

WELCOME TO WATSON LAKE

Southeastern Yukon holds many natural wonders. Whether you prefer watching wildlife from your vehicle, or travelling into the remote wilderness, this region is a true wildlife hotspot.

The mighty Liard River, 1 115 km long, is the central feature of this area. Lush forests of old-growth White Spruce, small ponds and extensive wetlands provide habitat for numerous wildlife species.

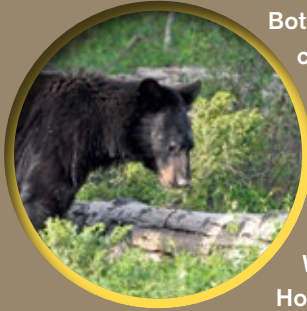
This region is home to creatures rarely found in the rest of Yukon. Birds like the American Redstart and Western Tanager are expected during summers. The territory's only Northern Myotis (bat) observations were made here.



TIPS & SAFETY

- Keep your binoculars and zoom lenses handy as wildlife encounters are common.
- Reduce speed when driving, especially during winter when caribou are near our highways.
- If you see wildlife while driving, only pull over when safe to do so. Stay in your vehicle and keep your stop brief.
- All of Yukon is bear country. For safety information visit www.env.gov.yk.ca/bears and read our *How you can stay safe in bear country* brochure.

Bears



L. Moore

Both Black and Grizzly Bears call this region home. Black Bear viewing in spring and early summer can be excellent along the Robert Campbell Highway and the Alaska Highway between Watson Lake and Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park.

See **TIPS & SAFETY** for more information.

Frogs & Toads

While only the Wood Frog is widespread in Yukon, three other species have been found in the Liard drainage: Western Toad, Columbia Spotted Frog and Boreal Chorus Frog. Watch for these creatures in wetlands, along lakeshores and in damp, grassy areas.



C. McClelland

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Environment Yukon, Wildlife Viewing Program

www.wildlifeviewing.gov.yk.ca
wildlife.viewing@gov.yk.ca
867-667-8291
toll free: 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8291

Watson Lake Visitor Information Centre

Junction of Alaska & Robert Campbell Highways
Watson Lake 867-536-7469
open mid-May to mid-September
call for details

Town of Watson Lake

710 Adela Trail, Watson Lake
867-536-8000
twl@northwestel.net

WILDLIFE



VIEWING

IN THE WATSON LAKE AREA



J. Jantunen



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Yukon
Environment

VIEWING SITES

1 LIARD CANYON RECREATION SITE

Alaska Highway KM-971

This site includes Lucky Lake — great for swimming and fishing — and a sports field. A 2.2 km trail through pine and spruce forest leads to the Liard River. The American Marten, a large weasel, prefers mature spruce forests like those at the end of this trail. Be careful near the swift, cold river.

2 WYE LAKES

These small lakes in the heart of Watson Lake provide easy opportunities for bird and dragonfly viewing. Wye Lake Park features a 2.5 km walking trail, picnic area, and a playground. Red-necked Grebes and rafts of ducks are frequently seen on the water. Listen for the sweet songs of Savannah Sparrow and Red-winged Blackbird. The beautiful Calypso orchid, or Fairy Slipper (*Calypso bulbosa*), blooms in late May and June along a part of the trail.

Second Wye Lake is accessed from 3rd Street North. Launch a canoe or kayak here to paddle among ducks, loons, gulls, and songbirds. Moose are known to feed along the shoreline and the spring soundscape of birds, frogs and the occasional beaver tail-slap is impressive.

3 WATSON LAKE CAMPGROUND

Alaska Highway KM-984

This Yukon government campground has some short walking trails and provides access to Watson Lake. From ice melt to mid-July fish can be seen in shallow bays on the lake. Northern Pike and Lake Whitefish are two common fish species that are often seen in Watson Lake.



4 ALBERT CREEK BIRD OBSERVATORY

Alaska Highway KM-993

This seasonal bird banding station is located along the edge of a large wetland complex. Spring bird migration is monitored by the Society of Yukon Bird Observatories. Songbird diversity is outstanding at this site and many species at the northern extents of their range are observed here. The sizeable Pileated Woodpecker is one such “southern species”.

