17 Skidegate Inlet - The inlet is an excellent place to spot migrating and feeding birds from April to June. You can also look for a wide variety of migrating waterfowl and seabirds from April through June.

18 Queen Charlotte Island Highway - Look for a race of very small Black-tailed Deer called Sitka Deer that may be found here as well as numerous other bird species including Gyrfalcon and Snow Buntings. Grizzly Bear foraging for the first green vegetation in spring and summer often can be seen very close to the road from July to September.

19 Delkatla Wildlife Refuge - Here, you will find a tidal lagoon with trails and viewing platforms that enhance wildlife viewing all year round. Over 130 species of birds have been recorded here including Sandhill Cranes, Least Sandpipers, Great Blue Herons, Common Snipe, shorebirds, and seabirds. Best mid March through May.

20 North Beach - Drive 25 km east of Masset on a mainly gravel road to find North Beach in Naikoon Provincial Park. This 14 km sand beach provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities year round. You are likely to see several species of Shorebirds and numerous other seabirds. Beach combing can be good after storms. Remember to check the tide tables to pick the best time to travel on the beach.

Highway 37 leaves Highway 16 at Kitwanga and winds north through forested valleys, often alongside wilderness rivers and lakes. The climate becomes drier and colder as you travel north. Most of the route is wilderness with small amounts of cultivation widely spaced along the way. Marshy lakes and wetlands near the road are good places to spot nesting waterfowl and Moose feeding on aquatic vegetation.

21 Mezidjan Fish Ladder - Take the first left turn north of the Nass River Bridge (approximately 16 km south of Mezidjan junction) and follow the gravel road until you reach the parking lot near the river. From July to mid September you will often see Sockeye and Chinook Salmon jumping to reach the upper reaches of the highway. Be aware, both Black and Grizzly Bears are found in the area.

22 Bear River Estuary - The Bear River enters the Portland Canal near Stewart. A new boardwalk along the estuary provides viewing of Bald Eagles, waterfowl, and shorebirds. The viewing season extends from April through July but is best in April and May.

23 Ningusan Pass - Highway 37 winds through this narrow pass north of the Bell-Irving River. Look for wildlife on the many avalanche slopes, particularly Grizzly Bears foraging for the first green vegetation in May as the snow melts. If you do see bears, stay close to your vehicle to avoid danger.

24 Todagin Mountain - Look for opportunities to pull off Highway 37 near the north end of Kitaskan Lake. Then use your binoculars to look for Stone’s Sheep on the open mountain slopes east of the highway. The best viewing is in July and August.

25 Goat Pass - This pass just north of the Sitkine River is low and mushy with a number of small lakes. Look for Woodland Caribou in May, nesting waterfowl over the early summer and Moose in the wetlands around lakes from spring to fall.

26 Black Mountain - The mountain is just south of the Yukon boundary on the road to Atlin. Stone’s Sheep can often be seen very close to the road from July to September.

This brochure was funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and supported by the Federation of Canadian Naturalists and the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.
The Skeena Region

The Northwest part of British Columbia is known as the Skeena Region. It is a mountainous landscape, broken by large plateaus, hundreds of lakes and several of the province’s largest rivers including the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine. On the coast, dense rain forests border long fiords surrounded by steep sided granite peaks. Off the coast, there is a sea of islands, including the Queen Charlotte Islands west of Prince Rupert.

The most heavily traveled routes in the region are the Yellowhead Highway (Highway 16), running from east to west, and Highway 37, connecting the area with the Yukon. This guide is arranged to help you find opportunities to view wildlife as you travel these highways. Several marine sites with excellent viewing opportunities are also included for those who come to the area to fish and boat on the ocean.

Fraser Lake to Houston

Traveling west along Highway 16 you enter the Skeena Region just west of Fraser Lake. From here until you reach Houston, you are crossing the Nechako Plateau, a hilly landscape with small mountains, rock outcrops and hundreds of small lakes and wetlands. The forests are mixed lodgepole pine, spruce and aspen. Drier south-facing slopes often have groovy openings. During spring and early summer, the lakes and wetlands are ideal places to observe migrating and nesting waterfowl. These wetlands are also excellent Moose habitat from spring to fall. During the winter months, the open south-facing slopes are important habitat for Moose and Mule Deer and they can often be seen browsing at dawn or dusk.

