

Wildlife Are Watching



We've all had it happen. You look up from the trail just in time to see an animal dive out of sight – a swoop of wing, a flash of antler, a slap of beaver's tail.

The truth is, most animals see and hear and smell us long before we catch their drift. They size us up, and depending on how far away we are and how we act, they decide whether to stay, defend themselves, or flee. Fighting and fleeing from us rob them of precious energy.

Fortunately, there are simple ways you can help blend into an animal's surroundings. In return, you'll be treated to a wildlife show that will make your heart pound and your senses hum.



Winning the Wildlife Sweepstakes

The ultimate wildlife watching experience is behavior watching – viewing animals without interrupting their normal activities. Instead of just a glimpse, you have an encounter – a chance not only to identify the animal, but to identify with it.

- Fade into the woodwork.
- Let animals be themselves.
- Stick to the sidelines.
- Come to your senses.
- Be easy to be with.
- Think like an animal.

WHERE THE ANIMALS ARE:



Have you noticed the brown-and-white binocular signs along the highway? They mark hundreds of wildlife viewing areas that are described in state guidebooks.

Remember though, wildlife can't read the signs. They lurk everywhere, and if you act respectfully, you may encounter animals while traveling to or from the viewing site. "On the way" is all part of the adventure. Good luck!

For more information, contact your nearest natural resource or wildlife agency.

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Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
17076 293rd Avenue
Zimmerman, MN 55398
Phone: 763.389.3323 / Fax: 763.389.3493
E-mail: sherburne@fws.gov
Website://midwest.fws.gov/sherburne

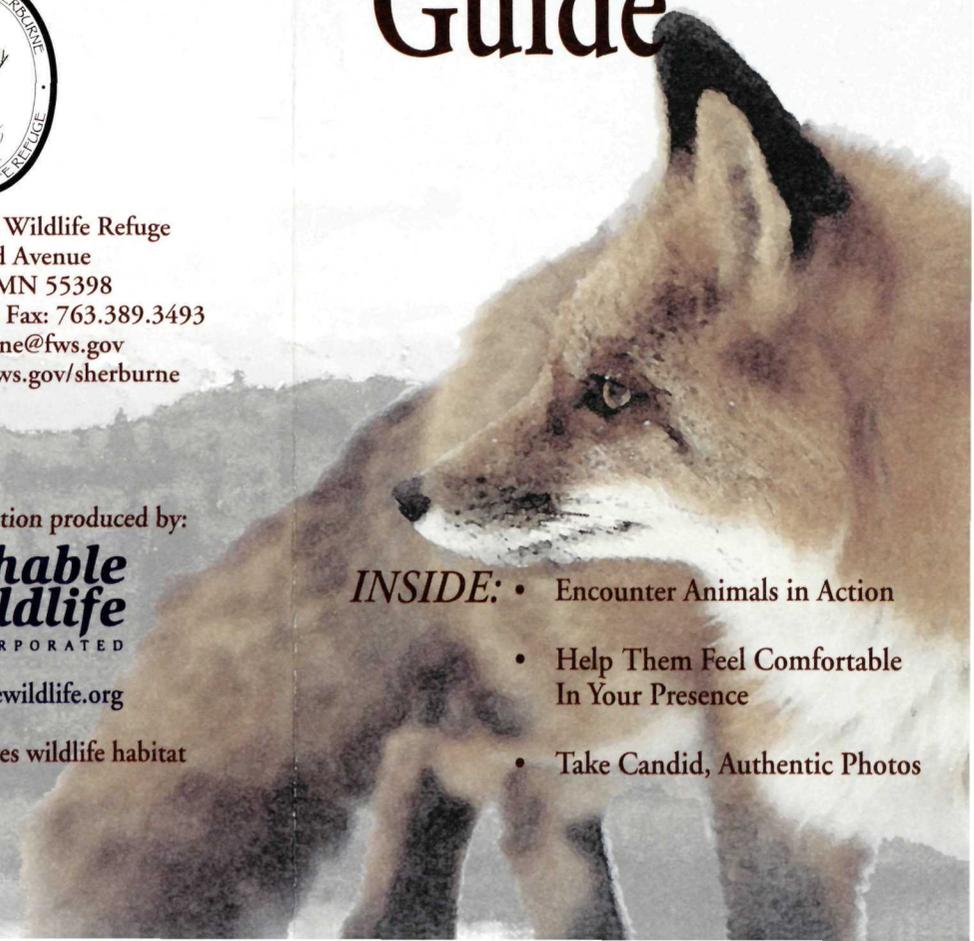
A cooperative publication produced by:

