

Appendix 2 – Animals

Many of the larger animals were discussed in the section about hazards and safety. This appendix has an emphasis on identification and habits of these animals.

Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) – This type of bear is the most common bear found throughout Canada. Although it is called a “black” bear, the “black” refers to a specific species, not just the color of the coat. It is possible to have black bears that are brown, tan, cinnamon, blond, and even white (albino) in colour. If you’re planting anywhere other than BC or Alberta, and you see a bear, it’s very unlikely that it’s anything other than a black bear, no matter what colour its fur is. Male black bears typically range in size for up to 250kg, and females can weigh up to 170kg. A young bear of any type is called a cub. Unlike grizzly bears, a black bear doesn’t have an obvious large hump of fat on its upper back, and its face and snout are fairly flat. A bear has an extremely acute sense of smell, far better than even that of a bloodhound. However, most people assume that a bear’s hearing and eyesight are weak. This is incorrect. The hearing of a bear is definitely more sensitive than that of a human (as well as perceiving a larger frequency range), and a bear’s eyesight is believed to be at least as strong as a humans. If you think that a nearby bear hasn’t noticed you, it’s often likely that it just doesn’t care about you. If a bear isn’t killed by humans, it will often live for twenty years or more.

Brown/Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) – The grizzly bear and brown bear are essentially the same animal, however, many people (including biologists and scientists) emphasize a distinction whereby the grizzly is a subspecies of brown bear. In fact, the grizzly has a different Latin name (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) than the generic brown bear (*Ursus arctos*). The best way to think of them is probably that brown bears are slightly larger than grizzly bears, and are found along the coastal regions, whereas grizzly bears are found more in the Interior and in Alberta. As with the black bear, the “brown” refers to the species, not specifically to the colour of the fur (although it is typical that grizzly bears are frequently not as dark as black bears). The fur of the brown bear can range from quite dark to albino, just like the black bear. In Canada, the other two common subspecies of brown bears are the Kodiak and the Stickeen brown. The brown bear is the species which varies most significantly in weight of all bears. Interior brown bears (grizzly bears) are smaller than most people assume, typically weigh around 180kg for males and 135kg for females. Coastal brown bears (Kodiaks and Stickeens) typically weigh double those amounts, or even larger, ie. almost as large as a polar bear. All brown bears typically become a lot closer as you go further north or closer to the coast. The best way to identify a grizzly is to look for a large hump of fat on its upper back, and a concave shaped face and snout.

Moose (*Alces alces*) – The moose is the largest member of the deer family, and can be found all over Canada. Moose are solitary animals for the most part, never travel in herds, and it's very uncommon to see more than two or three together. A bull moose has large antlers that have large flat sections, rather than the entire antler being the spike-like or branch patterns that are common in deer. A cow (female) moose does not have antlers. A young moose is called a calf. A typical adult bull moose usually weighs 400-500kg. A moose is typically quite languid and cautious in its movements, but can become aggressive and can move quickly when startled or angered. Moose are herbivores and feel very comfortable in swamps and ponds, and they can swim across lakes. They prefer to hang out in forests or bodies of water, as protection from predators. The moose is predominantly a browser, eating vegetation on shrubs and trees. Moose populations across Canada and the northern US have been declining sharply for the past two decades. Many scientists believe that climate change is increasing winter temperatures, which has led to explosive growth in parasites such as liver flukes, brain worms, and ticks, and these parasites are infecting and killing the moose. Perhaps this is another good reason to eat vegetarian, instead of hunting wild game.

Whitetail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – The whitetail or white-tailed deer is also known as the Virginia deer in the US. Whitetails can be found across most of southern Canada, except for PEI and Newfoundland. Adult females are called does, and adult males are called bucks. Young deer are called fawns. Mature bucks usually weigh from 60-100kg, and mature does usually weigh from 40-90kg. Bucks grow antlers throughout the spring/summer/fall, but the antlers fall off in the winter. These antlers have tines that branch off the main stem. Deer have sharp eyesight, but their vision is only dichromatic (blue/yellow) rather than trichromatic like humans. This means that deer have problems perceiving reds and similar colours. If you were wearing blue jeans and a hunter orange vest, the deer would see the jeans as a very bright and obvious object, but the hunter orange would be very subtle. Deer are usually herbivores, eating lots of leaves and some grasses, but they can also eat mushrooms and toadstools which are toxic to humans. All types of deer prefer browsing to grazing, giving preference to vegetation on shrubs and trees over grasses. It is not uncommon for planters to stumble across a sleeping deer in a grassy block, especially smaller fawns. If you do, the best thing to do is to leave it alone. If you do, its mother will return after you've left the block. When a whitetail deer runs, its front two legs act in unison, alternating with the back pair, much like a dog runs. When a whitetail walks, its diagonal pairs of legs alternate, unlike a dog where the legs on the left side then on the right side alternate.

