

# WildSmart

## Our Mission

WildSmart is a proactive conservation program that encourages efforts by communities to reduce negative human-wildlife interactions.

We conduct a variety of education and outreach activities, and we help to remove wildlife attractants from high human-use areas. These activities increase public safety and enjoyment while also supporting healthy wildlife populations.



WildSmart was established in 2005 by a coalition of local interest groups including businesses, environmental organizations, and municipal and provincial government agencies. In 2009 WildSmart became a program of the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley, a local charity.

The Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley empowers local residents, businesses and visitors to be active environmental stewards. We do so through targeted education, research, and community engagement.

Cover photo courtesy of Amar Athwal



Jamin Mulvey

## Road Side Viewing

One of the most common places for you to see wildlife is on the side of the road.

A few things to remember:

- Being close to wildlife causes them stress. It is safer for you, other cars and wildlife if you do not stop your car. Slow down, but continue past.
- If you notice a 'wildlife jam' (a large number of cars parked on the side of the road), keep moving when safe to do so.
- Stay in your vehicle. Leaving your car is very dangerous. Wild animals are unpredictable and need a lot of personal space.

## Road and Mountain Biking

- Bikers move quickly and quietly, making them more likely to surprise wildlife. Slow down, especially in areas with thick bushes, blind corners, crests of hills and near noisy rivers.
- Bike in groups, be aware of your surroundings, make lots of noise, and carry bear spray.
- If you encounter a bear, prepare to use your bear spray. Step off your bike, back away slowly and keep your bike between you and the bear. Do not try to out-cycle a bear.

# How to Avoid and Manage Encounters

## Avoid Encounters

Do not approach or feed wildlife. This could lead to human injury and/or destruction of the animal.

Ways to avoid wildlife:

- Make lots of noise to alert animals of your presence (e.g. talk loudly, sing or shout);
- Travel in groups;
- Walk pets on leash;
- Be aware of your surroundings and recognize signs (tracks/scat) of wildlife;
- Respect area warnings and closures;
- Leave the area if you see or smell a dead animal; and
- Carry bear spray and know how to use it.

## Handling an Encounter

When handled calmly and appropriately, most wildlife encounters end without injury to humans or wildlife.

- **STOP—gather your group together!**
- **NEVER RUN!**
- If the animal is unaware of your presence, quietly go back the way you came.
- If the animal is aware of your presence, act non-threatening—talk calmly and back away slowly.
- Prepare to use your bear spray.

## In a defensive encounter a bear may feel threatened by your presence if you:

1. Are too close to the bear or its cubs;
2. Are too close to its food (e.g. a carcass, berry patch); or
3. Surprised the bear (it didn't hear you coming).

Be non-threatening—stay calm and back away slowly.

- **NEVER RUN!**
- If the bear comes within range, use your bear spray!
- If the bear makes contact, **play dead**.
- If the attack continues it may have shifted to a non-defensive (i.e. predatory) attack. In this case fight back (see below).

**A non-defensive approach by a bear, cougar, coyote or wolf** is when the animal has time to leave, but still approaches you.

- **NEVER RUN!**
- Intimidate the animal—act big and loud.
- If wildlife comes within range, use your bear spray!
- If the animal makes contact, **fight back**. Attack the eyes and nose.

**For more information on handling encounters visit: [wildsmart.ca](http://wildsmart.ca)**



Amar Athwal



Penny Lawless

## Carry Bear Spray

- Bear spray has been proven to be effective at deterring attacks from black and grizzly bears.
- Bear spray may also be used to deter other animals such as elk, wolves, cougars and coyotes.
- Learn to use your bear spray and carry it with you when you recreate outdoors.
- Carry your bear spray in an easily accessible spot, preferably attached to your body by a holster or sling. Do not carry bear spray inside your backpack!
- Carry bear spray even in winter. Keep it warm to ensure its effectiveness.
- Check the expiry date on your bear spray. Replace after expiration or use.
- Take the time to read the directions on your bear spray, as different brands have different specifications.