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Watchable Wildlife Viewing Guide

- INSIDE:*
- Encounter Animals in Action
 - Help Them Feel Comfortable In Your Presence
 - Take Candid, Authentic Photos



Viewing Tips

If you long to be wrapped up in watching, follow these tips from experienced behavior watchers. With the right combination of patience and know-how, you'll be able to witness wildlife without startling them or sapping their energy. It's a feeling you'll never forget!

Fade Into the Woodwork

- Wear natural colors and unscented lotions. Remove glasses that glint.
- Walk softly so as not to snap twigs.
- Crouch behind boulders or vegetation to hide your figure or break up your outline.
- Try not to throw a shadow.
- Remember that your reflection may be caught in a pool of water.

Let Animals Be Themselves

- Resist the temptation to "save" baby animals. Mom is usually watching from a safe distance.
- Let animals eat their natural foods. Sharing your sandwich may harm wild digestive systems and get animals hooked on handouts. These animals may eventually lose their fear of cars, campers, or even poachers. As a bonus, you'll learn a lot about an animal by watching what food it prefers.
- Let patience reward you. Resist the urge to throw rocks to see a flock fly.
- Savor the experience of being in an animal's home. Absorb all that it can teach you about living gently upon the land.

Stick to the Sidelines

- Use binoculars or zoom lenses to get that close-up. Aim for pictures of assured, dignified animals instead of stressed, panting victims.
- Give nests a wide berth. Although you mean well, your visit may lead a predator to the nest or cause the parents to jump ship, exposing eggs or young to the elements.

How to Use Binoculars

1. Find the subject with your unaided eyes.
2. Bring the eyepieces just under your eyes.
3. Sight the subject over the tops of the eyepieces.
4. Slowly bring the binoculars to your eyes.

Come to Your Senses

- A wildlife encounter is a spectrum of sensations. Deepen awareness by tapping your sense of smell, taste, touch, hearing and sight.
- Focus and expand your attention, taking in the foreground and then switching to take in the wide view.
- Use your peripheral vision rather than turning your head.
- Look for out-of-place shapes – horizontal shapes in a mostly vertical forest or an oblong shape on a tree branch.
- Watch for out-of-place motions – the flight of a bird, for instance, stands out against a backdrop of falling leaves.
- Look above and below you. Animals occupy niches in all the vertical and horizontal layers of a habitat.
- Make "mule ears". Cup your hands around the back of your ears to amplify the natural sounds.
- Heed your instincts. If the hair on the back of your neck stands up (a vestige of the days when we had fur), an animal may be near.
- Silence can speak volumes. Animals may fall silent when a predator is passing through an area.

Be Easy to Be With

- Relax your muscles; animals can easily detect tension.
- Make yourself as small and unassuming as possible.
- Move like molasses, slow, smooth and steady.
- If you must advance, take a roundabout route, never directly toward an animal.
- Avert your gaze, animals may interpret a direct stare as a threat.

Think Like an Animal

- Imagine how the animal you are seeking spends its days. Check field guides to find out about life history and preferred habitats.
- As a rule, the border between two habitats is a good place to see residents from both places.
- Look in high-visitation areas: trails, intersections, perches, ledges overlooking open areas and drinking sites.
- Take note of the season and gauge whether the animal will be shopping for a mate, feathering its nest, fattening for the winter, or preparing to migrate.
- Figure out the best time of day for viewing by imagining an animal's daily schedule. When does it feed? Nap? Bathe? Drink? Dusk and dawn are usually good bets.
- Factor in the weather. After a rain for instance, many animals emerge to feed on displaced insects, flooded out rodents, etc.

Camera Tips

- Use at least a 400 mm lens.
- Have the sun at your back.
- Afternoon light is best.
- Aim for featuring wildlife with natural surroundings, not a full-frame profile.

