



Gustavus: Gateway to Glacier Bay

Marvel at the glaciers and wildlife on a boat tour into the heart of Glacier Bay National Park. Look and listen for migrating sandhill cranes at the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area. Paddle the sheltered waters of the Beardslee Islands, keeping your eyes open for wildlife. Watch for whales and other marine mammals while standing on the Gustavus dock, or on a boat or guided kayak tour to Icy Strait.

Thousands of visitors come to Glacier Bay National Park each summer, attracted by the astounding scenery and thriving wildlife populations. After visiting the park, spend a few days in the nearby town of Gustavus, where you're sure to find additional surprises and delights. Wildlife viewing, beautiful surroundings, and gracious residents are just a few of the reasons why Gustavus is an excellent addition to any Glacier Bay trip.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Gustavus Visitors Association. Visit www.gustavusak.com or call 907-697-2454.



For information on Glacier Bay, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/glba or call (907) 697-2230.



Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail

From the bears of Hyder to the bald eagles of Haines, the whales of Frederick Sound to the birds of the Stikine River, the **Inside Passage Segment** of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail highlights over 70 wildlife viewing sites in and near the communities of Gustavus, Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Prince of Wales Island, Sitka, Skagway and Wrangell.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wildlife Conservation and
Restoration Program

*All public partners
are equal opportunity
providers and employers.*

For more information
about the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail and to browse through
wildlife viewing sites in other communities, visit wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov

Moose photo © Karla Hart, ADF&G • Otter raft photo © Jamie Karnik, ADF&G.
Kittiwake photo - Vernon Byrd, USFWS. All other photos © ADF&G.

GUSTAVUS


Wildlife Viewing Guide





www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov


Alaska Department of
Fish and Game
Watch Our Wildlife


Wildlife Viewing Tips

 **Keep a Low Profile.** Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors. Resist the temptation to try to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas.

 **Time it Right.** Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidepools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.

 **Look for Clues.** Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife in the area - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you.

 **Help Keep Wildlife Wild.** Never feed wild animals. Doing so can cause them to associate people with food, which can cause trouble. Human food can also make them sick.

 **Be Considerate of Others.** People use and enjoy Alaska's wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.



Sea otters are sometimes seen in groups of two or more animals.

Watchable Wildlife “Fun Facts”

Making a Comeback: Sea otters are on the rebound and numbers are increasing dramatically in Southeast Alaska waters. Hunted to near-extinction in the 19th century, they disappeared from the ecosystem. Sea otters from the Aleutians were transplanted to Southeast Alaska in the late 1960s and thrived. The animals were first seen in Glacier Bay in the mid-1990s and now number more than 4,000 in the park. Voracious eaters, they consume up to 25 percent of their weight daily with serious implications for populations of clams, crabs and sea urchins, and other animals and birds that also prey on these food sources. Reduced numbers of kelp-grazing urchins, however, could increase the undersea kelp “forests” in the bay, which are good habitat for small fish and invertebrates that feed birds and mammals. Biologists are keenly watching Glacier Bay's sea otters and their effect on the bay.

To Calve or Calve Not: When a tidewater glacier “calves,” enormous chunks of ice fall off the glacier's face and crash dramatically into the water below. The impact can stir nutrients, and stun crustaceans, krill and small fish, all of which float to the water's surface. These small fish and microorganisms are vital food for many other species, making glacial calving an integral part of the food chain of Glacier Bay National Park. Watch for black-legged kittiwakes circling and plunge diving for this prey after a glacial calving.



Traveling Safely in Bear Country (All of Gustavus is bear country)

Making noise (sing, clap, talk) while you travel will reduce your chances of surprising a bear. Be alert along noisy streams, in thick brush, and when visibility is poor. Always keep your belongings (backpack, food, fish, etc.) with you or in bear-proof storage.

If you see a bear, **stay calm**. If the bear does not notice you, quietly leave, keeping your eyes on the bear. If it does notice you, face the bear, wave your arms and talk to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground.