**For more information watch the 'How to properly use bear spray' video at [wildsmart.ca/bearspray](http://wildsmart.ca/bearspray)**

## Pets

- Pets should be kept on leash and under your control everywhere in the Bow Valley except in designated dog off leash areas.
- It is not uncommon for off leash pets to come into conflict with wildlife.

# Wildlife Attractants

Here in the Bow Valley, we take animal attractants such as garbage, pet food, unattended food, greasy barbecues, fruit trees in town and birdfeeders seriously. Bears that gain access to these food sources can lose their natural fear of people, which increases the possibility of human-wildlife conflict. These bears can cause injury to people and pets and destroy property, resulting in bears being relocated or destroyed.

Help keep bears wild and everyone safe by:

- storing food in a secure area such as inside a building, vehicle, or hard-sided camper;
- cleaning grease trays on barbecues;
- taking birdfeeders down in spring through fall;
- placing garbage in bear proof garbage containers;
- keeping pet food indoors;
- removing fruit bearing trees and shrubs from your yard, or ensuring the fruit is removed.

**DO NOT FEED WILDLIFE.** It is illegal to feed wildlife in most of the Bow Valley and can result in large fines and possible imprisonment.



Craig Douce



Amar Athwal

## Urban Elk and Deer

It is not uncommon to see elk and deer inside town limits. Although it may be hard to believe that these gentle-looking giants are dangerous, elk and deer are a major cause of human-wildlife conflict in the Bow Valley. Because they lack the sharp teeth of bears and cougars and are frequently seen calmly grazing on grass inside the town, visitors often believe that approaching or feeding elk and deer is harmless. However, they have been known to suddenly charge, injuring people and pets.

- Leave 30 meters (100 feet) of space between you and all elk.
- Keep your pets on leash.
- During the rutting season (September-October) never get between a male elk and a herd of female elk.
- Never approach female elk with young, especially during calving season (May-June).
- If you are charged by an elk or deer, position a large object (e.g. tree or car) between you and the animal.

# Why be WildSmart?

The Bow Valley has numerous human-wildlife encounters every year. Some encounters have resulted in people suffering injuries or fatalities, or in wildlife being relocated or destroyed. A successful public education program helps to increase awareness, improve public safety and reduce human-caused wildlife mortality. This is essential for the long term sustainability of wildlife in the region. The WildSmart Community Program has become a benchmark for human and wildlife safety and education programs in the Bow Valley and beyond.

### How Can I Help?

- Learn about Bow Valley wildlife and how to behave in order to avoid encounters and serious injury.
- Carry bear spray in an easily accessible location and know how to use it.
- Help keep yourself and your pets safe by walking them on leash.
- Help keep our neighbourhoods safe by removing wildlife attractants such as pet food, unsecured garbage, birdfeeders, fruit and fruit bearing trees and shrubs from your yard.
- Spread the word. Share information on how to be WildSmart with neighbours, friends, family and people you meet on the trail.
- Sign up for wildlife safety programs in your area.
- Respect trail closures and wildlife warning signs by choosing alternative trails.
- Volunteer your time or donate to the WildSmart Program.
- Sign up for our weekly bear report at wildsmart.ca

# More Information

### Donate to WildSmart!

WildSmart is a program of the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley and relies entirely on donations and sponsors. You can donate online at wildsmart.ca, by mail or in person. Please make cheques out to the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley (note: WildSmart program).




### Contact Us

#### WildSmart Community Program

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wildsmart.ca

 @wildsmart

 Bow Valley WildSmart



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



**Report sightings of bear, cougar, wolf and aggressive wildlife:**

403-591-7755 (Bow Valley + Kananaskis Country)  
403-762-1470 (Banff National Park)

**For all public safety emergencies call 911**

# LIVING SMART WITH WILDLIFE



## How WildSmart are you?

