

Preventing Carnivore Conflicts:



Campsite with available wildlife attractants

No attractants left in tents, vestibules or campsite

Bob Hansen, Care of Parks Canada

Preventing carnivore conflicts:

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

Don'ts:

- Never leave food, garbage, pet food, or other items smelling of food available to wildlife:
 - Dish rags and dish water
 - Soap
 - Pots
 - Toiletries (deodorant, toothpaste, sunscreen, etc)
- Do not cook and eat in or near your tent;
- Do not sleep in the clothes that you wore while cooking;
- Do not dispose of fish remains near a camping area;
- Never allow pets to roam off-leash.

Never feed or entice predators (or any other wildlife)!

Do's:

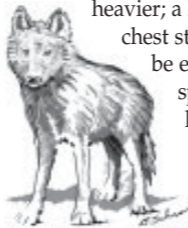
- Store all food and related items securely:
 - In a latched kayak hatch
 - Slung between trees
 - In your car or wildlife-proof container
- Note: tents/vestibules and unlatched kayak hatches are NOT secure storage!**
- Cook and eat meals at least 100 metres from your tent, if possible;
 - Securely store clothes that you wore (while cooking) with your food;
 - Pack out garbage, discard fish remains in the sea - well away from land;
 - Leash your pet. *It is illegal to take pets into backcountry areas of the park.*

Keep Carnivores Wild and Wary!

Did You Know?

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. Their narrow chest streamlines their gait, allowing them to be 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. Packs are extended family groups.



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 cougar are most often sighted traveling along trails, roads, beaches, edges of mudflats, stream-courses, in bogs and in sand dune complexes. These areas provide effective travel corridors where predators can see prey or detect their tracks or scent.

Wolves in particular may travel more openly on beaches, in sand dunes and along hiking trails in the winter months when human use decreases.

Predator Tracks

When cougars and wolves are wild and wary, they tend to stay out of sight. You may, however, find signs that they are in the area. Tracks & scats, or droppings, are the most common clues indicating the presence of these animals.



Identifying Wolf Tracks

Claws usually show. Longer than they are wide - oblong shape around 7 centimetres wide by 9 centimetres long for an adult



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, but they do not have the endurance for prolonged full-speed pursuit. If possible, they 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 2km away. Once they detect potential prey, the pack works together to assess its vulnerability. If no individual appears to be a good target, the pack will move on. If they do detect a target, they work as a pack to chase and exhaust the prey before they close in for the attack.



Identifying Cougar Tracks

Claws usually don't show - Generally circular in shape around 9 centimetres wide by 9 centimetres long for an adult



You are in WOLF & COUGAR COUNTRY

PACIFIC RIM NATIONAL PARK RESERVE



Keep Predators Wild & Wary...



Photo: Steve Diggon

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

Habituation = Loss of fear

Wolves and cougars can become accustomed to human presence, leading to "habituation", a term used to describe animals that have learned to lose their natural fear of people and places of human activity. This lesson is accidentally taught when the repeated presence of humans brings no negative consequences to the animal.

Juveniles may be habituated more easily than adults. They are inexperienced and curious; learning about life through trial and error. Habituated animals may become bold or inquisitive and may be encountered at close distances. Any animal that is reluctant to flee from you is probably habituated.

Fearless, yet non-threatening behaviour has become more common in recent years. It sets the stage for the feeding of predators by people.



Keep kayak hatches secured

Wolves and cougars are predators native to Vancouver Island and are vital to maintain the health of the coastal ecosystem. They may be encountered anywhere in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve and its environs.

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". With people and wild predators sharing the same places, encounters are becoming more common. This may threaten the safety of both people and predators. Can we co-exist?

Food-Conditioning = Increased risk

Food-conditioned 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 take greater risks for increased hunting success – even if it means entering populated areas. 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 their natural foods. These food-conditioned predators put themselves at risk and are a threat to public safety.

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.**
- 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 them that members of your group are not prey and that 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 kittens leave the area immediately. Do not approach.

If a wolf or cougar approaches you:

- Throw sticks and stones etc. or use pepper spray (*be sure you know how to use it beforehand*).
- 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 a predator kill

- (e.g. a deer carcass)
- Leave the area immediately and notify park staff.

CONTACT US:

Please report any wolf or cougar sightings or kill sites to Parks Canada staff at (250) 726-7165. Check for wolf or cougar information at Park Information Centres and Warden Offices.



Are people and pets at risk?

Cougars will very rarely prey on people. The probability of being struck by lightning is much higher than that of being attacked. Wolf attacks are even rarer. In this region, there have been two cougar attacks. In both cases children were attacked: one on the West Coast Trail in 1985 and one fatal attack just outside the park in Clayoquot Sound in 1989. Children and crouching adults are more at risk of attack; they may more closely resemble prey. People who travel alone in wildland areas are also at higher risk.

In 2000, a food-conditioned wolf seriously injured a camper sleeping by a campfire in Clayoquot Sound. The wolf had been fed by previous campers and entered the camping area apparently in search of more food. The attack was not believed to have been predatory.

Off-leash pets are at a much higher risk of attack by wolves and cougars. Almost every year, 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.

Take precautions in wolf and cougar country for the safety of yourself and your pets.

Stay Safe

Be Predator Aware!

- Predators may be in the area at any time – be alert!
- Check in at Park offices for current information.
- Watch for and respect "wildlife warning" signs.
- Do not enter closed areas.
- Avoid hiking alone, especially at dawn, dusk or night.
- Keep children close; discuss cougar & wolf safety.
- Never approach a carnivore or its den site.
- Carry deterrents: walking stick, small air horn or pepper spray (*know how to use it, test it, check expiry date*).
- If you encounter wolf pups or cougar kittens, leave the area immediately. Do not approach.

Whenever you see a wolf or cougar on the road, trail, beach or elsewhere, **scare the animal away immediately**; this will teach it to be more wary of people, reducing the risk to the animal and people. Do all you can to appear larger; pick up a stick, wave your arms, and shout. Use a deterrent (listed above); throw things if necessary. **Avoid scaring the animal into the path of other people.**

Dogs are not permitted in the backcountry units of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve: the West Coast Trail and the Broken Group Islands. Dogs must be leashed in the Long Beach Unit. Wolves and cougars have killed and eaten unleashed dogs. They are not only attractive prey, they may lead a predator back to you, and trigger an attack.

Pacific Rim National Park Reserve of Canada
Living with Wildlife Program
Contact Parks Canada staff at (250) 726-7165
ISBN ??

Cover photo: Mark Hobson, Care of Parks Canada
Deer photo and graphics by Schramm Design. Printed in Canada 2004

... Never Feed or Entice!