

A close-up photograph of a spiny-tailed lizard resting on a reddish-brown, textured rock. The lizard's body is covered in small, light-colored scales and larger, dark, pointed spines along its back and tail. Its head is turned slightly to the right, showing its eye and nostril. The background is a blurred natural setting.

ALBERTA'S  
Watchable Wildlife

2017  
C A L E N D A R





# Alberta's Watchable Wildlife

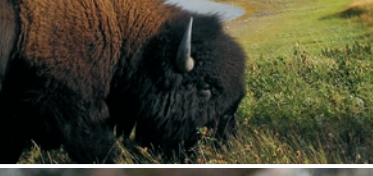
Wildlife-viewing, once considered an activity only for mild-mannered eccentrics, is now one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation in North America.

Albertans are very much part of this increasing interest in various nonconsumptive uses of wildlife – uses which do not remove wild plants and animals from their environment. And this includes hunters and anglers who also appreciate the viewing aspects of wildlife and plants. Related activities include wildlife photography, species identification (“listing”), birdfeeding, behaviour study and flower identification. In support of these activities, the Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks, maintains a Watchable Wildlife Program. The program is designed to increase the following:

- levels of public interest in and appreciation for the wildlife resource

- opportunities and participation levels in the nonconsumptive use of wildlife
- levels of public knowledge and understanding of wildlife species and their habitats; and
- public involvement and support in wildlife management programs.

Recent surveys show that more than 90 per cent of Albertans participate in various forms of wildlife-viewing and appreciation, while two-thirds participate in a direct and purposeful way, either near home, in their backyards, at local urban parks or on trips and outings away from home.



## Wildlife Conservation and Enhancement

Alberta is richly blessed with an abundance and variety of wild plants and animals. It is the only place in North America where the prairie, boreal forest and mountain ecosystems meet. As a result, more than 400 bird, 90 mammal, 18 reptile and amphibian, 50 fish and 1800 flowering plant species occur in Alberta at least part of the year.

Many of us watch and listen to wildlife as a means of re-establishing contact with the natural world and to escape the

noise and hectic pace of our busy lifestyles. The sight and sound of migrating geese, a glimpse of a deer or the call of a loon are special experiences that highlight our memories. Without such experiences, our world would be a much less interesting place. To ensure that we continue to enjoy these experiences and pass them on to future generations, we all must share the responsibility for conserving our natural heritage.

## Responsible Wildlife-Viewing

Wildlife-viewing demands courtesy and common sense, including respect for animals and their habitats, knowledge of local regulations, and consideration for private property and the activities of others.

Ethics for the field include the following:

- **Keep to Designated Trails**  
Confine your movements wherever possible to designated trails, viewing platforms and blinds.
- **Be Considerate of Wildlife**  
Use binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras with telephoto lenses to observe animals from a distance THEY consider safe. Avoid nesting sites and respect resting periods. Try not to surprise wildlife and never chase or flush wild animals.
- **Don't Approach Baby Animals**  
Be sure not to pick up any wild baby animals. Your actions may expose them to predators or prevent their parents from

returning to care for them. Even though not visible, the mother is likely close by.

- **Control Pets**  
Pets can harm wildlife and hinder viewing opportunities. They should be under your control at all times or left at home or in your vehicle (only under suitable conditions).
- **Be Considerate of the Environment**  
Leave viewing sites, including plants and animals, undamaged by your visits. Be sure your garbage is properly disposed of or recycled. Many wildlife-viewing sites are *User Maintained*; therefore, pack out what you pack in. Return used brochures to kiosks for re-use.
- **Be Considerate of Others**  
Avoid disrupting the wildlife-viewing activities of others in the area. At the same time, show a friendly disposition and willingness to share observations and related information.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

Successful wildlife-viewing requires certain skills and knowledge. The following tips will help in this respect:



Take the time to plan and anticipate what you want to see and experience. Find out where the best viewing locations are for each wildlife species and at what times of the year you may see them.



