

# maine's

---

watchable wildlife



photo ©Bill Silliker Jr.

# DISCOVER MAINE'S NATURAL TREASURES

Discovering Maine's rugged beauty and amazing wildlife has been a tradition for hundreds of years. Pristine streams flow from craggy mountains through magical pine forests, down to the bold and rocky coast. And everywhere are diverse species that can be seen in abundance, many found nowhere else on the East Coast. A visit to Maine, whether to the mountains, lakes, forests or thousands of miles of coastline, can only be complete by experiencing Maine's natural treasures.

See a moose. Hear the loon's melancholy cry. Watch seals playing in our harbors or photograph puffins on a rocky coastal island. Our lodging, guided excursions, state parks and public lands are second to none and offer visitors an experience of natural, unspoiled wonder.

## HINTS FOR SEEING WILDLIFE

- Keep in mind that Maine's animals are wild and should not be approached, fed or startled.
- Wildlife is more active in early morning and evening.
- Carry adequate water, particularly in summer, and dress appropriately, keeping in mind the cool temperatures that can occur in the evening and when exploring on and around the water.
- Sunscreen and insect repellent are necessary during warmer seasons.
- Several specialized items, like binoculars and field guides, can enhance your wildlife viewing.
- A camera will help you bring your Maine wildlife adventure home with you; a telephoto lens will help get a close look without actually being too close to the wildlife.
- In Maine, 95 percent of the land is privately owned. Please respect landowners' wishes and obey posted signs.



Courtesy of Maine Audubon

## RESOURCES

- Maine Office of Tourism, as well as Chambers of Commerce and Visitor Information Centers, can supply information on wildlife touring opportunities, guides, outfitters, lodging and other services: 888-MAINE45 (888-624-6345) or [www.visitmaine.com](http://www.visitmaine.com)
- Downeast Heritage Center, Calais. Celebrating over 12,000 years of Downeast regional culture and natural history. 877-454-2500, 207-454-7878, [www.downeasterheritage.org](http://www.downeasterheritage.org)
- Maine Audubon offers nature-based programs, trips and events for all ages at natural areas and Audubon centers and camps around the state. For information, visit [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org) or call 207-781-2330.
- Maine Department of Conservation's Bureau of Parks and Land manages more than 30 state parks and several public land areas where wildlife lives in its natural habitat: 207-287-3821 or [www.maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov)
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife is an excellent resource for information on wildlife viewing – including where to see particular species – and offers a field guide, “On Water, On Wings, In the Woods: A Guide for Maine Wildlife Watchers.” 207-287-8000 or [www.mefishwildlife.com](http://www.mefishwildlife.com)
- Maine Department of Marine Resources offers information on fishing and fish-viewing opportunities: 207-624-6550 or [www.maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov)
- Maine's National Wildlife Refuges offer trails and interpretive programs. Contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) or by phone at each individual site.  
Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge, Limestone, 207-328-4634  
Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, Errol, 603-482-3415  
Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, Baring, 207-454-7161  
Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, Milbridge, 207-546-2124  
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Wells, 207-646-9226  
Sunhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Old Town, 207-827-6183
- Maine Professional Guides Association offers custom wildlife viewing tours: 207-338-3932 or [www.maine-guides.org](http://www.maine-guides.org)
- Maine Sporting Camp Association provides information on Maine's many traditional sporting camps: [www.mainesporting-camps.com](http://www.mainesporting-camps.com)

# HABITATS

Whether visiting the breathtaking splendor of Acadia National Park, Baxter State Park or the more than thirty state parks and many public lands in Maine, you're bound to see exciting wildlife. Bald eagles, moose, loons, seals and porpoises are just a few of the animals you may encounter whether touring by car, relaxing over a picnic, on a porch, on a harbor cruise or along a forest trail.

