

# Frequently asked questions:

## Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences

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### What is considered wildlife research?

Under Alberta's *Wildlife Act* and Wildlife Regulation, wildlife research includes, but is not limited to, scientific research, applied science, surveying, inventory and monitoring and educational activities involving wildlife.

### What types of activities require a Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence?

Under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*, Alberta Environment and Parks has the responsibility for the management and protection of wildlife. Proposed research activity, on public land (including Provincial Parks) or private land, requires a Research Permit and Collection Licence (a "permit") if it involves any of the following:

- collecting/capturing/possessing live or dead wildlife or wildlife parts (does not include feces or naturally shed, "exuviated", hair/feathers/antlers);
- the potential to involve handling, disruption or disturbance of wildlife (e.g., aerial surveys; radio telemetry; techniques that use dogs to locate wildlife or samples; electronic call playbacks; unmanned aerial drones (UAVs); use of artificial lights or deterrents); remote cameras **that disturb the animal through use of bait, luring or other disturbance.**
- activity that is included in a Class Protocol (e.g., electronic call playback).

### Why do I need a Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence?

Alberta's *Wildlife Act* protects wildlife from various activities, which are listed under the definition of "hunt" [section 1(1)(o)]. Under the act, without a licence that authorizes "hunting", a person cannot undertake the following activities in relation to wildlife:

- (i) shoot at, harass or worry,
- (ii) chase, pursue, follow after or on the trail of, search for, flush, stalk or lie in wait for,
- (iii) capture or wilfully injure or kill,
- (iv) attempt to capture, injure or kill, or
- (v) assist another person to hunt in a manner specified in subclause (i), (ii), (iii) or (iv) while that other person is so hunting;

Many research-related activities fall under the above definition of "hunt" and, therefore, require a licence. Research-related "hunting" activities are authorized under a Collection Licence.

The Wildlife Regulation [sections 46+47] states that to have a Collection Licence you have to have a permit (e.g., a Research or Falconry Permit). A Research Permit [section 81+82] authorizes its holder to possess wildlife and live controlled animals. This is why both a Research Permit and Collection Licence are needed to conduct research on wildlife.

What types of activities **DO NOT** require a Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence?

Examples of activities that do not, or are not likely to, disturb wildlife and therefore do not require a Research Permit and Collection Licence (a “permit”) include:

- 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:
  - <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, spot mapping, recordings, transect surveys, presence/absence 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.

Do I require a different Permit or Licence for different types of industrial activity?

No. Alberta Environment and Parks issues Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences on the basis of the risk of the survey activity to wildlife. For example, passive surveys for wildlife, like breeding bird point counts, will not require permits, regardless of industry type requiring the surveys (e.g., wind development). The one exception to this rule is associated with specific activity types associated with one particular industry such as bird deterrent systems used with tailings or process ponds associated with oil sands mining.

Can I combine different activities in

Yes; in fact, Alberta Environment and Parks **encourages bundling of low-risk activities** for one or more similar projects into a single permit application that

different regions of the province into a single permit?

specifies the type(s) of activity being proposed, and the regions in which they are expected to occur. If the applicant can reasonably foresee that the work will occur in more than one region, they should include all potential regions in their application.

Not all activities can be bundled together, but those that can be bundled are generally related to pre-industrial survey activities that are commonly used, follow Class Protocols, and disturb wildlife but otherwise present a relatively low risk, including:

- Call playbacks
- Den searches/checks and monitoring
- Amphibian surveys including capture for ID and translocation out of harm's way
- Sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys

For more details on bundling of low-risk activities please see the Process document on our web site:

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

How do I apply for a Wildlife Research Permit and Collection Licence?

Environment and Parks uses an online system for applying for Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences. The system is housed within the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system that was initially developed by Alberta Culture and Alberta Parks. The Wildlife Research system is joined with the system for applying for Parks Research and Collection Permits. Features include:

- One-time registration that provides users with individual password-protected accounts to complete, submit and track the progress of applications
- Communication by e-mail, notifying users when applications have been received, requesting changes if necessary and sending back approved permits and licences

With this system, your permit and licence are electronically generated, signed and distributed. Once they are approved, you will receive them almost instantly. In addition to allowing researchers to apply for either a wildlife or a parks permit on its own, the system also allows researchers who are working on wildlife in parks to apply for both permits with a single application.

How long does it take to process an application?

All new and renewal wildlife research applications undergo review by a Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch Wildlife Biologist ("Permit Coordinator"). Applications are reviewed for animal care aspects of the proposed work and, if animals are being handled, may be forwarded for review by the Alberta Wildlife Animal Care Committee (AWACC) before approval and issuance. The time frame to review and process each application is dependent on a number of factors including:

- 1) **Following AWACC Class Protocols** - our website contains Class Protocols that provide AWACC-approved guidelines for a number of methods commonly utilized by researchers in the province of Alberta. Following these Class Protocols will speed application review. Proposed methods not included within the set of approved Class Protocols will undergo a more detailed review. **Class protocols can be found at:**

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

- 2) **Time of the year** - February to June is our busiest time for processing applications. Each application is processed and reviewed “first come, first served” and processing may take **4-6 weeks. It is advised that applications for Research Permits be submitted at least 1 month prior to the commencement of work and contain complete information.**
- 3) **Application completeness** – application reviewers need to see details on all aspects of purpose, personnel, proposed activities, methodology, and locations. For example, simply referring to a class protocol, or stating ‘survey wildlife’, without describing proposed activities, would not be considered sufficient detail. Lack of sufficient detail may result in the application being returned for revision.