Many wildlife species are more active and readily seen at certain times of the day. Early morning and late afternoon/evening are often the best for many birds and mammals.



Wildlife are very sensitive to human presence. By moving slowly and quietly, or even stopping for several minutes at a time, you can ensure wild animals will be more accepting of your presence.



Learn to use vegetation, topography, or even your vehicle, as a visual screen. Wear soft clothes that make little noise when walking in the bush. Dull, darker colours and irregular patterns on clothes are also helpful.

### CAUTION!

In bear country you should keep yourself more visible and make noise to alert bears of your presence; also carry pepper spray.



Spring and fall are particularly good seasons to observe migratory birds, some of which only pass through Alberta between their wintering areas and summer breeding regions.



Your ears can be as helpful as your eyes in locating and identifying some of the more secretive wildlife species. Take in the full range of sights, sounds, and smells around you to enhance your overall experience.



Learn to recognize the signs of wildlife such as tracks, nests, cavities, droppings, and bits of fur or feathers. This will help you to see and learn more.



Use properly selected binoculars and spotting scopes to get that close-up, detailed look. Also, field identification guides will help to sort out the characteristics and names of the species you see.



Keep records of wildlife seen, their characteristics, and the circumstances of your observations. You will want to compare this with future observations. Pass on rare and unusual observations to nearby Fish and Wildlife offices.

## Alberta's Watchable Wildlife Calendar

To help increase public awareness, appreciation and understanding of wildlife, the Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks, is pleased to present *Alberta's Watchable Wildlife Calendar*. The calendar identifies specific wildlife activities throughout the year. Each month includes:

- a featured plant or animal,
- viewing tips of special significance, and
- noteworthy dates concerning wildlife activities and events.

Use the calendar to plan your wildlife-viewing excursions.



## Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiaca*)

The beautiful snowy owl breeds north of the treeline in Canada, but is extremely mobile and many spend the winter (November to April) in Alberta. The productivity of this owl is mediated by food supply and in years of high lemming and vole abundance on the tundra, large numbers of young are produced and many of these birds may contribute to an 'invasion' or 'irruption' of migrants on the wintering grounds, much to the delight of birders across North America. In some years juvenile birds overshoot the normal wintering grounds with some appearing as far out as the Bahamas and Hawaii! The species is quite variable in appearance, with some juvenile females so heavily marked that they appear as grey owls with a white face, while some adult males are pure white.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Large flocks of mallard ducks now overwinter in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. As these birds leave the rivers to forage on local fields each evening, they are vulnerable to raptor predation. Watch for gyrfalcon, prairie falcon, and goshawks working the flocks.
- A drive in the boreal forest and montane regions can yield interesting findings through snow tracks. Species like wolf, lynx, and fisher are often found surprisingly close to large urban centres.
- Pronghorn are seen in large groups along the Trans-Canada Highway between Brooks and Walsh.

# JANUARY 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <small>Increasingly rare evening grosbeaks visit feeders in rural northern Alberta.</small>	NEW YEAR'S DAY 2	3	4	5 	6	7
8	9	10 <small>Most moose have dropped their antlers.</small>	11	12	13	14 <small>Northern hawk owls perch prominently over bogs along Highway 88 north of Red Earth.</small>
15 	16	17	18 <small>Grizzly bears are born in the wintering dens in southern Alberta.</small>	19	20	21 <small>Drive the parkway at Elk Island Park to see wintering bison.</small>
22	23	24	25 <small>Look closely at your local black-capped chickadees for bent tail feathers created by communal nighttime roosting.</small>	26	27 <small>Flying squirrels begin breeding.</small>	28
29	30 <small>Look for American dipper along streams in our mountain national parks.</small>	31				





## Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*)

