



## Haines: The Northwest Passage to Southeast Alaska

Watch bears fishing in the rivers near town. Take a boat or raft tour in search of moose, eagles and trumpeter swans. Peer into binoculars to spot mountain goats, or climb the ridges for a closer look. Drive the scenic Haines Highway, stopping at pullouts to look for wildlife. Haines is known the world over as the "Valley of the Eagles," thanks to the spectacular winter concentration of bald eagles at the Chilkat River near town.

The Chilkat River is also a natural "highway" for wildlife to move between the interior of North America and Southeast Alaska, making Haines the "Northwest Passage" to the region for many species. This major river corridor combines with a diversity of habitats like marshes, tidal flats, alpine, subalpine, forest, and marine to make Haines an excellent wildlife viewing destination.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Haines Convention and Visitors Bureau. Visit [www.haines.ak.us](http://www.haines.ak.us) or call 907-766-2234. In Haines, stop by the visitor center downtown at Second Avenue and Willard Street.



From the bears of Hyder to the bald eagles of Haines, the whales of Frederick Sound to the birds of the Stikine River, the Inside Passage Segment of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail highlights over 70 wildlife viewing sites in and near the communities of Gustavus, Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Prince of Wales Island, Sitka, Skagway and Wrangell.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Wildlife Conservation and  
Restoration Program

*All public partners  
are equal opportunity  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
about the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail, or to  
browse through wildlife viewing sites in other  
communities, visit [wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov](http://wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov)

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Haines town and Estuary viewers photos © Jamie Karnik, ADF&G.  
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# HAINES

# Wildlife Viewing Guide



[www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov](http://www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov)

Alaska Department of  
Fish and Game  
**Watch Our Wildlife**

## 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.



## Watchable Wildlife “Fun Facts”

**Eagles, Eagles Everywhere:** In October and November, rivers and streams in Southeast Alaska begin to freeze and the bountiful salmon runs of autumn come to an end. As the harsh realities of winter begin to set in, bald eagles migrate to find reliable food sources. One of the richest sources during this time is the late chum and coho salmon runs in the Chilkat River near Haines. Parts of the Chilkat do not freeze over due to an “alluvial fan” (a fan-shaped pile of rocks and other debris) located beneath the confluence of the Tsirku, Klehini and Chilkat rivers. During the spring and summer, rain and meltwater flow into this alluvial fan, creating a huge reservoir of water in the cracks and spaces. As temperatures drop, the water stored in the alluvial fan stays above freezing, and seeps into the Chilkat River throughout the winter. This upwelling warmer water keeps parts of the river ice-free, and salmon runs in these ice-free areas attract more than 3,000 eagles between mid-October and January.



**Chilkat or Chilkoot?:** Haines is bordered by Chilkat Inlet to the south and Chilkoot Inlet to the north. These and other natural features are named after the Chilkat and Chilkoot Tlingits who have lived in the area since time immemorial. The similarity of names can be a little confusing at first. A good “rule of thumb” is that features north or east of town are generally named after the Chilkoots (Chilkoot Inlet, Chilkoot Lake, Chilkoot River) and those south or west of town are named after the Chilkats (Chilkat Peninsula, Chilkat Inlet, Chilkat Lake, Chilkat State Park). The exception is the Chilkat River, which is found west and north of town.

## Traveling Safely in Bear Country

*(All of Haines 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](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/safety).



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## Wildlife Viewing Sites



**Lutak Road 1** parallels the protected waters of Lutak Inlet. Pullouts along the road offer views of Haines and overlooks for wildlife viewing. Lutak Inlet is narrower and more sheltered than Lynn Canal, making it easier to spot river otters, Steller sea lions, harbor porpoises and harbor seals. A few humpback and killer whales swim into the inlets, especially in May and June. Look and listen for belted kingfishers, common loons, harlequin ducks, surf scoters, pigeon guillemots, boreal owls and bald eagles here as well.