Maine's exceptional variety and diversity of wildlife species are the result of a joining of several specific habitats; Maine is the natural boundary of the northern boreal forests and southern mixed-wood forests, each of which offers an unusual variety of wildlife. In addition to forestland habitats, Maine's 33,000 square miles of landscape range from sea level to cloud-capped mountains, and each change in elevation and geography brings with it its own unique variety of birds, mammals and fish, contributing greatly to the diversity of wildlife. Add to this some 5,500 miles of rugged coast, 6,000 lakes and ponds and 33,000 miles of rivers—all offering incredible opportunities to view animals on, in and around the water—and visitors to Maine are sure to have a spectacular and memorable wildlife experience.

## BEAVER POND



©2002 Sara Gray

## PORT CLYDE



©Headwaters/Maine SPO

## DAVIS BROOK



©Headwaters/Maine SPO

# WILDLIFE PARKS

A visit to the Maine Wildlife Park on Route 26 in Gray, Maine, offers great viewing of wild animals such as moose, lynx and bears. Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from mid-April through November 11, this park offers visitors a chance to see over 25 species of native Maine wild animals that are in need of human care due to injuries or other special needs. Visit the Maine Wildlife Park Web site at [www.mainewildlifepark.com](http://www.mainewildlifepark.com) or call 207-657-4977.

Swan Island Wildlife Management Area on the Kennebec River in Richmond, Maine, is known for its deer, bald eagles and wild turkeys as well as its rich history. Today, historic buildings from the 18 century stand as reminders of Swan Island's past. Tours of the island, available by reservation, cover island history, natural history of native wildlife and wildlife habitat management. Visit the Swan Island Web site: [www.mefishwildlife.com](http://www.mefishwildlife.com) or call 207-287-8000 for more information or 207-547-5322 for reservations. Open Memorial Day to Labor Day by reservation only. Camping available.

The Marine Resources Aquarium in West Boothbay Harbor, operated by the Maine Department of Marine Resources, is an exciting way to interact with and observe some of the creatures living in the waters of the Gulf of Maine. Open May to September daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the aquarium delights visitors with shark and skate tanks, a 20-pound lobster and a "touch tank" teeming with sea stars, urchins and hermit crabs. Contact the aquarium for more information at 207-633-9559 or visit DMR's Web site: [www.maine.gov/dmr](http://www.maine.gov/dmr).

The Maine Department of Marine Resources offers information on fishing and fish-viewing opportunities: 207-624-6550, Marine Aquarium: 207-633-9559 or [www.maine.gov/dmr](http://www.maine.gov/dmr).

The Burnt Island Living Lighthouse Program, also operated by the Department of Marine Resources, is a living and natural history experience unlike any other in the country. Take a boat from Boothbay Harbor for a scenic cruise to Burnt Island. Monday through Friday from June 28 to September 3. Morning and afternoon tours available. For more information call Department of Marine Resources 207-633-9559 or Balmy Days II Cruises 207-633-2284 or visit [www.maine.gov/dmr](http://www.maine.gov/dmr).

## LYNX



©Nate Barnes

## DOGTOOTH VIOLET



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

For information on wildlife watching opportunities through other organizations such as the Maine Department of Conservation's Bureau of Parks and Lands, local Chambers of Commerce, the Maine Guides Association, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, the Maine Sporting Camps Association and Maine Audubon, see "Resources" on page 1 of this guide.

# LAND MAMMALS

## MOOSE



Courtesy of Maine Audubon

Many mammals call Maine their home, both in the forest and along the coast. In fact, Maine has more moose, lynx, black bears and marten than any other state east of the Mississippi.

Thousands of visitors come to Maine each year to catch a glimpse of a moose. The tallest land mammal in North America, moose can stand over seven feet in height. These huge animals range all over Maine, particularly in northern and western sections of the state.