Mountain goats are the true mountaineers of Alberta's hoofed mammals. Unlike deer and sheep, the hooves of these animals have a soft core, surrounded by a thick outer ring giving them great grip. The hooves of each foot also move independently, providing even better footing on steep rock faces. With a thick fleecy undercoat and long outer guard hairs, the cold of the alpine has little influence on them. However, the hazard presented by avalanches at great mountain heights is very real, particularly in late winter and early spring. This species can be found throughout the montane eco-zone in Alberta. Some of the best places to see them include Disaster Point in Jasper National Park and Mt. Wilson in Banff National Park.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Great gray and northern hawk owls are active during the day and perch prominently along roadsides in the forested parts of the province. In most years, a drive along highway 88 north of Slave Lake is often an excellent way to see both species.
- Watch for northern migrant bird species that spend the winter in Alberta and then summer in the northern forests or Arctic tundra. These birds include: snow bunting, common and hoary redpoll, willow ptarmigan, and northern shrike.

# FEBRUARY 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3 <small>Check the Alberta Grain Terminal in Edmonton for hunting prairie falcons and gyrfalcons.</small>	4
5	6	7	8	9 <small>A day out ice-fishing also presents an opportunity for wildlife spotting.</small>	10	11 <small>The hearty gray jay begins nest building at this time.</small>
12	13	VALENTINE'S DAY 14	15 <small>If driving in the mountain and boreal areas, try to identify animal tracks in fresh snow in the ditches.</small>	16	17	18
19 <small>Mule deer and white-tailed deer begin dropping antlers – shed hunters get searching.</small>	FAMILY DAY 20		21 <small>Watch for young mountain whitefish in the shallows of the Red Deer River below the Dickson Dam.</small>	22	23	24 <small>Burbot spawning is at peak under the ice of Alberta lakes.</small>
26	27	28 <small>Most great horned owls are already incubating eggs.</small>				





## Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

The sharp-tailed grouse is found throughout Alberta – from the dry prairies to burned and cleared portions of the boreal forest. During spring, male grouse can often be seen and heard congregating at their breeding grounds, or leks. With lowered head and erect plumage, they perform an elaborate mating dance in hope of attracting as many females as possible. If you are lucky enough to see the birds up-close, you will also witness some nasty fighting between males. In the summer months, these birds forage on the ground, while in winter, they may also forage in trees. They eat seeds, berries, insects (especially grasshoppers), leaves, and buds. Sharp-tail populations have declined in recent years and the general status of sharp-tailed grouse in Alberta is considered *Sensitive*.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Migrating golden eagles can be seen stringing their way north over the Kananaskis Valley. As many as 400 have been counted in a single day during this month.
- Get out some calm evening to a local forest and listen for calling owls and enjoy the night sky. Great horned owls can be heard throughout the province, boreal owls are calling in the mountains and boreal regions, and northern saw-whets should be singing in the aspen parkland.

# MARCH 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 <small>Listen for the winnowing call of the boreal owl in mountain and boreal habitats in the province.</small>	2	3	4 
5	6	7 <small>The first fry of brook, brown, and bull trout can be seen in the gin clear waters of the Clearwater and McLeod Rivers.</small>	8	9	10	11 <small>The beautiful prairie crocus is blooming in southern Alberta.</small>
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS 12	13	14	15	16	ST. PATRICK'S DAY 17	18 <small>Tundra swans and snow geese arrive in southern Alberta.</small>
19	SPRING EQUINOX 20	21 <small>Melting snow reveals the mounds of soil created by northern pocket gophers – a species mistakenly identified as 'moles' by many Albertans.</small>	22 	23	24 <small>Male sharp-tailed grouse begin assembling on leks; however breeding will not peak for another month.</small>	25
26	27 <small>On warm days, the beautiful mourning cloak butterfly will emerge from hibernation.</small>	28	29	30	31 <small>American crows return to Alberta from their wintering haunts.</small>	





## Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Arguably one of the most beautiful of all duck species, the northern pintail arrives on the Alberta landscape in the earliest days of spring. A true dabbling duck, the pintail can erupt from ground or water and gain altitude at surprising speed. The Latin species name, *acuta*, means pointed – a clear descriptor of the birds' elongated tail feathers that are visible both in flight and when the bird is at rest. These elegant ducks can be found nesting in any part of the province and, during migration, flocks of thousands can be encountered feeding in harvested grain fields. Such large gatherings do not go unnoticed by predators, so watch for large falcons and eagles working the flocks in both spring and fall. Breeding populations of pintail have fluctuated widely over the last century.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Noisy mating rituals of merlins can be heard throughout the month. In bird rich neighbourhoods, watch as the power-blue males court and feed food-begging females. Listen for the quiet 'tik tik' of the female as she readies an abandoned local crow or magpie nest for her clutch.
- Ruffed grouse begin to 'drum' throughout the aspen parkland. Careful approach will allow detection of the drumming log and, most often, a good look at the grouse. Note the colour morph of the bird by looking at the fanned tail; red or grey.

# APRIL 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3 <small>Trumpeter swans can be seen in the waterbodies along the TransCanada highway west of Calgary.</small>	4	5 	6	7 <small>American robins begin singing in urban nesting areas.</small>	8
9	10 <small>Peregrine falcons return to their nesting sites in Alberta, including nine pairs in Edmonton.</small>	11	12	13	GOOD FRIDAY 14	15 <small>Burrowing owls arrive at their nesting areas in the Eastern Irrigation District near Brooks.</small>
EASTER 16	EASTER MONDAY 17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 	29
30 <small>Wolf pups are born at this time of year in Alberta.</small>			<small>Most toad and frog species in Alberta are calling – listen for the quiet piping of western toads to the duck-like rattle of wood frogs.</small>			








## Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

The spectacular golden eagle breeds in all eco-zones of the province but is not common in any area. Most often found on cliffs, the huge stick nests of this eagle can be seen on the banks of most major rivers, in the mountains and foothills, and on the Canadian Shield in the north-eastern corner of the province. The grasslands eco-region of the province harbours a relatively small population that uses the clay banks of major rivers and tributaries for nesting. Although some golden eagles in Alberta remain here all year, some join the ranks of birds from northern Canada and Alaska that migrate through the province where they are counted in the thousands as they pass over the Kananaskis range in south-western Alberta each fall.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- In early May, observe the courtship of peregrine falcons at or near their urban nest sites in Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer. Follow the more intimate aspects of courtship, scrape making, and laying by tuning in to live webcams on the website of the Alberta Conservation Association.
- Visit Frank Lake south of Calgary or North Cooking Lake east of Edmonton to see migrating shorebirds heading for their Arctic breeding grounds. A good spotting scope will provide excellent views of their spectacular breeding plumages.

# MAY 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
	The weird high-pitched whistle of the upland sandpiper is heard over the prairies.				Peregrine falcons have started egg-laying, while their prairie falcon cousins have already finished their clutches.	
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
		Elk calving season begins in the mountain parks. Give cow elk a wide berth at this time as they are very defensive of calves that can be hiding anywhere.				Columbian ground squirrels emerge from their burrows in the lower meadows of the Kananaskis valley.
MOTHER'S DAY <b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
					Morels erupt in central Alberta — they make excellent eating.	
 <b>21</b>	VICTORIA DAY <b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
		Ruby-throated hummingbirds are back in Alberta, even as far north as Athabasca.				Along woodland paths, the delicate white flowers of star-flowered Solomon's seal can be seen.
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			
		The rarely seen yellow rail can be heard calling its gentle "tic-tic" from Hay Zama wetlands in north-western Alberta.				





## Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)

A true harbinger of spring, the plaintive call of the Killdeer can be heard throughout the province as early as the first week in April. This beautiful plover is perhaps the most vocal of six plover species that can be seen in Alberta, and the species name, *vociferous*, is meant to celebrate this fact. Often found nesting on barren ground, beaches, and even gravel roads, this species is well-known for its 'broken wing displays' when adult birds feign injury in an attempt to lure potential predators away from the nest or from recently fledged young. For plover parents, controlling broods of young is akin to herding cats with only the need for warmth bringing the young back to the protective breast feathers of the adult.