Never run from a bear.

If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food. **Stand your ground!** If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck and remain still. In rare instances, bears may be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged.



STAY SAFE!

The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. For safety, take a guided tour or take a companion, let someone know your plans and be prepared for emergencies with spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication. Visit the Alaska State Parks' Staying Safe web page for details: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/safety.

Wildlife Viewing Sites



Most of Glacier Bay National Park's administrative and visitor services infrastructure, including the Glacier Bay Lodge, is located at **Bartlett Cove**, **1** about 10 miles from the Gustavus airport. Trails in this area allow you to explore a variety of ecosystems. The **Beach Trail** follows the shore for one mile from the lodge along beach meadows and forest habitats, home to porcupines, bears and moose. A variety of birds spend the summer here, including blue grouse, dark-eyed juncos, orange-crowned warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, three-toed woodpeckers, Pacific-slope flycatchers, hermit thrushes, winter wrens and yellow-rumped warblers. Watch for harbor seals, Steller sea lions and humpback whales in the water, especially near the entrance to Bartlett Cove. Park rangers lead a variety of daily activities from evening programs to guided hikes and walks, like the popular one-mile **Forest Loop Trail**. Many visitor resources, including a bird checklist of the area, are available at the NPS Backcountry Visitors Station at Bartlett Cove.

Watch wildlife from the water's surface on a kayak trip into the **Beardslee Islands**, **2**. Humpback whales, sea otters and harbor seals are scattered throughout the Beardslees, with whales and otters most likely to be seen on the western side of the islands. Watch the shore for black bears and moose. Black oystercatchers – black shorebirds with bright red-orange bills – nest on the islands. Look for harlequin ducks, pigeon guillemots, pelagic cormorants, arctic terns, marbled murrelets and large flocks of molting mergansers as well.

Guided trips and kayak rentals are available. Before heading out on your own, check with a park ranger about tides, maps and areas closed for the protection of wildlife. Multi-day campers must attend an orientation, receive a permit and check out bear-resistant food containers. The Beardslee Islands are closed to motorized vessels, and the calm waters make this an ideal paddle for kayakers of all skill levels.

An eight-hour **boat tour** **3** takes visitors into the heart of Glacier Bay for dramatic views of tidewater glaciers. Look for humpback and killer whales along the way. You might spot sea otters floating on their backs feeding on shellfish, or wrapped up in kelp beds. Tours stop near **South Marble Island**, an important seabird colony where you may see nesting pelagic cormorants, common murrelets, black-legged kittiwakes, pigeon guillemots and tufted puffins. Watch and listen to the Steller sea lions hauled out at the north end of South Marble Island. Elsewhere in the park, mountain goats and brown bears might be spotted. Harbor seals haul out on the icebergs that calve off tidewater glaciers. Watch for Kittlitz's murrelets circling and diving in the waters around tidewater glaciers, especially after a glacial calving. Boat tours include narration from a park ranger, kayak drop-off service, on-board lunch and other amenities.

The **Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area** **4** is one of the largest expanses of undisturbed wet meadow habitat in Southeast Alaska. This is a brief but important stopover for sandhill cranes during fall migration, when numbers at the refuge can reach into the thousands. Crane viewing is best in September, especially on clear, sunny days. The meadow also provides many birds with an abundant food source and good places to roost with the ability to see predators at a distance. Birds that use the area for all or part of the year include short-eared owls, Canada geese, Wilson's snipe, tundra swans and mallards. Moose also feed here, with sightings of moose on the rise as the population continues to grow in the Gustavus area.



1. Bartlett Cove				1 – 4 hours
2. Beardslee Islands				2 hours – full day+
3. Day Boat Tours				8 hours
4. Dude Creek				2 hours – half day
5. Gustavus Dock				1 – 2 hours
6. Icy Strait				4 – 6 hours
7. Nagoonberry Loop Trail				1 – 3 hours

- Wheelchair accessible*
 - Entry or tour fee
 - Interpretive signs
 - Hiking trails
 - Boat access only
 - Camping in area
- * Not all boats are wheelchair accessible, ask when booking.
+ Multi-day trips allow for the richest experience.

