

Omnivores and Carnivores



Grizzly Bear

Grizzlies are the bigger of our two bears and have a distinctive hump on their shoulders. This hump is a large muscle used for digging roots, tubers and the occasional unlucky ground squirrel. The grizzly's long claws (up to 10cm long) help the bear to dig, but also make it a poor tree climber, unlike its relative the black bear.

Black Bear

Black bears should be respected; however they generally do not need to be feared. These omnivores are not very good at hunting large prey and their diet consists mostly of greens, berries, insects and small mammals. A black bear spends 6-7 months hibernating through the winter and its heart rate can slow to as low as 8 beats per minute at this time! They do not eat, urinate or defecate during hibernation; however pregnant mothers will wake to give birth to tiny cubs which then nurse for several months while mom sleeps.



Wolverine

The wolverine – North America's largest weasel – has a reputation for being a fierce fighter. This reputation is warranted as wolverines have been known to chase much large predators, such as cougars and bears, away from their kills. Wolverines are sometimes called 'skunk bears' due to their habit of spraying their food with a stinky musk to prevent other predators from desiring it. The smelly musk is apparently also useful in attracting female wolverines. This intelligent animal has a vast home range and lives a solitary life. Spotting one is a rare, lucky, and usually unnerving experience.



Chris Selvig

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Common Mammals of Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks

Hoofed Mammals

Mountain Goat

Mountain goats are the rock-climbers of the mammal world. They spend much of their time on steep cliffs, which offer them protection from predators. Their hooves have an inner spongy area, surrounded by a hard outer shell, and are specially adapted to life on the rocks. A mountain goat can stand with all four hooves on a 15cm by 5cm ledge and can even turn around on this small spot. Mothers are very protective of their young and will walk downslope from their kid to prevent falls.



Mountain Caribou

Mountain caribou are uniquely adapted to the deep winter snows of the Columbia mountains. Unlike most animals, they migrate high up into the snowy subalpine for the winter months, where they survive on a diet of hair lichen growing on older trees. Caribou, known as reindeer in Europe, have huge hooves which act as snowshoes and allow them to walk on top of the deep snowpack. Unlike most of the other members of the deer family, both females and males grow antlers. Unfortunately, this animal can no longer be considered "common" as the title of this brochure suggests. Mountain caribou are listed as a threatened species under the Canadian Species at Risk Act.



Alice Weber

Horn or antler?

Members of the cattle family have horns (eg: goats and sheep). These are unbranched, made of keratin (the same as your nails and hair are made from), stay on an animal throughout its entire life and are usually found on both the male and female of the species. Antlers, on the other hand, are found on members of the deer family (eg: deer, moose and caribou). They are grown and shed each year, made of bone, and tend to be branched. With the exception of caribou, only the males sport antlers.

Hares and Pikas



A pika hay pile.



Alice Weber

Pika

Arguably one of the cutest animals in our province, the pika is more easily heard than seen. Its call is a high-pitched “eeenk” that sounds much like a squeaky dog toy. Pikas live on rocky scree slopes and if you see one slipping back into its burrow to hide from you, it is worth sitting and waiting for it to reappear to catch a glimpse of this fur-ball with round ears.

Pikas collect flowers and grasses throughout the summer and pile these to dry in the sun before storing them for winter. They do not hibernate, but instead live under the insulating snow, digging tunnels up to 90 metres long to access their ‘hay’ stores - and occasionally to steal hay from a neighbour.



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Snowshoe Hare

As their name suggests, snowshoe hares have large feet that allow them to hop on the soft snow that their predators sink into. Their coats also change from brown to snowy-white as the days begin to shorten. In years when snow is late to arrive, it is easy to spot the white animals against the dark earth, though they seem to know this and will seek out patches of snow to ‘hide’ on.

Rodents



Hoary Marmot

Marmots are also known as ‘whistlers’ for their habit of whistling loudly as hikers approach. These chubby rodents live in colonies, and take turns keeping watch for predators – they have various calls to announce different potential predators such as eagles, grizzly bears or humans. Marmots pile on the pounds in the short summer season by eating lots of greens and then snuggle into their burrows together for eight to nine months of cozy hibernation.

Columbia Ground Squirrel

These little furry rodents live in colonies in underground burrows. Burrow tunnels are 1-2m long and end in a central chamber that is up to 75cm in diameter and often lined with dried vegetation. Each ground squirrel has its own burrow with up to 35 entrances. Colonies also have extra burrows used as hiding spots from predators when a ground squirrel is far from its burrow.



Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel

These little striped ground squirrels live in underground burrows with separate chambers for sleeping, storing seeds and for a latrine. They have a varied diet, starting in spring with fresh greens and moving onto seeds, fruits, insects and carrion (dead animals) in summer and finally eating conifer seeds and fungus in the fall. They can hold several hundred seeds in their cheek pouches which they bring back to their burrows for storage.