# JUNE 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 4	 5			1	2 <small>White suckers are spawning along the rocky shoreline of Seibert Lake.</small>	3
		6 <small>Pincushion cacti are blooming on the prairies.</small>	7	8	9	10
11 <small>Visit the Helen Schuler Nature Centre in Lethbridge and watch for western painted turtles in the waterbodies nearby.</small>	12	13	14	15 <small>Double-crested cormorants are hatching on Dowling Lake near Brooks.</small>	16	17 
FATHER'S DAY 18	19	20 <small>Fireweed begins to blossom province-wide.</small>	SUMMER SOLSTICE 21	22	23 <small>Young loggerhead shrikes begin fledging from nests located deep in hedgerows of abandoned farmsteads near Hanna.</small>	24 
25	26 	27 <small>Wildflower blooms in the high country of Waterton National Park are at a peak.</small>	28	29	30 <small>The haunting flute-like call of the Swainson's thrush echoes throughout wooded river valleys in the province.</small>	

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- A great month for birding by ear. Learn the calls of Alberta birds by purchasing and using a birding app on your mobile phone.
- The eggs of many bird species in the province hatch at this time. Some young may appear to be orphaned, but the parents are often nearby. The best policy is to leave recently fledged birds alone.
- American white pelicans often appear on parkland and prairie waterbodies and may even alight on storm water catchments in sub-urban areas.





**Eastern Short-horned Lizard**  
(*Phrynosoma hernandesi*)

Alberta's only lizard, the tiny eastern short-horned lizard inhabits the rocks of south-facing slopes of coulee rims located in short-grass prairie of south-eastern Alberta. Extraordinarily cryptic, these tiny reptiles are easily overlooked as they forage among the sagebrush. This species exists in Alberta at very much lower densities than further south, probably as a result of early and late seasonal extremes in temperature. Their diet consists mainly of ants, beetles, and grasshoppers. They are live-bearing, meaning they give birth to live young rather than laying eggs. Each spring they may produce up to ten young, with individual babies so small they can easily fit on a Canadian quarter!

# JULY 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						CANADA DAY <b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
	Be on the lookout for ripe Saskatoon, pin cherries, and...bears.				Little brown bats are a common site in the early evening for cottagers at Pine Lake.	
<b>9</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
		Except for ewes and lambs, bighorn sheep have moved higher in the mountains to summer ranges.				Large rafts of double-crested cormorants can be seen paddling across lakes in northern Alberta.
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
	Piping plovers are already leaving Alberta on their southward migration.		Watch abandoned buildings in central and southern Alberta for roosting turkey vultures.			
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	Young golden-mantled ground squirrels in the mountain parks are just out of their natal burrows.				If travelling the Ice-fields parkway from Jasper to Banff, keep an eye out for mountain goats using mineral licks at several spots along the road.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Catch the JasperSkyTram to above tree-line in Jasper National Park to look for alpine tundra specialties like white-tailed ptarmigan, gray-crowned rosy finch, and the *taverneri* subspecies of Brewer's sparrow.
- Head to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump near Fort Macleod to learn about Alberta's pre-history and to see yellow-bellied marmots on the bluffs above the interpretive center.
- Fireflies are visible on hot nights over fescue grasslands in south-eastern Alberta.






## Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

Mule deer are widely distributed throughout Alberta, usually in hilly or broken terrain that occurs along our river breaks and in the mountains, foothills, and sand hills. In conjunction with their preference for irregular terrain, mule deer have a peculiar vertical bound known as “stotting”, which is effective in helping them evade predators. Mule deer begin breeding at one and a half years. Breeding occurs in late November and generally they have two fawns in mid-June. On occasion mule deer hybridise with white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and their offspring have the appearance of a big-eared white-tail. The hybrid males are infertile, but females are fertile and their subsequent offspring gradually breed back to the maternal parent species.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Mid-August is a good time look for ripe blueberries. Cranberries ripen in late August. Be BearAware when harvesting in your favorite patches.
- Watch for recently fledged Swainson’s hawks along sub-urban and rural roadways – they are extremely vulnerable to vehicle collisions at this tender age.
- In wet years, Clark’s grebe and white-faced ibis can be seen on Pakowki Lake in the south-eastern corner of the province.

# AUGUST 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4 	5
		Tour the urban nesting sites of peregrine falcons to watch for feeding events – early mornings and late in the day are the best time for action.				Long-toed salamander larvae are in a state of metamorphosis in the ponds of Kanamaskis.
6 	HERITAGE DAY 7	8	9	10	11	12
		Cutthroat trout may spawn this late in high mountain lakes where ice melts late in the season.			High bush cranberry and chokecherries are ripe.	
13 	14	15	16 	17	18	19
		Daily capture totals for songbirds peak around this time at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory.				Large numbers of white pelicans can be seen on Lake Newell reservoir, south of Brooks.
20	21	22	23 	24	25	26
					Cabbage butterflies are locally super-abundant in parts of southern Alberta.	
27	28	29	30	31		
			Young badgers are dispersing from their family groups.			





## Bison (*Bos bison*)

Once found in massive herds that could kick up virtual dust storms across the prairie landscape of Alberta, bison are now relegated to a few isolated areas in northern Alberta and a couple of national parks. The largest land mammal in North America faced challenges in the 1800s that reduced their numbers from around 50 million animals to a few thousand. The western expansion of European settlement led to over-hunting and new disease threats. Currently bison can be found in Elk Island National Park, Wood Buffalo National Park and the muskeg-filled habitat in the northwest corner of Alberta. Bison have a simple diet of grasses and sedges and have an average lifespan of 20-40 years. Free-ranging bison in the Hay-Zama herd are considered an *Endangered* species in Alberta.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Drive the forestry trunk road from Highway 11 to Highway 16 to witness spectacular fall colours and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.
- Bull Elk in Jasper National Park and Banff National Park are bugling and attending harems of cows as the 'rut' comes into full swing. Give bulls a wide berth at this time as they may defend cows aggressively.
- Many species of waterfowl begin congregating on the larger waterbodies in preparation for fall migration. Take a spotting scope out to look for rarities.

# SEPTEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 <small>Garter snakes in Alberta begin returning to their hibernacula in central and southern Alberta – watch out for them on the road.</small>
3	LABOUR DAY 4	5	6 <small>Use respect. Bow, duck, and upland game hunters should always ask permission to access private land during the hunting season.</small>	7	8	9
10 <small>Viewpoints at Lois Hole Provincial Park, near St. Albert, and Frank Lake, south of Calgary, provide a good look at a wide variety of water birds.</small>	11	12	13	14	15 <small>Most insectivorous birds, like swallows, have left the province for their wintering grounds.</small>	16
17	18	19 	20 <small>Watch for normally secretive woodland hawks like broad-winged, Cooper's, and sharp-shinned as they take to the open air in migration.</small>	21	FALL EQUINOX 22	23
24	25 <small>Sandhill cranes appear at great altitudes and in their thousands as they drift south.</small>	26	27	28	29	30 <small>Bull trout begin to spawn in the lakes of our mountain parks.</small>





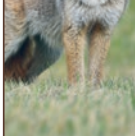
## Ermine (*Mustela erminea*)