Turn north on Albert Creek Road, drive about 450 metres and turn right onto the small dirt track (not suitable for large RVs and trailers) www.yukonbirdobservatories.org

5 RANCHERIA FALLS RECREATION SITE

Alaska Highway KM-1112

This small waterfall on the Rancheria River is at the end of an accessible, 0.5 km trail. The American Dipper — an aquatic songbird — is often seen feeding here. Arctic Grayling and Bull Trout are sometimes visible swimming below the falls. In Yukon, Bull Trout are only found in the Liard River watershed. Lucky viewers will spot caribou on the surrounding mountainsides.

6 WATSON LAKE AIRPORT

Robert Campbell Highway KM-10

The combination of lakeshore, grassy areas, clustered trees and shrubs, and a tiny wetland make this site a birding treasure. Common Loons are often seen and heard on the lake, while songbirds and shorebirds come and go. Little Brown Myotis (bats) are visible during summer evenings.

Drive the road along the airport fence to the far side of the airport property by the lake shore.

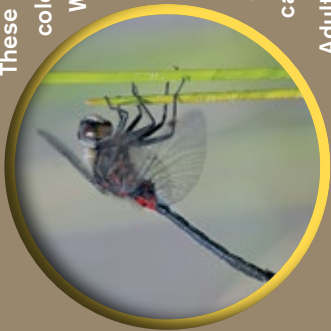
7 ROBERT CAMPBELL HIGHWAY

This gravel highway is remote with few services, but abundant wildlife. Target Lake (KM-40) often hosts breeding White-winged Scoters, an attractive duck. The Simpson Lake Campground (KM-81) is a great base camp with Moose sightings reported nearby and at the north end of the lake, which is visible from the highway at KM-92.

At KM-107 the Nahanni Range Road begins, leading to the mountainous border with the Northwest Territories. Give large mining trucks plenty of space.

Dragonflies & Damselflies

These insects are large, colourful, and superb fliers. While closely related, damselflies tend to be slimmer, smaller and slower fliers than true dragonflies. Both groups together are called "odonates".



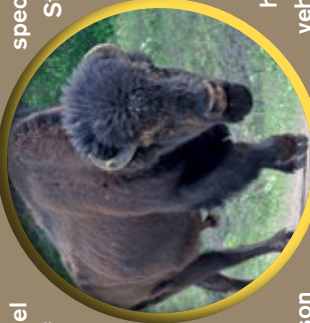
C. Eckert

Adult odonates are formidable predators, mostly eating flying insects they catch in flight. Their powerful jaws make short work of prey species. The Watson Lake area is home to a remarkable diversity of odonates. At Wye Lake alone, 17 species have been identified. The Crimson-ringed Whiteface, Shadow Darner and Boreal Snaketail are among the rarer species you may see.

Look for odonates during sunny, summer days at ponds and small lakes with lots of plant life. Midday is the best time to search.

Wood Bison

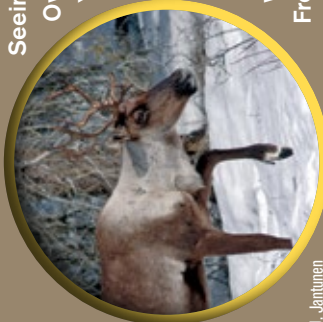
Wood Bison are the largest land mammals on the continent. A large male can weigh as much as 1,000 kg! As you travel the Alaska Highway southeast of Watson Lake, watch for these massive creatures. They often graze on roadside plants and cross the highway frequently.



L. Moore

These bison are part of the Nordquist herd, established in the 1990s by translocating 68 bison from Elk Island National Park in Alberta. This was a re-introduction of Wood Bison to the area. The species was on the brink of extinction in 1900. Strong conservation actions across Canada and the United States have restored Wood Bison to a portion of its historic range. Drive slowly and carefully when approaching bison on or near the road. Collisions are very destructive for both humans and bison. Never leave your vehicle and approach a bison.

Woodland Caribou



J. Jantunen

Seeing caribou in the wild is enchanting. Over 25 caribou herds can be found in Yukon. The nearby Little Rancheria herd is estimated at 1,000 to 1,200 animals.

Summer time finds most of the herd in the mountains to avoid the worst of the heat and biting insects. From October to April, caribou are often spotted along the Alaska Highway from the Lucky Lake area (KM-967) west to past the Big Creek Campground (KM-1048).

Given the small herd size, even a few caribou deaths from vehicle collisions is significant. Watch for road signs marking high-risk areas and look for fresh animal tracks in winter. Please drive carefully, for the safety of all, and enjoy these special caribou encounters.

