



Wildlife Observation Permit Frequently Asked Questions

What is a wildlife observation permit?

Regulations under the *Wildlife Act* established a requirement for wildlife observation permits in 2014. They allow the permit holder to “offer or provide an organized activity **for profit** in which **big game** is the object of **interaction, manipulation or close observation**, including the making of a film or the provision of an expedition, safari or cruise.”

This includes:

- Bison
- Coyote
- Wolf
- Cougar
- Wolverine
- Mountain goat
- Dall’s sheep
- Muskox
- Bear
- Moose
- Caribou
- Deer
- Elk

In the Northwest Territories, these permits can be obtained from ENR for free. Wildlife observation permits are required for similar activities in Nunavut, where the fee charged is between \$100 and \$175.

Why is this permit needed?

The wildlife observation permit was established to protect both wildlife and business operators in the NWT. The issuance of this free permit provides an opportunity for ENR officers to have a conversation with anyone planning to conduct activities in the NWT that involve close observation of big game wildlife (including photographers, filmmakers and tour operators) to ensure they are aware of and understand the territory’s wildlife laws and regulations. It also ensures any communities that may be affected by these activities are informed, where necessary.

Provisions in the *Wildlife Act* around harassment, damage to wildlife habitat and other potential wildlife interactions (such as killing wildlife in self-defence) continue to apply outside of the permit. The purpose of the permit is to confirm the activities that will be undertaken by the operator and allow ENR to address any potential concerns about how those activities will take place.

Who needs a wildlife observation permit?

Anyone seeking out observation or interaction with big game wildlife for the purpose of profit requires this permit. This includes:

- Filmmakers and photographers that are filming/photographing big game wildlife for profit
- Tour operators and/or guides
- Others undertaking or providing an organized activity **for profit** in which **big game** is the object of **interaction, manipulation or close observation**

Please note: If an operator already holds a Tourism Operator Licence that includes provisions for seeking out big game and appropriate protection of wildlife, then a wildlife observation permit may not be required.



If you think you may need a permit, ask yourself:

- Am I conducting or offering an activity where I am seeking out a big game species?
- Do I expect to be interacting with this species or conducting close observation?
- Is this activity for profit?

If the answer to all three questions is yes, then a wildlife observation permit is likely required.

Who does not need a wildlife observation permit?

You do not need a wildlife observation permit to:

- Snap a picture or take a video of a bear or bison on the highway if you happen to be driving by
- Film or photograph the reindeer herd outside of Inuvik (reindeer are not considered big game wildlife under the *Wildlife Act*, as they are privately owned)
- Sell a photo you took when you happened upon big game wildlife while you were out on the land or driving by
- Seek out big game wildlife for observation or photography as long as you do not profit from the activity
- Research big game wildlife (must apply for a wildlife research permit instead)
- Conduct activities that are already covered by a Tourism Operator Licence

What does “close observation” mean when it comes to big game wildlife?

“Close observation” means you are observing the animal at a distance where they may be aware of your presence and change their behaviour. This can be from a vehicle, with a drone or in person. If your planned for-profit activities could potentially interfere with wildlife, you require a permit. Please note, if you are too close, you may also be harassing the animal. The rule of thumb is if the animal knows you’re there, you are probably too close.

How do I get a wildlife observation permit?

The application form is available on our webpage:

www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/content/wildlife-observation-permit-application-form

Activities that require a wildlife observation permit should be planned well in advance. While the issuance of the permit itself usually only takes about a day, in most cases you will also have to consult with nearby communities. This ensures local community members are informed of activities on their traditional lands and have an opportunity to provide feedback and raise any concerns they may have.

The consultation process can take 30 days or more. If you are planning to conduct activities in more than one location you may require a recommendation form from more than one community.

Recommendation forms and instructions on how to consult can be found on our website:

www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apply-research-observe-and-handle-wildlife-nwt



Where can I get more information?

For more information on wildlife permits, email wildlife@gov.nt.ca, visit your local ENR office or go to our website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca.