 1 (1) (o)] to include:
 - shoot at, harass or worry;
 - chase, pursue, follow after or on the trail of, search for, flush, stalk or lie in wait for;
 - capture or wilfully injure or kill;
 - attempt to capture, injure or kill; or
 - assist another person to hunt in a manner specified above while that other person is so hunting.
- Section 46 (a) of the Wildlife Regulation states that in order to be issued a **Collection Licence**, a person must have a valid permit such as a Research Permit or Falconry Permit. An annual Collection Licence authorizes the holder to hunt or collect wildlife as specified in the Licence (Section 47).
- Sections 81 and 82 of the Wildlife Regulation state that adults/business corporations/societies (further referred to as persons) interested in conducting research or education that involves possession of wildlife in Alberta must obtain an annual **Research Permit** from the Minister responsible for wildlife.
- A Research Permit and Collection Licence are required for research involving all wildlife, including non-licence animals, and controlled animals. By definition under the *Wildlife Act*, a species of “wildlife” is an “animal” (a vertebrate that is not a human or a fish), and therefore a Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence is not required for research on fish, invertebrates or plants, even if they are listed as Endangered or Threatened. (For information on Fish Research Licences, see: <https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>)

- However, a Research Permit and Collection Licence are not required for non-licence animals if:
 - the proposed activity involves the live-trapping of non-licence animals that can be possessed, and the trapping method being used does not harm the animal (Schedule 1, s. 4(1)(c) of the Wildlife Regulation); or
 - if the proposed activity involves hunting or trapping specified non-licence animals as identified in Schedule 1, s. 7 (9), (10), (12) of the Wildlife Regulation).

In summary, it is the Collection Licence that authorizes many proposed research activities (e.g., those that involve pursuing, searching for, disturbing, worrying, capturing wildlife). A Research Permit authorizes the possession of wildlife for research or education purposes. In order to be issued a Collection Licence, a person must have a valid Research Permit. For these reasons, both a Research Permit and a Collection Licence are issued (the only exception is when possession occurs without collection/hunting of wildlife – in the case of picking up found dead wildlife or maintaining a collection of live or dead specimens or wildlife parts). Research Permits just list the holder, while Collection Licences list the holder PLUS key persons involved in the collections. The requirement of listing those conducting the activity relates to identifying individual accountability (i.e., who is doing the ‘hunting’). A completed and approved application is considered a “written plan authorizing the conduct of research or educational programs” as defined in s. 82 of Alberta’s Wildlife Regulation.

Activities Requiring Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences

Proposed research activity, **on public land (including Provincial Parks) or private land**, requires a Research Permit and Collection Licence if it involves any of the following (also see Figure 1):

- collecting/possessing live or dead wildlife or wildlife parts (does not include feces or naturally shed, “exuviated”, hair/feathers/antlers) – possession without collection of live animals from wild may only require a Research Permit (no Collection Licence);

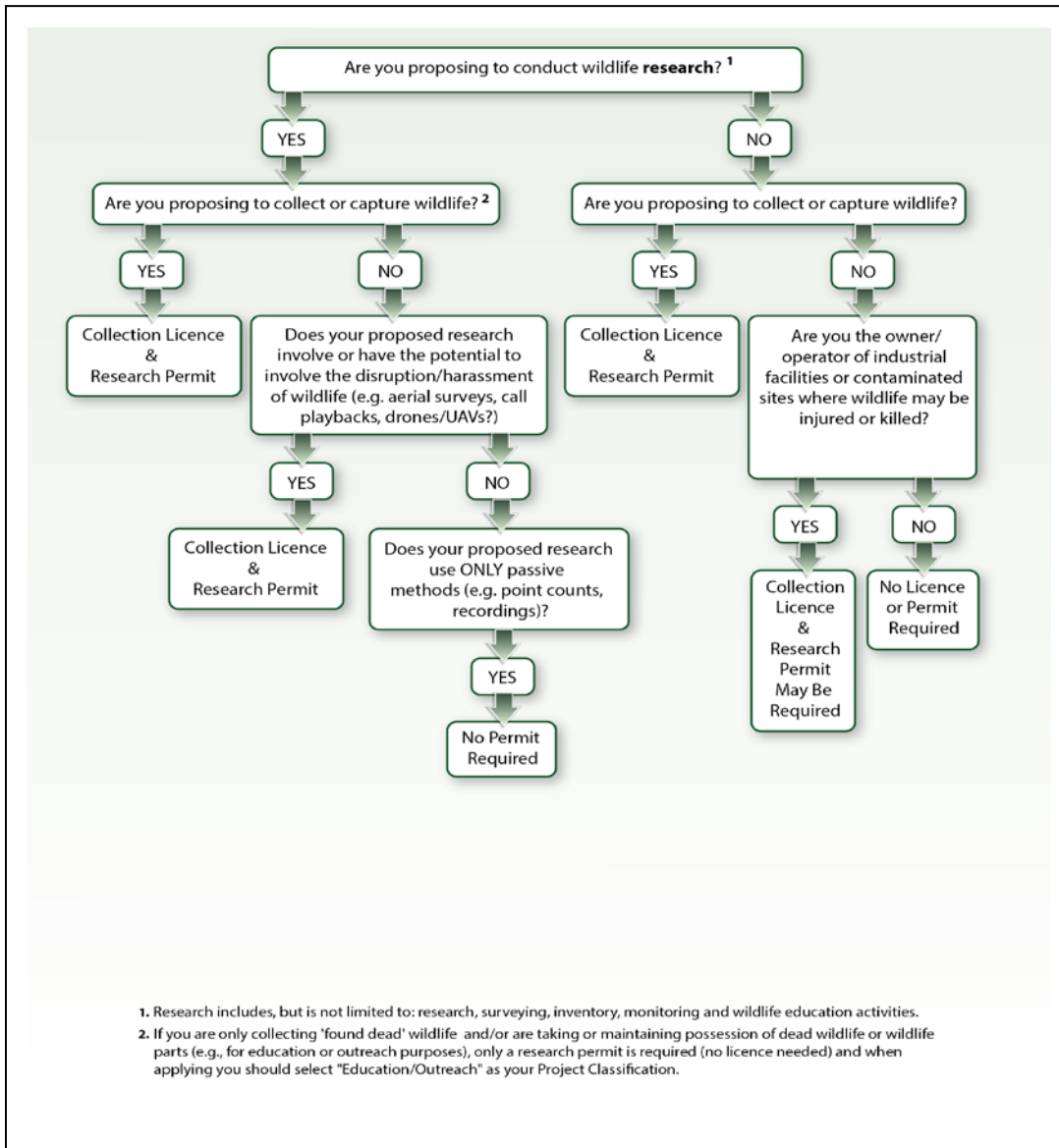


Figure 1: Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence Decision Tree

- surveying animals where the survey technique causes disruption to the animal (e.g., call playback, aerial surveys, flushing birds from nests, unmanned aerial drones/UAVs, use of artificial lights or deterrents, remote cameras disturbing the target species [e.g., erected at an active nest] or that modify behavior through baiting or luring);
- activity that is included in a Class Protocol.

The *Wildlife Act* [s. 1 (2) (a) (ii)] excludes activities such as photography or bird watching from the definition of 'hunt' [s. 1 (1) (o) (ii)]; therefore a Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence is not required for these activities **as long as the activities do not include actions listed under the definition of hunting**. A Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence is generally not required if the research technique does not, or is not likely to disturb or alter the behaviour of wildlife; e.g., some passive survey techniques like:

- wildlife sweeps – search for significant wildlife habitat features as defined in the Alberta Public Lands Glossary of Terms, and referred to in the Master Schedule of Standards and Conditions and accompanying Factsheet where wildlife are not disturbed (i.e., not using close approach or flushing) (<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/master-schedule-of-standards-and-conditions> and <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/wildlife-sweep-conditions-in-the-master-schedule-of-standards-and-conditions>).
- acoustic or visual surveys – (e.g., call surveys for birds and amphibians) that can be achieved without disturbing wildlife (e.g., point counts, transect surveys, breeding bird surveys, sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys where birds are not disturbed), and do NOT include use of playbacks.
- deployment of passive detection devices such as automated recording units (ARUs) and remote cameras that are deployed **without** actively disturbing the target species (i.e., not at active nest or modifying behavior through baiting or luring).
- collection of hair from natural rub trees (even if a small amount of wire is added to the rub tree; however, a large amount of wire, or use of bait, would interfere with the wildlife and would require a Research Permit/Collection Licence).
- notwithstanding these exclusions, permit holders working within sensitive wildlife (e.g., caribou) habitat are requested to consider timing their activities to reduce disturbance and/or to minimize the creation of skidoo or other trails (which allow wolves into caribou habitat) in winter

People cannot possess dead wildlife without authorization such as a Found-dead Wildlife Permit or a Research Permit. For simple possession of wildlife (without collection via hunting-like activities; e.g., wildlife provided by the Crown), if the purpose is for research, e.g., for a museum to possess found-dead wildlife for research purposes, the work can be authorized by a Research Permit alone (no Collection Licence needed).

Where there is a history of or potential for accidental injury or mortality of wildlife at industrial facilities, owners and/or operators may require a Collection Licence and Research Permit. Owners and/or operators should contact the local regional Wildlife Biologist to discuss further.

If after reading this document an applicant is unsure of licencing requirements for a proposed activity, they can also discuss their proposal with the appropriate regional Wildlife Biologist by:

- viewing the Fisheries and Wildlife Management Area Contacts—Map at <https://www.alberta.ca/fisheries-and-wildlife-management-contacts.aspx>
- calling 310-0000 and asking for the appropriate Fish and Wildlife office
- contacting the Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence phone line (780-422-9533), or
- emailing AEP.WildResPermits@gov.ab.ca

Failure to hold and produce a valid Research Permit and Collection Licence and abide by the terms and conditions of the Licence may result in prosecution under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*.

The Application Process

New and Renewal Applications

Both new and renewal applications are handled through the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system, which can be accessed from the Wildlife Research Permit web site:

<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>

or directly:

<https://www.opac.alberta.ca/>

Online application, amendment, reporting and renewal is provided through OPaC. The OPaC Wildlife system is joined to the OPaC Parks system for applying for Parks Research and Collection Permits. In addition to allowing users to apply for wildlife or parks permits separately, the system allows those who are working on wildlife in parks to apply for both permits with one application.

For details on the application process and what type information is needed in an application, please refer to the OPaC User Guide and the Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence Guidance document at:

<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>

The review process for both new and renewal applications is outlined in Figure 2 (below).

All applications received by the OPaC system are assigned a unique nine-digit Application Number. Once a permit/licence is issued, it received a number in the form of YY-number as received (i.e., 21-042 = 42nd permit issued in 2021).

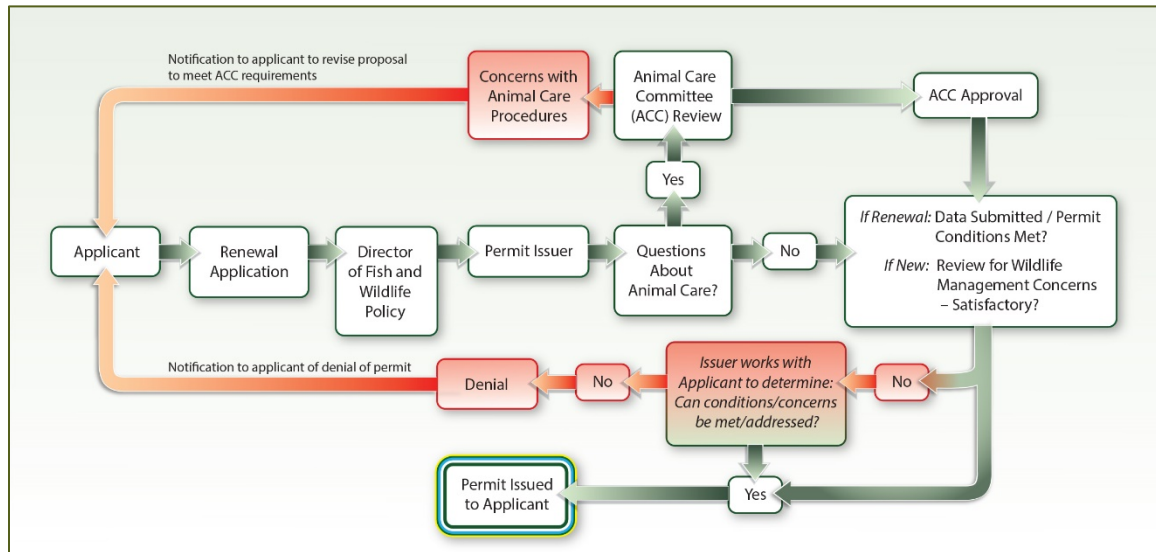


Figure 2: Review Process for New and Renewal Research Permit and Collection Licence Applications

Denial of Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence Application

If the Permit Coordinator deems that the application should not occur as proposed and is not able to come to an agreement with the applicant on submission of data or revisions that would allow the project to proceed, the application can be denied. Denial of an application does not preclude the applicant from submitting the same or very similar project at a different time.

Applications for Research Permits and Collection Licences or Renewals will be denied if:

- The applicant or those responsible for the previous project have outstanding FWMIS data submission requirements.
- The stated goal of the application has weak or no demonstrated link to the advancement of management and conservation for a particular species.
- The overall risk to individuals, subpopulations or populations of a species is determined to be too great, including consideration of cumulative effects of multiple activities.

