

WILDLIFE AWARENESS

Do You Know How to Stay Safe in the Fall and Winter Season?

Wild animals have seasonal patterns of migration, rutting, and denning which can be dangerous to anyone entering a remote area. Especially during the fall and winter seasons, you need to take extra precautions.



BEARS

Denning season

Black Bears and Grizzlies:

Fall to early winter

Typical den sites are only big enough to fit a single bear when it's curled up. Tree stumps, hillside holes, and overturned logs make ideal denning sites. Grizzlies, in particular, like to den at higher elevations, moving down towards the valleys in the warmer seasons.

Polar Bears:

Pregnant females den throughout the winter, beginning in mid-October. All Polar Bears temporarily occupy dens in cold or stormy weather.

One of the largest Polar Bear maternity denning sights is near Churchill, Manitoba, on the coast of Hudson Bay. Polar Bear den sites are usually in deep snow drifts near the coast, on south-facing slopes or valleys.

HIBERNATION:

No Canadian bears are true hibernators, because they don't become inactive throughout the entire winter season.

All Canadian bears can be active all winter if the temperatures are warm enough, or if they're disturbed in their dens.

LARGE UNGULATES

Rutting season

Fall to early winter

During rutting season, male ungulates are increasingly aggressive and eager to challenge other males for dominance and mates. During this time, the risk of an encounter with a male ungulate is higher.

They may mistake typical noises from people in the wilderness, such as rustling branches and coughing, as a challenge from another ungulate and respond aggressively.

Migration

Bison, Moose, Elk, Caribou, Deer:

Late summer to early winter

Ungulates often use human-made corridors, like roads, to travel between their seasonal ranges. They're also attracted to paved roads during the winter, because they like to lick the road salt used to melt ice.

Avoid encounters

Avoid encounters by:

- Calling local fish and wildlife to determine if the area you're going to is populated by ungulates or bears, so you can be prepared
- Avoiding bear and ungulate habitats, as well as grassy meadows and fresh water sources, which they frequent
- Scanning for animal signs, like scat, rut holes, and torn up stumps
- Being cautious and alert during work

Avoid collisions with large ungulates by:

- Ensuring that your windshield and headlights are clean
- Securely fastening your seatbelt
- Scanning the roadside for wildlife (e.g., eye reflections)
- Staying alert and slowing down, particularly at dawn and dusk
- Driving with your headlights on at a reduced speed at night. Use your high beams where possible, ensuring that your headlights light up the road and the roadside.
- Preparing for more animals after you spot a single one by slowing down and staying alert
- Slowing down and staying alert at wildlife crossings and warning signs