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – There are a number of different types of mule deer. The most common subspecies found in Canada (and elsewhere in North America) is the Rocky Mountain mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus hemionus*). This mule deer can only be found in BC, Alberta, and parts of Saskatchewan. There are no mule deer in central or eastern Canada. The mule deer is typically fairly large compared to a whitetail. There are a few other ways to distinguish a mule deer from a whitetail. The antlers of a male mule deer fork as they grow, rather than branching off from a single main stem. The tip of a mule deer's tail is black, whereas the whitetail is, not surprisingly, white. Finally, the most obvious sign, especially from a distance, is that when a mule deer is trying to "run" more quickly, it starts to make huge hops, with all four legs hitting the ground at once, instead of the front pair / back pair alternating pattern seen with the whitetail. This "hopping" behavior is called stotting or pronking, rather than

running. The mule deer has a number of sub-species, including the Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) which is found throughout Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

Elk (*Cervus canadensis*) – Elk and caribou are often confused with each other, but they are two very distinct species. The elk, sometimes also called the wapiti, is often almost as large as a moose. A mature bull elk is often in the 300-330kg range. The fur on the main body of the elk is usually a light brown or blonde in color, depending on the time of year, while the throat and neck area are a shaggier dark brown colour. Unlike deer or moose, elk are predominantly grazers, preferring to eat grasses over foliage. It is very common to see Elk while passing through Jasper national park. Occasionally, western Canadian planters may see elk on their blocks, but elk outside the Park tend to be reclusive. Outside of BC and Alberta, there are a few scattered populations of elk through Manitoba and northern Ontario.

Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) – The ungulate known as the caribou in North America is known as the reindeer in Europe and Siberia. They are the same general species. There are three common subspecies of caribou in the tundra of northern Canada, but if a planter is going to see a caribou, it is probably the woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) that will be encountered. Caribou are only about half the size of elk, with adult bulls usually weighing about 150-180kg. The color of a caribou is also quite distinct from that of an elk, with the main body of a caribou being much darker, and most notably, the shaggy fur around the throat and neck usually being much lighter in colour than the rest of the body. As rare as it is for a planter to see an elk, a caribou sighting is even more unlikely.

Wolf (*Canis lupus*) – The wolf is known by several common names, such as the gray wolf or timber wolf or western wolf, but they're all the same species. The wolf can be found everywhere in Canada except in the Maritimes, and is one of the most well-known and studied of wild animals. Wolves always had a bad reputation due to attacks on livestock, and for centuries, were a significant danger through Europe and Asia. However, many people today believe that wolves are extremely unlikely to threaten adult humans. While wolves are probably much less dangerous than their unpredictable smaller cousin the coyote, a few modern cases of attacks on humans have been recorded. It is believed that most of these attacks were because the wolf had rabies, was defending young, or felt threatened. On a positive note, evidence seems to indicate that in the rare modern cases where humans have been attacked, a provoked attack was usually not pressed, with the wolf instead preferring to give a quick bite then escape. Despite this, the very rare sounds of a wolf pack making a kill near a block will send shivers down your spine. A fully grown male wolf can often weigh 50-80kg.

Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) – There are many different types of foxes found commonly around the world, including half a dozen genera of the family Canidae. The main types found in Canada belong to the genus *Vulpes*, species *vulpes*. There are approximately 45 different sub-species in this specific species. The common names for most of the fox sub-species found in Canada are the red fox, the silver fox, and the cross fox. Foxes are usually sly and mistrustful of humans, especially when encountered in civilized areas. However, in more remote areas, it's not uncommon for foxes to be very curious about humans, and in rare cases, will come up to investigate a planter and even eat food out of the planter's hand. A fully grown fox can weigh 10-15kg. Foxes don't see humans as prey, and would be extremely unlikely to attack a person. Foxes are becoming quite common in some urban areas.

Coyote (*Canis latrans*) – Coyotes are dog-like animals that are much smaller than wolves, but larger than foxes, with adults often reaching 15-20kg. The Latin name for the coyote, *Canis latrans*, means “barking dog.” Coyotes are certainly vocal, and planters in remote camps can frequently hear packs yipping and barking at night. Coyotes range all over most of southern and western Canada (and Newfoundland), and also throughout most of the United States. The three subspecies which are commonly found in Canada are the northern coyote, the mountain coyote, and the plains coyote. The coyote is predominantly a carnivore, but it will eat a wide variety of grasses and berries in the spring and summer. Its diet tends more toward rodents and small animals in the fall, and scavenging on dead ungulates in the winter. Although there has only been one recorded case of a fatal coyote attack on an adult human (Taylor Mitchell, in Nova Scotia), there have been a few hundred non-fatal attacks. Certainly, a large pack of coyotes could pose a danger to an individual planter, although the coyotes would probably be quite wary of any human. If a coyote is going to attack anything larger than a rabbit, it is most likely going to be a sheep, which is why a lot of ranchers and government officials try to kill coyotes.

