

Keep Predators Wild & Wary ...

Parks Canada needs YOUR help to prevent people-predator conflicts and to keep our predators wild!

Wolves and cougars are native to Vancouver Island, and as predators, are vital to a healthy coastal ecosystem. They may be encountered anywhere in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. National parks are great places to view wildlife in their natural habitat. However, once animals become accustomed to people they are in danger of losing their wildness. The repeated presence of humans that brings no negative consequence to the animal leads them to lose their sense of fear. With people and wild predators sharing the same places, encounters are becoming more common. This may threaten the safety of both people and predators.



Habituation = Loss of Fear

Wolves and cougars can become accustomed to human presence, leading to habituation. This is a term used to describe

animals that have lost their natural fear of people, and places of human activity. Juvenile animals may be habituated more easily than adults as they are both inexperienced and curious; they learn about life through trial and error. Habituated animals may become bold or inquisitive and may be encountered at close proximity. Any animal that is reluctant to flee from you is probably habituated.



Keep kayak hatches secure.

Food-conditioned = Associate Humans with Food

Food-conditioned wolves are animals that have either been fed or have found food left by humans. The food source is then associated with humans. These wolves often become increasingly aggressive food-seekers, progressing rapidly from foraging in campsites at night, to openly approaching people by day. Behaviour may include aggressive body language, baring of teeth and growling.

Cougars rarely scavenge, preferring to kill their prey. Habituated cougars may be more willing to enter populated areas for increased hunting success; common targets are cats, raccoons, off-leash dogs and urban deer.

DO NOT FEED WILDLIFE! It is illegal to feed wildlife in a national park. Wildlife find their healthiest food in their natural environment. Once they become accustomed to being fed by people, they spend less time looking for natural foods. Food-conditioned predators put themselves at risk and they threaten people.

Are People at Risk?

Cougars very rarely prey on people. Children and crouching adults are more at risk of attack as they more closely resemble prey. People on their own are also more at risk than groups of people. Wolf attacks are even rarer.

In this region, there have been three cougar attacks. In each case children were attacked: one on the West Coast Trail in 1985, one fatal attack just outside the park in Clayoquot Sound in 1989 and another at Kennedy Lake in 2011.

In 2000, a wolf that had obtained food from previous campers, attacked a sleeping man by a campfire in Clayoquot Sound.



Keep kids close.

Protect your Pet

Almost every year, domestic dogs and cats are killed or injured by predators in the region. Leashed dogs are at a much lower risk of attack; there have been no recorded attacks on leashed pets in this area.

Off-leash pets are at a much higher risk of attack by wolves and cougars; wolves and cougars have killed and eaten unleashed dogs. Pets are not only attractive prey, they may lead a predator back to you and trigger an attack.

Pets must be leashed in the Long Beach Unit at all times. Pets are not permitted on the West Coast Trail or in the Broken Group Islands.



Keep pets on a leash

Be Predator Aware!

- Predators may be in the area at any time – be alert!
- Check in at park offices for current information.
- Respect “wildlife warning” signs.
- Do not enter closed areas.
- Avoid hiking alone, especially at dawn, dusk, or night.
- Keep children close; discuss cougar and wolf safety.
- Carry deterrents: walking stick, small air horn or pepper spray (know how to use it, test it, check expiry date).

Stay Safe!

If you encounter a wolf or cougar:

- Pick up small children.
- Gather the group together.
- Do not run.
- Do not crouch down.
- Make and maintain eye contact.
- **Wave your arms and shout.**
- Do all you can to appear larger and to scare the animal away.
- Avoid scaring the animal into the path of other people.
- Use a noise maker like an airhorn or throw things if necessary.
- Never approach a carnivore or its den site.

If a wolf or cougar holds its ground:

Convince it that your group is not prey and you are dangerous!

- Do not turn your back. Maintain eye contact.
- Create and maintain space between you and the animal.
- Back away slowly.
- If you encounter wolf pups or cougar kitten, leave the area immediately. Do not approach.

If a wolf or cougar approaches you:

- Throw sticks, stones etc. or use pepper spray (if you know how to use it)
- If the aggression escalates, fight back with a stick, your fists, or whatever is at hand.
- Hit the animal in the eyes and nose.

If you see an animal carcass:

Leave the area immediately and notify park staff.

Pacific Rim National Park Reserve
Living with Wildlife Program
Contact Parks Canada staff at (250) 726-3500

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...Never Feed or Entice!



Preventing Carnivore Conflicts

Did you know?



No attractants left in tents, vestibules or campsite



Campsite with available wildlife attractants

Wolves, like bears, can become conditioned to human food. You can help prevent this by keeping a "bare campsite."

Campsite Tips

- Store all food and related items securely:
 - in a latched kayak hatch
 - slung between trees
 - in your car or wildlife-proof container.

Note: tents/vestibules and unlatched kayak hatches are NOT secure storage!
- Cook and eat meals at least 100 metres from your tent, if possible.
- Securely store clothes that you have worn while cooking.
- Pack out garbage, discard fish remains in the sea — well away from land.
- Keep your pet leashed in the national park.
- Keep food, garbage, pet food or other items smelling of food unavailable to wildlife including:
 - dish rags and dish water
 - soap
 - pots
 - toiletries (deodorant, toothpaste, sunscreen, etc).

The Wolf

A wolf looks like a German shepard dog but with a narrower chest, longer legs and larger feet. They are also heavier; a large wolf weighs 45 kg. They are efficient long distance runners and sprinters. Wolves can sprint up to 60-70 km/hr. On Vancouver Island, the wolf is a coastal subspecies that has a reddish, tawny coat. You may see a single wolf, a pair or larger packs.



The Cougar

Cougars are the only large cats on Vancouver Island. Longer and heavier than wolves, they weigh up to 63 kg. From nose to tail tip, they can be 190 cm (longer than an average bed). Their coats are a sandy or tawny colour, and the tail may have a black tip. They are usually solitary.

Travel Behaviours

Wolves and cougars are most often sighted travelling along trails, roads, beaches and in the sand dunes. These areas provide effective travel corridors where predators can see prey or detect their tracks or scent.

Predator Tracks

When cougars and wolves are wild and wary, they tend to stay out of sight. However, you may find signs that they are in the area; tracks and scat (droppings) are the most common clues indicating the presence of these animals.



What Do These Predators Eat?

Wolves and cougars are meat eaters (carnivores). Their diets consist mainly of deer, small mammals and birds. Dogs and cats are seen as prey.

How Do Cougars Hunt?

Cougars either stalk or ambush their prey. They attempt to get as close as possible to their prey before attacking. They are very fast sprinters and are able to leap long distances. They prefer to leap onto their prey from above or behind, and bite the neck or throat. Cougars are most active at dawn & dusk.

How Do Wolves Hunt?

Wolves can smell prey up to 2 km away. Once they detect potential prey, the pack works together to assess its vulnerability. If they detect a target, they work as a pack to chase and exhaust the prey before they close in for the attack.



Pacific Rim National Park Reserve

You are in
Wolf & Cougar Country

Never Feed or Entice Predators (or any other wildlife)!

Keep Carnivores Wild and Wary!



Identifying Wolf Tracks

Claws usually show. They are oblong shaped (longer than they are wide) around 7 cm wide by 9 cm long for an adult.



Identifying Cougar Tracks

Claws usually don't show. They are generally circular in shape, around 9 cm wide by 9 cm long for an adult.