**Permits are issued from a Resource Management Office in the region where you will be doing all, or the majority, of the proposed work. The exception to this is for educational projects that involve collection of ‘found dead’ wildlife and/or possession of live or dead wildlife or wildlife parts without collection from the wild (e.g., projects relating to museum/school specimen collections), which are issued by Fish and Wildlife Stewardship in Edmonton. Permits are emailed to the applicant via the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system.**

Is it possible to receive one permit for research or collection at multiple sites?

Yes. As long as the proposed methods in the application do not change between work sites, one permit can cover multiple work sites or multiple species. You must, however, list the geographic and taxonomic breadth of work that is being proposed, and clearly demonstrate your experience and proficiency to conduct the proposed activities. If you do not know the location of the sites on the initial permit application, you are required to amend your current permit and licence **by submitting an amendment application** through the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system with the appropriate changes to the locations noted.

Is it possible to amend a Permit and Licence?

Yes. Amendments to current permits are possible and can have a quick turnaround, especially if the changes are minor. To do this you must **access the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system and select “Amend/Renew Parks and/or Wildlife Permit and Licence”**. Select “Parks/Wildlife Amendment” and choose the permit/licence you want to amend. Make any changes that are appropriate (e.g., adding to the list of “Other Project Members”, or altering methods), and submit the amendment application (along with an updated research proposal if methods have changed). If the changes to the original methods conflict with approved Class Protocols, the application may require review by the AWACC and may take longer to be processed.

When you receive the amended Permit and Licence, destroy all copies of the old one and carry the new one with you (a copy of the original permit will remain as a record within the OPaC system).

What is required in a report?

Submitting a report within the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system will require you to answer a few questions about your project, and submit a

document identified as a “Progress report” along with any observation data related to your project. If animals are being captured or collected, you will be required to report on any mortalities or “oversampling” (capturing that exceeds the amount outlined in the application/research plan by more than 10%). The Permit Issuer may add additional reporting requirement to your permit when you receive it. Even if your project is ending and your report is a final report, the OPaC system will require a “Progress Report”; if desired, you may identify within the report that it is your final report. If you have used radio telemetry, a report on transmitter deployment is also required.

Do I have to submit my data for uploading to FWMIS (Fisheries and Wildlife Management Information System) prior to renewing a Research Permit and Collection Licence?

Yes. As a condition to all issued Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences, data must be received through the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system in the correct load form and in condition suitable for entry into FWMIS prior to a new or renewal permit being issued (this does not include amendments to current permits). Submitting the complete data set promptly and in the proper format will expedite permit renewal.

Information on how to do this is provided with the issued permit and on our web site:

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

Do I require a Collection Licence for falconry?

Yes, a Collection Licence is required for falconry. Applicants must have a valid Recreational or Commercial Falconry Permit.

Application forms for collection of falconry birds from the wild can be found at:

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

If have an Alberta Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence, will I require any other permits?

You might. It is up to the applicant to ensure that all appropriate permits are in place, for example (but not limited to), those for federal migratory birds, federal species at risk, or provincial parks.

If you are doing wildlife research in a Provincial Park or Protected Area, you can apply for an Alberta Parks Research and Collection Permit within the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system at the same time as you apply for your Wildlife Research Permit/Collection Licence.

Additional information on research in Alberta Parks can be found at:

- <http://albertaparks.ca/albertaparksca/science-research.aspx>

Information on some federal permits can be found at:

- <https://www.ec.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=12AF79B6-1>

What do I need to know if I am

Any research involving use of radio telemetry requires you to submit a proposed radio frequency list for approval before a permit is issued. This will ensure that

planning to use  
radio telemetry?

the proposed radio frequencies do not overlap with ones currently in use. If you are planning on using radio telemetry, contact us as early in the planning process as possible.

Contact us to discuss your plans for radio telemetry by viewing the Fisheries and Wildlife Management Area Contacts-Map at:

- <https://www.alberta.ca/fisheries-and-wildlife-management-contacts.aspx>

What if my project  
is for education or  
outreach purposes?

There is an “Education/Outreach” Project Classification in the Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) system application. However, this category is **only** designed for projects that **do not involve live wildlife** (e.g., use it if you are picking up “found dead” wildlife, receiving/possessing/storing carcasses, specimens or parts to be used for educational purposes); in this case only a Research Permit is required. If your education/outreach project involves collection/handling of live wildlife (e.g., live-trapping for a biology field course), you require both a Wildlife Research Permit and a Collection Licence. If this is the case for you, please select a Project Classification **other than** “Education/Outreach”.

Remember that a Wildlife Research Permit authorizing possession of specimens for education or outreach will need to be renewed annually to maintain your authorization over time.

If I still have  
questions, where  
can I get more  
details??

The Environment and Parks website has several tools that will give you more information, including a detailed “process”/guidance document for Wildlife Research Permits and Collection Licences, an OPaC User Guide, information and forms for data submission, class protocols outlining commonly used research techniques and contact information

Additional information can be found at:

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

or you can contact us at:

- [AEP.WildResPermits@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AEP.WildResPermits@gov.ab.ca)
- [780-422-9533](tel:780-422-9533) (for toll-free in Alberta dial 310-0000 first)