1 Stelakes River - This 10 km river between Francois and Fraser Lakes is accessible at both ends by paved road. In early summer, Stelakes River is fed by snowmelt from the mountains and is in high flow. It is a good place to look for rafting and camping opportunities. The river is named after Francois Stelake, who was the first white man to explore the area in 1805.

Tips for viewing

This guide will help you find some of the best places for viewing wildlife in the Skeena Region. Follow some of the viewing tips below to increase your chances of seeing wildlife during your travels through the region.

• Check the season - most sites have a time of year when more birds or animals may be seen.
• Time of day is important - early morning and evening are often good times
• Use cover, move slowly and be quiet to avoid startling wildlife and improve your viewing success
• Be patient - many animals will observe their surroundings for long periods before moving
• Look for signs - many animals leave tracks, droppings, nests, sleeping beds and dens if you look carefully
• Field Guides - provide clues to help you find and identify wildlife. Guides often include descriptions of habitat where wildlife can be found
• Binoculars and spotting scopes - help you view wildlife and other scenery. They allow you to effectively watch wildlife and other scenery. They allow you to effectively watch
• Wildlife

Staying Safe

Wild animals are often unpredictable; follow the tips below to stay safe.

• Keep your distance - many wild animals can be dangerous, respect their space
• Stay alert - many incidents between people and wildlife occur when they meet by accident, be particularly careful when viewing spawning fish as both Black and Grizzly Bears are often found nearby
• Caution around young wildlife - mothers are often very protective and can be quite aggressive, especially bears and moose

Responsible viewing

We all have a responsibility to minimize the effects we have on wildlife and their habitat. Please follow the guidelines below.

• Keep vehicles on roads - off-road traffic damages vegetation, causes soil erosion, disturbs wildlife and may reduce habitat usefulness for wildlife
• Stay on trails - many animals experience less stress and can better adapt when human use is predictable, for example when hikers stay on trails
• Don’t approach or chase animals - unnecessary movement uses energy that may be needed for their survival
• Use binoculars - by staying farther away you can reduce stress on wildlife
• Control pets - to avoid wildlife harassment and to give animals a better viewing opportunity
• Respect others - ask owners if you wish to cross private property and leave other viewers the space and quiet they want
• Leave the environment unchanged - take your garbage out
• Don’t feed or touch animals - feeding can create an unhealthy reliance on people, touching young animals may cause mothers to abandon them
• Report environmental abuse - We are all responsible for the environment. Report environmental or wildlife abuse to any Conservation Officer. Please record the location, date, time, vehicle description and license plate number of the offender.
**Wildlife of the Skeena Region**

2 Fulton River Spawning Channel - Drive 35 km north of Telkwa on a good road and look for the spawning channel just after you cross the Fulton River Bridge. From mid to late September hundreds of thousands of spawning Sockeye Salmon can be seen over the river and spawning channel. A fish counting fence improves viewing opportunities and interpretive signs can be found along the riverbank. Keep an eye out for Osprey, Bald Eagles and Black Bears attracted by the salmon carcasses. Similar viewing opportunities are found at the Pinkit Creek Spawning Channel north of Burns Lake.

3 Morice Mountains - Just west of Houston turn south on the Morice River Forest Road and follow this good gravel road for 17 km to the Aspen Forest Recreation Site. Use your binoculars to spot Mountain Goats on the rocky cliffs that can be seen east of the forest road.

4 Tyber Lake Provincial Park - You will find this scenic provincial campground just north of Highway 16 near Telkwa. A walking trail through the aspen forest and along the lakeshore offers excellent opportunities to see forest songbirds, Osprey, Belted Kingfishers, Common Loons, Red-necked Grebes and other waterfowl. The best viewing opportunities are found April through June during spring migration and nesting.

5 Woodmere Road and Telkwa Hi-Road - These two scenic roads leave Highway 16 near Telkwa and wind through farming country east of the highway. Drive these roads at dawn during the last two weeks of April to view thousands of migrating Sandhill Cranes.

6 Tloksun Lake - This small, marshy lake is found 11 km northwest of Smithers in full view of Highway 16. During spring and fall, large numbers of waterfowl rest here. From May through July you will see nesting Canada Geese and Red-necked Grebes as well as other waterfowl. No parking is required as no parking is available on Highway 16.