© Copyright 2009 National Geographic Society, i-cubed.
Map is for locator reference only, not for navigational use.
Trail guides for the Nagoonberry Loop are available from local places of lodging.



Black oystercatchers nest on islands in Glacier Bay National Park

You might also see marten, weasels and coyotes. The eastern boundary of the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area is at the end of Good River Road, which heads west out of the center of Gustavus. There are no public use facilities or developed trails. Be prepared for any conditions and wear appropriate footwear. Much of the land east of the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area is private. Respect property boundaries when approaching the area, and stay on the refuge while visiting.

Stand on the **Gustavus dock** **5** and scan the water for the blows of humpback or killer whales in Icy Strait.

Closer to the dock, look for Steller sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters, marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots and several species of loons. Bald eagles perch on the dock and along the shore. Northern harriers and short-eared owls hunt over the grasslands along the beach and around the dock. The nutrient-rich **Salmon River estuary**, a five-minute walk west from the dock, is a good spot to look for wildlife. In May sand lance (slender, five- to eight-inch fish) draw large numbers of bald eagles, harbor seals and other predators. The beaches around the dock and near the estuary are good spots to see black-bellied plovers, western sandpipers, dunlin, whimbrels and short- and long-billed dowitchers in May and August, when these migrating shorebirds stop to refuel on their long journeys to and from their breeding grounds farther north. The Gustavus dock is located south of the main intersection in town, at the end of Gustavus Dock Road. The tides here can change up to 20 vertical feet between high and low, and it is advisable to consult a tide table before wandering too far along the beach. Kayak and boat tours depart from the Gustavus dock to explore the waters of Icy Strait (see site 6).

Icy Strait **6** is the primary passage for water flowing between the open Pacific Ocean and the northern

Inside Passage. Humpback whales, sea otters, Steller sea lions, Dall's porpoises and killer whales are drawn to Icy Strait by the abundant food sources. **Point Adolphus** on the southern shore of Icy Strait is especially well known for whale watching. Look for marbled murrelets, pigeon guillemots, Pacific loons, pelagic cormorants and black-legged kittiwakes in Icy Strait throughout the summer. Boat tours to Icy Strait depart from the Gustavus dock daily in the summer. Guided multi-day kayak tours also explore Icy Strait and Point Adolphus. Many accommodations in town will arrange an Icy Strait wildlife tour, or you can check with the Gustavus Visitor's Association for information.

Follow the **Nagoonberry Loop Trail** **7** into the Nature Conservancy's Gustavus Forelands Preserve and witness the effects of ice retreating from nearby Glacier Bay. With the weight of the ice lifting, a dynamic landscape is emerging from the sea at a rate of over one inch a year. Starting in 80-year-old spruce forest, the 2.5 mile trail leads hikers through progressively younger habitats to a lush beach meadow abundant with wildflowers. Look for moose browsing on willow and signs of black bear, wolf, coyote and porcupine. The mudflats draw migrating sandhill cranes, golden plovers, dunlin and spotted sandpipers among others. Sloughs and streams provide food for dabbling ducks and geese. Passerines breeding on the preserve include ruby-crowned kinglets, rufous hummingbirds, hermit thrushes and song sparrows.

Looking for more? Check with the National Park Service or the Gustavus Visitor's Association for details on other tours

that operate in Glacier Bay. Local operators offer **extended charters** that combine kayaking, backcountry camping, overnight boat tours and other experiences into a multi-day adventure. Packaged and individualized trips are available, tailored to a range of ability levels. Check with the Gustavus Visitor's Association for more information about these and other wildlife viewing opportunities in Gustavus and Glacier Bay.

