



Encountering Wildlife

Help keep them wild! Approaching or feeding wildlife endangers both you and the animal.



Prince William Forest Park is home to a diverse group of wild animals such as deer, fox, coyote, squirrel, raccoon, black bear, birds, and snakes. Depending upon the season and the time of day, you may glimpse some of these animals during your visit. Even if they appear to be tame, cute, injured, or unafraid of people, wild animals are unpredictable and may attack in self-defense. Please remember that the park is their home and by following a few simple steps you can help *keep them wild!*

I. **Report a wildlife encounter.** Help park researchers learn more about park wildlife by recording your wildlife encounter on this card and returning it to the visitor center (open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily). You can also e-mail us on our website at www.nps.gov/prwi.

Type of animal: _____

Location: _____

Describe your encounter: _____

Date & time of day: _____

Weather: _____

2. ***Make noise.*** Alert wildlife of your presence by talking, singing, or clapping while hiking. Be aware of your surroundings at all times, especially at dawn and dusk when wildlife is most active.
3. ***Do not approach wildlife.*** Wildlife of all sizes will feel threatened and will react if you get too close. You may unknowingly put yourself between an animal and her young.
4. ***View wildlife from a safe distance (30 to 100 meters).*** Remember wildlife is wild, even though they may look cute or tame! Binoculars, spotting scopes, or telephoto lens are great tools for safe wildlife viewing.
5. ***It is unlawful to feed wildlife.*** Do not leave food or food items unattended. Wildlife may lose their natural fear of humans when they associate us with food, becoming a risk to public safety.
6. ***Do not run.*** Running makes you look like prey to some animals. You do not want to be seen as something to eat!
7. ***Make yourself look as big as possible.*** This will usually prevent the animal from coming towards you.
8. ***Identify yourself as human.*** Talk calmly. Your voice will distinguish you from the animal's natural food source or prey.
9. ***Do not surround a wild animal.*** Slowly back away. This gives the animal space and allows it more opportunity to choose the "escape" option instead of the "attack" option.
10. ***Do not approach injured wildlife.*** The animal may try to defend itself, not understanding your intentions.

To learn more about the wildlife in Prince William Forest Park, please visit our website at www.nps.gov/prwi or call the visitor center at 703-221-7181.

In case of an emergency, call 9-1-1 or the National Park Service Emergency Dispatch at 1-866-677-6677.