Many guides and outfitters offer moose-watching tours. You can venture on back roads yourself, or ask your lodging hosts where the best local viewing spots are. A few tips on location and habitat: moose typically eat the tender shoots of vegetation at the edges of lakes and ponds and come to the water during early morning hours and at dusk. Look for moose tracks on dirt roads, identified by their large cloven impression, which can be more than five inches long and show a stride of ten feet—a sure sign that the moose was on the run.

Remember to drive cautiously in moose country, however, since they are often encountered ambling in the middle of a road. Keep a sharp eye out for the moose's cousin, the white-tailed deer, which can be seen in fields and forest clearings, particularly at dawn and dusk.

## RED SQUIRREL



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

## WHITE-TAILED DEER



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

## BLACK BEAR



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

Maine also has an abundant black bear population. Bears can occasionally be seen in northern, central, eastern and western sections of the state, although they are shy and will likely avoid contact with people. Their broad tracks can resemble the print of a flat-footed person with inwardly-turned steps. These powerful animals should be appreciated from afar and not be approached or startled.

## PORCUPINE



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

One of Maine's most active furry creatures is the beaver, which builds its home in streams, rivers and lakes. Look for its dome-like lodges, which can stand as high as five or six feet above the surface of the water. Another sure sign of "beaver country" is finding sharpened and chewed sticks on the shores of rivers and lakes that appear to have been whittled at the ends.

Porcupines are viewable throughout the state, although they are typically more active at night. Contrary to popular belief, porcupines cannot throw their quills, which number more than 20,000. These animals are not aggressive and present great photo opportunities.

Some of the more elusive furry animals found throughout Maine include fishers, marten, ermine, red foxes and coyotes.

## BEAVER



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

## RED FOX



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

- Moose are most often seen at inland wetlands.
- Check with guides and outfitters for specific wildlife tours.
- Be sure to drive carefully, especially on country roads at night.
- There are more bears in Maine than any other eastern state.
- Look for whittled sticks in beaver country.

# MARINE ANIMALS

Several species of whales can be found in Maine's coastal waters. Finback, humpback and minke whales can be seen throughout the summer season. Many guide boats and outfitters offer whale-watching tours that will take you right to their popular feeding areas in the Gulf of Maine. An unforgettable sight is watching these massive creatures breach, leaping from the water and landing on their backs with a tremendous and joyful splash. Or keep a sharp eye for their signature spouting—hot air and water spouting from the blow holes in their heads—which can be seen from more than a mile away. Also be on the lookout for the basking shark, one of the largest of sharks (they can be up to 40 feet long), or the ocean sunfish, which can weigh in at several thousand pounds. You can view alewives running in spring in several areas, particularly at “the mills” area of the Damariscotta River in the Midcoast town of Newcastle.

Harbor seals can be found in virtually every harbor along the coast, from Kittery to Eastport. These playful creatures, with their dog-like faces and large brown eyes, are best seen from the deck of a tour boat, particularly if you want to catch them sunning themselves on rock ledges. Seals will congregate around fish piers, too, taking advantage of handouts. But if you walk along any harbor front, look for them poking their dark heads out of the water to get a better view of you.

## HUMPBACK WHALE



©John C. Fuller

## HARBOR SEAL



©John C. Fuller

## RIGHT WHALE



Courtesy of Maine Audubon

Harbor Porpoises can also be seen on a harbor cruise. Often traveling in groups, porpoises surface for air in a playful rhythm, showing their sharp dorsal fins and sleek black backs.

Tidal pools, the shallows left in rocks by a falling tide, exist along the entire Maine coast in rocky areas and are host to spectacular mini-ecosystems that teem with life: anemones, sea urchins, crabs, sea cucumbers and small fish. Exploring tidal pools is a wonderful opportunity to view wildlife with children. A field guide is a great way to identify the numerous plants and animals wriggling in tide pools, and a tide chart will help identify the best time for tidal pool viewing. Keep in mind that the lowest pools, those closest to the water's edge, offer the most diversity and abundance of life. Look carefully and move gently; life in tidal pools is fragile!

