

Mount Rainier National Park



Keep Wildlife Wild

Visiting Mount Rainier can be a wonderful experience.

Part of your experience is enjoying the amazing wildlife and supporting habitat protected in the park.

Mount Rainier is home to 54 species of mammals, 126 species of birds, and 17 species of amphibians and reptiles.

Though you are not likely to see all of them, there are a variety of birds and mammals you may encounter while in the park. Some of these animals are easy to spot, such as black-tailed deer that graze in the meadows. Other species take patience and a good eye to see, like the blue grouse whose camouflage markings hide it from predators.

Knowledge of these different species and what is appropriate behavior around them will enhance your experience and protect both you and wildlife from harm.

Keep the “wild” in wildlife

Biologists at Mount Rainier National Park have noticed a change in the natural behavior of the park’s wildlife. Some animals have been fed by people and are now “food-conditioned”—meaning, they seek out people for food. They learn to steal from picnic tables, trash cans, and will even forage through your belongings. This behavior is unsafe for both wildlife and park visitors. Park staff need your help to stop this unnatural behavior and keep wildlife wild . . .



Douglas squirrel
Tamiasciurus douglasii



Porcupine
Erethizon dorsatum



Mountain lion
Puma concolor



Townsend's chipmunk
Tamias townsendii



Elk
Cervus canadensis



Coyote
Canis latrans



Blue grouse
Dendragapus obscurus



Black bear
Ursus americanus



Pika
Ochotona princeps



Mountain goat
Oreamnos americanus



Cascade foxes
Vulpes vulpes cascadenis

Nest-robbing species (Corvids)



Raven
Corvus corax



Clark's nutcracker
Nucifraga columbiana



Stellar's jay
Cyanocitta stelleri



Gray jay
Perisoreus canadensis

... Feeding wildlife can be as direct as offering a bit of your lunch, to leaving your food or garbage exposed for animals to find. It may take just one experience for an animal to learn "people" equals "food."

Wildlife depend on natural behavior for survival, once a wild animal becomes food-conditioned it loses its natural fear of people and public places. Not feeding park animals keeps you safe and the wildlife wild.

How can feeding wildlife harm wildlife?

Feeding attracts nest predators

Corvids, such as jays and ravens, become food-conditioned easily. These birds (*Corvid* family) are natural nest predators and will eat the eggs and young of other birds. Feeding them attracts these birds in large numbers to areas where they will not only eat human food but kill other birds in that area as well.

This can decrease the populations of song birds in areas such as pullouts and picnic areas. This will also decrease your chance of seeing different types of birds the park has to offer.

Feeding causes vehicle accidents

Feeding wildlife attracts animals to areas with high vehicle traffic such as pullouts and picnic areas. This puts the animals at risk for being hit by cars. Mount Rainier has many threatened species of wildlife which depend on safe habitat for survival. One such threatened species is the Cascade fox, these animals can be easily attracted to roadways to beg for food. Three out of four foxes struck by cars in the park between 2005 and 2008 died.

Feeding can cause starvation

Fed wildlife will store human food as well as natural food in the same place. Unfortunately human food may not store well and will contaminate the natural food; this can destroy the entire cache. If this happens, animals may not have enough to eat and could starve to death during harsh winter months.

Mount Rainier provides habitat for many species of animals. When you visit the park, you are visiting their home. The choices you make have a direct effect on the wild animals that live here. By following the simple steps listed here you can help protect these animals and help to keep wildlife wild.

How can feeding wildlife harm me?

You could get sick

Birds and mammals can carry diseases and parasites transmittable to each other and to humans. When you feed animals in the park, they will return to beg food from other visitors. Here they may pass germs to each other and even to you! Animals leave germs behind when they land on you or on your belongings.

You could get hurt

Although a food-conditioned animal may tolerate being close to you, it is still a wild and unpredictable creature. Feeding an animal is dangerous—it could bite, kick or attack you if it becomes frightened. Wild animal bites are very painful and can become infected.

Feeding attracts predators

Feeding encourages small mammals and birds to concentrate in areas like pullouts and picnic areas to beg and steal food. This can attract larger predators such as bears and mountain lions which prey on these smaller animals. Once these large predators become used to people, small pets and children can be at risk as well.

How YOU can help keep wildlife wild.



- Don't feed the wildlife
- Store your food in an animal-proof container, or inside your car.
- Don't leave food, beverages, pet food or toiletries unattended for any length of time.
- Clean up picnic areas after you eat.

Pass it on!

Help Mount Rainier National Park teach others about this important issue.

- Share this brochure with your friends and family.
- Volunteer at the park as a meadow rover and help educate visitors about the reasons and importance of not feeding the wildlife! Sign up at a visitor center today!

Food-conditioned animals



A squirrel robbing a pack may bite or pass disease



A gray jay aggressively seeking humans for food



A raccoon scavenging unsecured dumpster for food



A hoary marmot loitering near parking area for food