



Wildlife Observation Permits

Frequently Asked Questions

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) is responsible for wildlife in the Northwest Territories (NWT). In 2014, a new *Wildlife Act* came into effect and the new regulations established the need for a wildlife observation permit.

Activities that require a wildlife observation permit should be planned **well in advance**. In most cases the permit application requires consultation with nearby communities, which may take several weeks.

This document addresses some of the frequently asked questions about wildlife observation permits. For more information on wildlife observation permits, email wildlife@gov.nt.ca, visit your local ENR office or go to the ENR website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca.

What is a wildlife observation permit?

A wildlife observation permit allows 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 photography for commercial purposes.

What is “big game”?

Under the *Wildlife Act*, big game includes:

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

Reindeer are not considered big game under the *Wildlife Act*.

What does “close observation” mean?

“Close observation” refers to being within the vicinity of the animal where they become aware of your presence and change their behaviour. This can be from a vehicle, with a drone or in person. The rule of thumb is if the animal knows you’re there, you are probably too close.

What is the difference between “close observation” and “harassment” of wildlife?

Harassment of wildlife includes unnecessarily chasing an animal, fatiguing, disturbing or tormenting or otherwise pestering game species or birds of prey. This may include:

- Intentionally driving close or walking up to an animal so that it knows you’re there
- Using a drone in close proximity to an animal such that it changes its natural behaviour

Always keep a safe distance between yourself and the wildlife you are photographing.



Who needs a wildlife observation permit?

A business or individual seeking out big game for commercial purposes (for profit) requires this permit. This includes filmmakers and photographers.

Who does not need a wildlife observation permit?

A wildlife observation permit is not required:

- To snap a picture or take a video of big game on the highway that you encounter by chance
- To sell a photo you took when you happened upon big game while doing another activity (driving, hiking, etc.)
- To film or photograph the reindeer herd outside of Inuvik
- If accompanied by a tourism operator with a valid tourism operator licence who is approved for wildlife observation activities (such as a cruise, expedition, safari or photography)
- To conduct research (researchers must apply for a **wildlife research permit**)

Please note:

- Tourism operators holding a valid tourism operator licence with specific terms and conditions included in their licence to regulate their activities with respect to wildlife do not require a wildlife observation permit.
- Visitors who are accompanied by a licensed tourism operator who is approved for wildlife observation do not need wildlife observation permits.
- It is expected that the tourism operator will ensure visitors follow safe observation practices when participating in activities outlined in the tourism operator's licence.

How do I get a wildlife observation permit?

Application forms and instructions for applying for a wildlife observation permit can be found on the ENR website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apply-research-observe-and-handle-wildlife-nwt.

Applications must include **recommendation forms** signed by the Local Harvesting Committee(s). Community consultation ensures members of 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.

How do I conduct community consultation?

Recommendation forms and detailed instructions on how to consult can be found on the ENR website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apply-research-observe-and-handle-wildlife-nwt.

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.

How much does a wildlife observation permit cost?

A wildlife observation permit is issued by ENR for free. There is no cost to the permit holder.

How long is a wildlife observation permit valid?

A wildlife observation permit is valid for one calendar year from the date of issue. It needs to be renewed annually, including community consultation.