Cougar (*Puma concolor*) – Within Canada, the cougar is typically only found in western Canada, and the largest population is living on Vancouver Island. Despite this, *Puma concolor* ranges right down the west coast of North America and throughout almost all of South America, where it is called the puma instead of cougar. Outside of Canada, the cougar is often referred to as the puma or panther. Within Canada, the cougar is sometimes referred to as a mountain lion. Five of the seven fatal cougar attacks on humans in Canada were on small children, and only two were on adults. A human is much more likely to die of lightning strike than from a cougar attack, and even in the US, where cougar attacks are more frequent, humans are about thirty times as likely to die of a snake bite. Within the US, there are about fifteen known historical cases of fatal cougar attacks in the last hundred years, although two of those were adults that were killed in 2018. In April of 2018, there was a case of a cougar attacking a planter’s dog on the coast, and a separate non-attack encounter with a cougar that was following one of my own planters on a block in Whitecourt just a few months later. So although the chance of a cougar attack is very small, it’s not impossible. As an adult male cougar in BC usually weighs between 50-90kg, you should exercise caution if a cougar is known to be nearby. In the rare event that you were confronted by a cougar, try to appear as large as possible, and if it attacks, do everything possible to fight it off.

Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) – The Canada lynx is one species of the Lynx genus, which has four cat species in total. Only two of these are found in North America (the bobcat is the other). The Canada lynx and the bobcat are easily confused, as they look very similar to a casual observer. They are roughly the same size, and their ranges frequently overlap along the southern parts of Canada, which makes identification even more difficult. When someone refers to a “lynx” in Canada, they are usually referring specifically to the Canada lynx species, not to the overall genus. The Canada lynx is basically a northern cat. It is not too commonly found in the US, so southern Canada generally marks the southern range of its territory. It is quite comfortable with cold weather, and can be found throughout large parts of Alaska, the Yukon & Northwest Territories, and southern Nunavut. The diet of the Canada lynx is carnivorous, and consists predominantly of snowshoe hares, with a smattering of birds, young ungulates, and small mammals and rodents. An adult lynx usually weighs between 10-20kg. When I think of the look of the face of a Canada lynx, I think of a cross between a house cat and the [fictional] abominable snow man or werewolf,

especially if they have a lot of winter fur. The lynx has a gray, mottled fur colour. It's tail is short and black. Finally, its hind legs are longer than a bobcat's, so long that the rear end is raised up in the air above head level, so the lynx almost looks like a wheelbarrow shape. Planters will not be at risk of being attacked by small wild cats.

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) – As noted above, the bobcat is another species of the Lynx genus. The bobcat is more of a southern cat. It is commonly found within Mexico and the US, but the bobcats that are found in Canada are usually within a few hundred kilometers of the US border. The bobcat is the same size as the lynx, although it has a more varied diet. It predominantly feeds on rabbits and hares, but will also eat any other small animals that it can catch, including birds, insects, and even fish. When I think of the look of the face of a bobcat, I think of a cross between a house cat and a leopard. The bobcat is typically tan with a white underside and lots of black spots. It has a longer tail than a lynx, and that tail has a banding pattern with a black end and white underneath the tip. Because the bobcat's hind legs are shorter than that of a lynx, it looks "normal" when compared to the look of a house cat, because it's rear end is not jacked up in the air.

Some other "common" Canadian mammals, which are rarely seen by planters, include: wolverines, skunks, otter, mink, muskrats, ferrets, and weasels, as well as many smaller rodents including groundhogs (woodchucks), shrews, and rats.

Small mammals and rodents that a planter might see quite frequently include: rabbits and hares, beavers, squirrels, chipmunks, gophers, marmots, voles, and mice.

The Hinterland "Who's Who" website has some good resources about various animals: www.hww.ca

You may also see snakes while you're planting. Most are fairly benign, especially in regions characterized by boreal forests. Canada has 26 different species of snakes, and most are found in the far southern parts of the country. The only species that you'll regularly encounter in the more northern parts of Canada is likely to be a garter snake. Harmless.

For more photo and video resources associated with this appendix, visit: www.replant.ca/training/animals