The **Chilkoot River 2** flows into Lutak Inlet, and is one of the more easily reached bear viewing spots in Southeast Alaska. Salmon spawn in the Chilkoot each year, attracting brown bears between mid-June and October, with July and August the peak months for bear viewing. River otters and harbor seals chase salmon upstream at high tide. Common mergansers, Barrow's goldeneyes, harlequin ducks and other waterfowl feed at the estuary where the Chilkoot River flows into Lutak Inlet. In the spring and fall, large numbers of shorebirds flock to the estuary mudflats to refuel before continuing their annual migrations. American dipper feed on aquatic invertebrates and small fish throughout the year. Naturalist-guided tours to the Chilkoot River are available during the summer, some of which combine the river and Lutak Road into one wildlife viewing excursion.

**Battery Point 3** overlooks the narrowest and shallowest part of Chilkoot Inlet. Schools of fish often congregate in these relatively still waters, attracting a variety of marine mammals. Stand on the beach and look for the telltale blows or flukes of humpback whales. Scan the waters for the reflection off the head of a harbor seal or Steller sea lion. Closer to shore, look for loons, surf scoters, pelagic cormorants and marbled murrelets as they dive in search of a meal. The Battery Point trailhead is located about a mile and a half south of town at the end of Beach Road. A flat, primitive trail winds through the rain forest for a little over a mile before reaching Battery Point. It is possible, though not common, to encounter bears and moose on the trail, so stay alert while hiking.

**Chilkat State Park 4** adjoins the waters of Chilkat Inlet, where the Chilkat River meets Lynn Canal. This is a great place to spot wildlife, both on land and in the water. Brown bears rumble through the forests and along the beaches. Moose, especially cow and calf pairs, wander near developed areas, in part to seek protection from bears. Porcupines are abundant. A visitor center cabin with a viewing platform and spotting scope overlooks Chilkat Inlet. This is an excellent perch from which to scan Chilkat Inlet for harbor seals, Steller sea lions, harbor porpoises, and humpback and killer whales. Surf scoters and pigeon guillemots may also be seen throughout the summer. Peer into the spotting scope for better marine viewing, and to search the ridges across the inlet for mountain goats. A volunteer staffs the cabin during the summer to answer questions and help spot wildlife. Eulachon, a small oily fish, run into Chilkat Inlet in mid-to-late May. Eulachon are a rich food source that draws large numbers of Steller sea lions, harbor seals, bald eagles and other species. Looking for a good hike? The park's **Seduction Point Trail** follows the shoreline for seven miles, with many viewing spots along



<b>1. Lutak Road</b>	1	1 - 2 hours
<b>2. Chilkoot River</b>	1	2 hours - full day+
<b>3. Battery Point</b>		1 - 2 hours
<b>4. Chilkat State Park</b>	2	2 hours - full day+
<b>5. Haines Highway</b>		2 hours - full day+
<b>6. Chilkat River</b>		2 - 4 hours
<b>7. Bald Eagle Preserve</b>		2 - 4 hours
<b>8. Mount Ripinsky</b>		2 hours - full day

- Wheelchair accessible\*
- Entry or tour fee
- Interpretive signs
- Hiking trails
- Guided boat tours
- Camping in area

\* Some tours are wheelchair accessible. Inquire before booking.

1 Fee for guided tours only

2 Fee for camping only. Trail use is free.

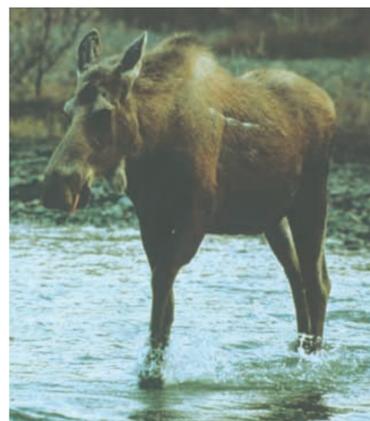
+ Multi-day trips allow for the richest experience.