- The application contains methods that are determined to be too invasive or detrimental to an individual, subpopulation or population and other techniques are not considered, and/or the applicant has not demonstrated adequate competency and/or experience in the handling of the target wildlife.
- The research/collection is being conducted in sensitive habitats or during a restricted activity period and the potential disturbance to the sensitive species is determined to be too great.
- The research/collection is being conducted with sensitive life-stages of the wildlife in question and the potential disturbance to the sensitive life-stage is determined to be too great.
- The potential risk to the public, applicant or infrastructure is determined to be too great.
- There are multiple applications for the same or similar activities. In this case, and if the applications are determined to be of the same merit, the first application received by OPaC by calendar date shall receive priority for approval.

Revocation/Cancellation of Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences

Research Permits and Collection Licences may be revoked or cancelled if:

- The Permit Coordinator and Permit Holder agree after the permit has been issued that the project will not go ahead or would fit better combined with another project (cancellation).
- The project lead or other participants violate conditions on the permit/licence or otherwise disturb wildlife in a manner that exceeds what the permit/licence allows (revocation).

In either case, the Permit Coordinator will communicate directly with the Permit Holder, providing the reasons for the revocation/cancellation, and a copy of the correspondence will be uploaded to OPaC as a record of the revocation/cancellation.

Class Protocols for Wildlife Research

As part of the original mandate for the AWACC, it was determined that ongoing, repeated activities associated with handling live wildlife should be managed so as to provide consistent standards. To this end, the AWACC, in conjunction with staff and individuals involved in these types of activities in Alberta developed “Class Protocols” that outline a standardized set of approved methods to cover specific activities.

To date, the following Class Protocols have been completed and are available at:

<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>

**Addendum to Class Protocols #001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 007, 008, 009, 101, 012:
Invasive DNA Collection from Wildlife Species**

Chemical Immobilization of Wildlife: Drug Volume Calculation Tables

Class Protocol #001 Raptor Collection for Falconry

Class Protocol #002 Recreational Bird Banding

Class Protocol #003 Capture and Handling of Amphibians

Class Protocol #004 Bat Capture, Handling and Release

Class Protocol #005 Capture, Handling, Immobilization and Release of Bears

Class Protocol #006 Call Playback for Owls

Class Protocol #007 Small Mammal Handling and Trapping

Class Protocol #008 Ungulate Capture by Net-Gunning, Handling and Release

Class Protocol #009 Canid Capture, Handling, Immobilization and Release

Class Protocol #010 Greater Sage-grouse Capture, Translocation and Release

Class Protocol #011 Ground-Based Wildlife Surveys

Class Protocol #012 Cougar Capture, Handling, Immobilization and Release

**Class Protocol #013 Ungulate Survey Protocol for Species Detection and
Monitoring Purposes**

**Class Protocol #014 Capture, handling, translocation and release of Ord's
kangaroo rat**

These Class Protocols have been adopted by the AWACC and approved by Alberta Fish and Wildlife Stewardship as conditions on appropriate Research Permits and Collection Licences.

Failure of the Permit Holder to abide by the protocol standards will render the Permit/Licence invalid.

Falconry Collection Licences

Falconry Collection Licences are not issued through OPaC at this time. Those applicants wishing to obtain a Falconry Collection Licence to obtain a wild raptor for recreational or commercial falconry must:

1. First obtain a Recreational or Commercial Falconry Permit. These Permits are only granted to those who belong to an approved falconry society. These Permits are not issued from the Office of the Executive Director of Fish and Wildlife Stewardship, but can be purchased for a fee at any local Resource Management (Fish and Wildlife) office.

2. Once a Falconry Permit has been purchased, the applicant must next apply for a Collection Licence. The Falconry Collection Licence application can be obtained at <https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>. Applications must contain information detailing species, capture methods and age of bird to be collected. The receipt from the purchased Falconry Permit must accompany the application.
3. Applicants must adhere to the Class Protocol “Raptor Collection for Falconry” which can be found under the heading Class Protocols on the following web site:

<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>
4. Email the completed Falconry Collection Licence Application for approval and issuance to Dr. Gordon Court at: Gord.Court@gov.ab.ca .

Contact Us

If after reading this document an applicant is unsure of licensing requirements for a proposed activity, they can also discuss their proposal with the appropriate area Wildlife Biologist by:

- viewing the Fisheries and Wildlife Management Area Contacts—Map at <https://www.alberta.ca/fisheries-and-wildlife-management-contacts.aspx>
- calling 310-0000 and asking for the appropriate Fish and Wildlife office
- contacting the Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence phone line (780-422-9533), or
- emailing AEP.WildResPermits@gov.ab.ca