For more information on fishing in Maine, see the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife fishing brochure, "Make a Splash Fishing in Maine," available at information areas and Visitor Information Centers. You can also visit the [www.maine.gov/dfw](http://www.maine.gov/dfw) site or contact any number of Maine's professional guides, either on the Internet or through local Chambers of Commerce and Visitor Information Centers. Saltwater fishing does not require a license; contact the Maine Department of Marine Resources for rules and regulations: [www.maine.gov/dmr](http://www.maine.gov/dmr).



©John C. Fuller



©Photo Courtesy of Downeast Heritage Center

- Watch for seals and seabirds in Maine's many harbors.
- Whale spouts can be seen from a mile away.
- Finback whales, common in the Gulf of Maine, are the second largest whales (behind blue whales) and can weigh 50 tons.

# BIRDS

The sound of a loon's mournful cry is a true symbol of Maine. Often observed in pairs on Maine's thousands of lakes and ponds, loons have a very distinctive appearance, with black-and-white spotted bodies and large teardrop-shaped heads. They can be seen—and heard—from many parks and lakefront lodgings. Also keep an eye out for them as you cross lakes and ponds by boat or travel the roadsides along larger water bodies.

Eider ducks, buffleheads, mergansers, guillemots and cormorants can be seen diving in the waves just offshore of any part of Maine's rocky coast. Cormorants have a curious habit of standing on rocks and spreading their dark slender wings to dry them out.

Maine is host to many species of predatory birds, including owls, hawks, eagles, ospreys and falcons, often seen soaring high above on thermal currents. Bald eagles, identified by their pure white heads and tails, range across Maine, from most coastal sections to forest and upland regions and along lakes and rivers. Their broad, dark wings make a striking silhouette overhead as they hunt for food. The Kennebec River from Waterville south is a great place to look for eagles; boat ramps and marinas make excellent vantage points for seeing these awesome predators in action.

## HOODED MERGANSER



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

## PEREGRINE FALCON



©Ron Joseph

## BLACK GUILLEMOT



©Ron Joseph

## BARRED OWL



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

Ospreys, also called fish hawks, have a more slender, M-shaped flying silhouette. Found around coastal and freshwater habitats, osprey nests are huge piles of sticks that can be seen in the tops of dead trees, on bridges and utility poles. A special treat is watching an osprey dive from high in the air into the water. They usually fly off with a large fish clutched in their powerful talons.

Atlantic puffins are a popular seabird that can be encountered only on a few islands off the Maine coast. They have colorful, clown-like beaks and a comic nature that endear them to all. Puffins use several Maine islands for summer nesting sites. Coastal outfitters in Cutler, Bar Harbor and New Harbor offer puffin cruises from early summer through August.

### GREAT BLUE HERON



©Pamela Wells, [www.sunkhaze.org](http://www.sunkhaze.org)

Graceful great blue herons can be observed wading in the shallows of ponds, lakes, rivers and freshwater wetlands. Look for beautiful snowy egrets in coastal wetlands and estuaries. Scarborough Marsh Audubon Center is one of the best viewing areas for wading birds and offers canoe and kayak tours.

The large and boisterous pileated woodpecker, which lives throughout Maine's woods inland and along the coast, is a thrilling sight for any birding enthusiast. Maine's songbirds, particularly migrating warblers and many resident species, make the woods come alive with their melodious songs. Maine has more nesting warbler species than any other state in the Northeast.

### ATLANTIC PUFFIN



Courtesy of Maine Audubon

- Puffins can be seen on specialized boat tours to certain islands.
- Ospreys position the prey in their talons aerodynamically— head first.
- Field guides make bird identification helpful and fun.
- Watch for the bald eagle's broad dark wings and snow-white head and tail.
- Bird watchers generally have the best luck at dawn and dusk.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## MAY

**Warblers & Wildflowers Festival, Bar Harbor**  
Enjoy bird walks, tours of Mount Desert Island's gardens, lectures and socials. 207-288-5103, 888-540-9996, [www.barharbormaine.com](http://www.barharbormaine.com)

### **Down East Spring Birding Festival, Cobscook Bay Area**

A Down East Maine birding experience during spring migration and the breeding season. You'll have many opportunities to see puffins, razorbills, owls and many others in their special habitats. 207-853-4644, [info@cobscookbay.com](mailto:info@cobscookbay.com), [www.downeastbirdfest.org](http://www.downeastbirdfest.org)

**Damariscotta River Association Field Trips**  
To view alewife run, call 207-563-1393 or visit [www.draclt.org](http://www.draclt.org)

## MAY-AUGUST

**Bird-banding Demonstrations, Falmouth**  
Watch up close as a Maine Audubon naturalist catches and bands live birds. 207-781-2330, [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org)

## JUNE

**Maine Canoe Symposium, Bridgton**  
Join us in early June at Winona Camps, a classic Maine woodland camp, in a family-friendly environment for lessons, demonstrations, slide presentations and on-the-water fun for all ages and levels. 207-892-3121, [mcs@canoemaine.com](mailto:mcs@canoemaine.com), [www.maine canoe symposium.org](http://www.maine canoe symposium.org).

### **Moose Maine, Greenville**

Dedicated to Greenville's most popular four-legged resident, this month-long celebration features a variety of activities for all ages. Moose River Canoe race, mountain bike race, Tour de Moose, craft fair, kids day and more. 207-695-2702, 1-888-876-2778, [info@mooseheadlake.org](mailto:info@mooseheadlake.org), [www.mooseheadlake.org](http://www.mooseheadlake.org).

## JULY

**Grand Lake Stream Folk Art Festival, Grand Lake Stream**  
Build a canoe, see handmade quilts, juried artisans, Native American basket weaving and hear local music. 207-796-8199, [glsfaf@thecccl.org](mailto:glsfaf@thecccl.org), [www.thecccl.org/glsfaf](http://www.thecccl.org/glsfaf)

## AUGUST

**Outdoor Sporting Heritage Day, Rangeley**  
Join the experts for a day celebrating the region's outdoor sporting heritage for the whole family. Day includes fishing demonstrations, canoe races, moose calling and more. 207-864-5647, [www.rangeleymaine.com](http://www.rangeleymaine.com)

## SEPTEMBER

**Bald Eagles of Merrymeeting Bay, from Boothbay Harbor**  
Join Maine Audubon on this annual boat trip to one of the largest concentrations of bald eagles in Maine. 207-781-2330, [www.maineaudubon.org](http://www.maineaudubon.org)

**The Maine Salmon Festival in Eastport**  
Enjoy a salmon dinner, see salmon aquaculture pens and enjoy music, arts & crafts, educational displays and tours. 207-853-4644, [www.eastportme.net](http://www.eastportme.net)

## NOVEMBER

**Spawning Spectacular, Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, East Orland**  
Visit this US Fish and Wildlife site's interpretive center and watch the artificial spawning of Penobscot River Sea Run Atlantic Salmon. 207-469-6701

## MAINE STATE PARKS WHERE YOU CAN SEE:

- Moose** Rangeley Lake, Lily Bay, Grafton Notch, Aroostook
- Seals** Holbrook Island Sanctuary, Roque Bluffs, Moose Point, Fort Point
- Whales** Quoddy Head
- Loons** Lake St. George, Rangeley Lake, Peacock Beach, Lily Bay, Aroostook
- Bald Eagles** Cobscook Bay, Roque Bluffs, Damariscotta Lake, Fort Point
- Ospreys** Wolfe's Neck Woods (Osprey watches in July & August, Tuesdays 2:00 p.m.)
- Fall Hawk Migration** Camden Hills, Bradbury Mountain
- Turkey Vultures** Camden Hills