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the way. Chilkat State Park is nestled on the west side of the Chilkat Peninsula. Take Mud Bay Road south out of town for six miles, then follow the signs for the park. The road becomes very steep just before the park entrance, and requires careful driving.

The **Haines Highway 5** passes between the Chilkat River and the Takshanuk Mountains. Roadside pullouts, with views of the river and mountains, are good places to stop and scan for wildlife. Species found along, or sometimes on, the highway include moose, coyotes, wolves, porcupines, and brown and black bears. A pair of trumpeter swans is often seen in the ponds near mile 5 in the spring. Pink salmon spawn in 10 Mile Creek in late July and August. Moose dip their heads to munch on underwater plants at roadside marshes, like the ones at mile 12 and 14. The best time to see moose is in the early morning hours. The slide area at mile 19 is a good place to look for mountain



goats. Bald eagles circle in the sky or perch in trees, especially where the highway parallels the Bald Eagle Preserve (see site #7) between miles 9 and 30.

The Haines Highway extends 42 miles to the U.S. - Canada border, making day trips into the Canadian alpine possible.

The **Chilkat River 6** serves as a travel corridor for wildlife as it slices through the rugged mountains that separate the interior of North America from the coastal ecosystems of Southeast Alaska. Moose wander the banks of the Chilkat throughout the summer. Watch for cow and calf pairs at the river's edge. Brown bears

and wolves come to the river as well, in part to opportunistically hunt moose calves. Mountain goats patrol the ridgelines, and are best spotted with binoculars or a spotting scope. Watch for many birds, including arctic terns and trumpeter swans,

along the Chilkat. The birds that make the river famous, however, are bald eagles (see next site).

The **Bald Eagle Preserve 7** was established along the Chilkat River as an Alaska State Park in 1982 to protect critical habitat for eagles. There are over 80 bald eagle nests and a year-round eagle population in the low hundreds in the preserve. Between late October and February, the largest congregation of bald eagles in the world gathers to feed on a late season salmon run (see the "Fun Facts" section for details). Guided boat and raft tours travel the Chilkat

throughout the summer, and land-based tours visit the preserve during the winter. Check with the Visitor's Bureau for more information. Pullouts on the Haines Highway have restrooms, a viewing platform, interpretive signs and spotting scopes with good views of the winter eagle congregations.

**Mt. Ripinsky 8** stands 3,600 feet above downtown Haines. The forest gives way to alpine, the primary habitat for mountain goats, at around 3,000 feet. Long hair and nimble footwork allows goats to thrive in the chilly alpine, where the steep, rugged terrain offers protection against predators. In the late spring and early summer, bears head for higher elevations to feed on emerging plants. Blue grouse, gray-crowned rosy finches and mountain chickadees are some of the birds found on Mt. Ripinsky. The trailhead for the rugged and difficult 3.5-mile Mt Ripinsky Trail starts at the end of Young Road on the northeast edge of town. This trail is for fit and experienced hikers only. Read the "Haines is for Hikers" guide (available at the Visitor's Bureau) for more information and hiking safety tips before setting out, and let someone know when you plan to return.

### DRIVE SAFELY!

When you see wildlife while driving, don't stop suddenly in the middle of the road. Instead, find a safe place to pull over and enjoy the experience without endangering yourself or others.

### The Alaska Bald Eagle Festival

The Alaska Bald Eagle Festival, five days of education and celebration of the largest concentration of bald eagles in the world, is held in Haines each November. The festival features guided naturalist trips to the bald eagle preserve, presentations, educational wildlife exhibits, and the opportunity to watch rehabilitated eagles be released to the wild. For details, visit [www.baldeaglefestival.org](http://www.baldeaglefestival.org) or call 907-766-3094. Pair the Bald Eagle Fest with the Sitka WhaleFest ([www.sitkawhalefest.org](http://www.sitkawhalefest.org)) and an Inside Passage ferry ride for an educational and fun November wildlife viewing experience.