7 Ross Lake Provincial Park - You will find this scenic park southeast of Hazelton, at the end of a short, well maintained, gravel road just off Highway 16. A five km trail around the lake provides excellent bird watching opportunities. The spring migration starts in April and peaks in May. During this time you may see large numbers of Tree and Violet-green Swallows, Red-necked Grebes, Lesser Scapla and Long-tailed Ducks. In May and June common nesting birds include Red-winged Blackbirds, Ring-necked Ducks, Common Loons, Redstarts and numerous warbler species.

8 Deep Creek Hatchery - To find the hatchery, drive 7 km north of Terrace on the Kulam Lake Road. Facilities at the site include walking trails, rearing ponds, and a viewing bridge across Deep Creek. Natural spawning takes place in Deep Creek and you may see Spawning Steelhead as well as Pink, Coho and Chinook Salmon in the creek at various times from March to October. Hatchery tours may be booked in the spring months.

9 Lakelese Lake Provincial Park - The park is nestled in the rain forest on the shores of Lakelese Lake, 17 km south of Terrace on Highway 37. Hiking trails and good access to the lakeshore provide very good bird watching opportunities. The peak migration and nesting period is April through June. Look for oriole species of waterfowl, at least six species of hawks and numerous forest songbirds. Great Blue Herons are often seen spring through fall and Trumpeter Swans over-winter November to March.

10 Coste Rocks - These barren rocky islets are about 29 km southwest of Kitimat near the north end of Devastation Channel. Harbour Seals use them as a pull out and are often seen here from April through September. Boat access only.

**Terrace to Prince Rupert**

Highway 16 follows the banks of the Skeena River for most of its route to Prince Rupert at the foot of the massive granite domes of the Coast Range. The dense temperate rainforest is broken by huge avalanche slopes and dozens of waterfalls.

11 Exchamsiks Provincial Park - This park is just off Highway 16 on the banks of the Exchamsiks River, 37 km west of Terrace. Here you can use binoculars to spot Mountain Goats on the cliffs south of the Skeena River. The best viewing is April through August.

12 Skeena River - The best wildlife viewing is found downstream from the Kasslu River. The spring Eulachon run and summer salmon runs are followed spriter by Harbour Seals, Northern Sea Lions, Bald Eagles and flocks of gulls. The Eulachon run occurs mid March to mid April and salmon runs occur mid July to early September. The mouths of major tributary rivers and mud banks exposed at low tide are very good places to see shorebirds and waterfowl year round. From November through April, Trumpeter Swans over-winter in several of the back channels seen near the highway.

Chatham Sound off Prince Rupert attracts a wide variety of sea mammals, waterfront, shorebirds and seabirds because of large variations in the tide, complex shorelines, herring spawning and high populations of salmon. This is especially true in the spring and early summer when the salmon are schooling prior to migrating up the Nass and Skeena Rivers. However, the best locations, including those listed below, are only accessible by boat.

13 Mouth of Work Channel - Boats may be launched in Prince Rupert or in the more protected waters at the head of the channel. The mouth of the channel provides good fishing and an excellent place to observe feeding Humpback Whales from June to August.

14 Big Bay - This wide bay is found northwest of Prince Rupert on the Tsimpsean Peninsula, between Metlakatla and Port Simpson. It has extensive tidal mudflats with eelgrass and is an internationally significant resting area for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Peak use is in April and May and again in the fall.

15 Melville and Dundas Island Group - Five large islands and hundreds of smaller islets form this island group northwest of Prince Rupert. Northern Sea Lions may be seen over the summer months hauled out on rocky islets. Elusive Grey Wolves on these islands have learned to subsist on a diet high in salmon, clams and sand fleas.

The Queen Charlotte Islands

This island archipelago, also known as Haida Gwaii, features some of the most spectacular rainforests in BC, amazing beaches and likely the best variety of wildlife viewing opportunities in the region. Over 100 smaller islands support seabird colonies. These are susceptible to human disturbance; many are ecological reserves and require a permit to visit. The Queen Charlotte Islands have some of the best bird watching sites in Canada with over 250 species recorded.

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