The ermine, or short-tailed weasel, is one of three weasels found in Alberta. Like the larger long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*) and the tiny least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), ermine turn white in winter. Towards the end of March, most ermine will begin to change back to their summer pelt of rich brown, with white underparts – the black tip on the tail always remains black. These dynamic predators are found throughout Alberta, with the exception of the grasslands in the very south-east corner of the province. The diet of the ermine consists mainly of animal prey, ranging from frogs and small birds, to mammals up to the size of the snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*). Though not often seen because of its nocturnal nature and fondness for thick cover, the ermine is thought to be the most abundant land carnivore in the province.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Head to Windy Point, the wildlife viewing site in the Sheep River Wildlife Sanctuary to watch for migrating raptors. Over 500 individual birds have been observed from this site in a single day.
- Take a trip to a local land-fill to look for rare gulls. Even in such a prosaic setting, you can often up your 'life birding list' by looking for species that are well outside their normal range.
- Lake whitefish congregate below the Mountain and Cascade Rapids on the Athabasca River upstream of Fort McMurray to spawn.

# OCTOBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Fall colours reach their peak this week in the Milk River valley.	2 	3	4	5	6 Now is the time to plan and install your feeders for winter birds.	7
8	9 THANKSGIVING DAY	10 Some of the first American rough-legged hawks arrive in central and southern Alberta.	11	12	13	14 Lesser yellowlegs, one of Alberta's most common shorebirds, leaves the province for wintering grounds in South America.
15	16	17 	18	19	20 Fall singing by American tree sparrows brightens the days within the Cooking Lake moraine east of Edmonton.	21
22 Snowshoe hares and weasels are already white in preparation for the winter.	23	24 	25	26 Nuttall's cottontail, Alberta's only true rabbit species, remains in brown pelage and is surprisingly common on the campus of the University of Lethbridge.	27	28 
29 Banders at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory often capture large numbers of long-eared owl during nighttime netting.	30	31 HALLOWEEN				





## Grizzly Bear (Ursus arctos)

Few scenes in nature cry out – **Halt, Danger, Do Not Proceed** – like this one. Before entering hibernation, grizzly bears enter a state of hyperphagia, where they eat constantly. A big male grizzly, after procuring a moose as seen here, could eat several hundred pounds of meat before leaving the carcass. Until that time they will protect the carcass with legendary ferocity. At one time grizzlies could be found roaming most parts of Alberta, including the southern plains. Land clearing and high levels of human settlement led to the extirpation of the bears from many areas and reduced their range to the Foothills and Rocky Mountain Natural Regions. They are the top of the food chain in their range and yet, most of their diet consists of berries, fruits, leaves, and roots. Grizzly bears will also consume other mammals, some as small as mice and others as big as moose.

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Watch for large dark hawks moving through the province. These are members of the Harlan's subspecies of red-tailed hawk migrating into Alberta from their breeding grounds in Alaska, the Yukon, and western portions of the NWT. They often appear at the same time as American rough-legged hawks from the tundra.
- In south-eastern Alberta, watch for large flocks of snow geese staging on lakes and reservoirs. They can make the landscape look as though it is covered in snow.

# NOVEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4 Listen for the first flocks of northern passerines arriving to winter in the city.
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS 5	6	7	8 Most big game rifle hunting seasons begin in Alberta.	9	10	REMEMBRANCE DAY 11
		Brown trout begin to spawn in Bill Griffiths Creek.		16	17 In most years, white-tailed deer are in, or are approaching, the rut in Alberta. Bucks move carelessly and range widely at this time – watch out while driving!	18
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Porcupine mating season begins.	19		21	22	23	24
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 Migrating tundra swans present in large numbers on ice-free lakes.
26	27	28	29	30		
				Last day of hunting season for most big game hunting in the province.		





## Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

One of the greatest outdoor experiences one can have in Alberta is to hear the howl of the grey wolf. Once found throughout the province, wolves now occupy habitats in the foothill, montane, and boreal regions. Opportunistic feeders, wolves in Alberta have been known to eat anything from berries to beavers, but their prime diet is ungulates like elk (*Cervus elaphus*), moose (*Alces alces*), and deer. Some of the largest wolves in the world live in Wood Buffalo National Park, where packs of up to 11 animals kill adult wood bison (*Bos bison athabascaae*), animals that can weigh over 1200 kg. To achieve this, these wolves have to be large and many weigh over 54 kg (120 lbs), however most wolves in Alberta average about 36 kg (80lbs).

## Wildlife-Viewing Tips

- Edmontonians – take drive on Range Roads 260 and 261 north of St. Albert near Manawan Lake to check on this year's 'crop' of snowy owls. Calgarians can do the same with a drive east of the city out to Medicine Hat on Hwy 1 or towards Drumheller on Hwy 9.
- Participate in Citizen Science by helping with the 2017 Christmas Bird Count. You can count birds visiting your feeder, drive the roads, or survey local woodlots to 'beat the bush' for birds.

# DECEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2 <small>Coyotes may turn to garbage and compost piles for food as the weather gets colder. Safeguard these edibles and report any aggressive coyotes to Alberta Fish and Wildlife.</small>
3	4	5 <small>Watch for irruptive winter visitors like red crossbills or white-winged crossbills – both are remarkably tame species.</small>	6	7	8 <small>Open water areas near large urban areas are patrolled daily by bald eagles.</small>	9
10	11 <small>Open water near the powerplants of Wabamun Lake host good numbers of the beautiful and animated hooded merganser.</small>	12 	13	14	15	16
17	18	19 	20	21 <small>WINTER SOLSTICE The shortest day of the year – spring seems a long way off in the coldest of winters, but at least the days now get longer!</small>	22	23 <small>If winds are light, take a Christmas Eve birding trip on Highway 827 between Colinton and Newbrook to see northern hawk owl and great gray owls.</small>
CHRISTMAS EVE 24	CHRISTMAS DAY 25	BOXING DAY		28	29	30
NEW YEAR'S EVE 31						



# Alberta's Watchable Wildlife Calendar 2017



## PHOTO CREDITS:

**January:** Snowy owl [JON GROVES]; coyote [GORDON COURT]; brown creeper [MYRNA PEARMAN]; sova [RUSS AMY]

**February:** Mountain goat [MYRNA PEARMAN], ruffed grouse, red-winged blackbird, grizzly bear [ROBERT MUELLER]

**March:** Sharp-tailed grouse, common redpoll [GORDON COURT]; American pika [ROBERT MUELLER]; black bear [TODD PONICH]

**April:** Northern pintail [BRIAN WOLITSKI]; barn swallow, swift fox [MYRNA PEARMAN]; rufous hummingbird [TODD PONICH]

**May:** Golden eagle [JON GROVES]; clover [CAROLYN SANDSTROM]; long-eared owl [MYRNA PEARMAN]; eastern yellow-bellied racer [SANDI ROBERTSON]

**June:** Killdeer [BRIAN WOLITSKI]; pincushion cactus, boreal chorus frog [GORDON COURT]; pileated woodpecker [MYRNA PEARMAN]

**July:** Eastern short-horned lizard [SANDI ROBERTSON]; Barrow's goldeneye [GORDON COURT]; bighorn sheep [TODD PONICH]; muskrat [ROBERT MUELLER]

**August:** Mule deer [NICK PARAYKO]; American kestrel; gyrfalcon [GORDON COURT]; three-flowered avens [CAROLYN SANDSTROM]

**September:** Bison [KRISTEN RUMBOLT]; grizzly bear [ROBERT MUELLER]; greater scaup [RUSS AMY]; spotted towhee [KRISTEN RUMBOLT]

**October:** Ermine, coyote [ROBERT MUELLER]; black bear [GLEN HOARE]; yellow-breasted chat [KRISTEN RUMBOLT]

**November:** Grizzly bear; American dipper [MARK BRADLEY]; gyrfalcon [GORDON COURT]; long-tailed weasel [MYRNA PEARMAN]

**December:** Grey wolf, gray-crowned rosy finch [GORDON COURT]; upland sandpiper, great horned owl [RUSS AMY]

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