



# Dalton Highway Corridor

## Watchable Wildlife

Driving north from Fairbanks on the Elliott and Dalton Highways offers a unique opportunity to experience Alaska's variety of habitat types. Begin your journey in the largest terrestrial biome on earth: the boreal forest. Weave through birch woodlands and spruce forests, pass freshwater ponds and expansive wetlands, and follow the Koyukuk River valley into the alpine tundra of the Brooks Range. Eventually, rocky peaks and high mountain passes give way to the expansive Arctic tundra.



Bob Wick, BLM

**Habitats** Arctic tundra | Alpine tundra | Boreal forest | Shrubland | Riverine/riparian | Freshwater lakes/ponds

### Species to See



NPS

**Muskox** - These robust creatures are well adapted to survive the harsh arctic weather. In winter, they grow a soft dense undercoat of hair called qiviut, a highly sought-after material used for knitting. Muskox were hunted to extinction in Alaska by the 1920s. In 1930, a group of 34 muskox were transplanted to the state from Greenland. View the descendants of these animals in small bands north of the Brooks Range.



Krista Lundgren, USFWS

**Upland sandpiper** - Look for upland sandpipers in open areas within the boreal forest, such as grassy fields, clearings, regenerating burn areas, and shrublands. Though most birds of this species breed in the contiguous United States, a portion of the population flies all the way to Alaska to breed. Upon arrival, male sandpipers may display to females by circling in the sky and whistling a song. After pairing, the couple may circle together.



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**Arctic ground squirrel** - These burrowing animals are the largest species of ground squirrel in North America. They are native to the Arctic and are often observed feeding, defending their territories, and watching for the many predators that rely on them as food. Arctic ground squirrels hibernate up to eight months a year, which is considered the longest hibernation period on earth. They compress all their feeding, reproduction, and fattening up for winter into the brief months of the Arctic summer.



BLM

**Dall sheep** - Spend time looking closely for these white sheep foraging in steep, rocky areas with good access to "escape terrain." If Dall sheep feel threatened, they will quickly scramble up cliffs to safety. During winter, they survive by eating dry grasses, sedges, and lichens in exposed, windswept areas.

### Other Resources

[Dalton Highway Visitor Guide](#) | [Toolik Field Station Bird Species List](#) | [Arctic Interagency Visitor Center](#)



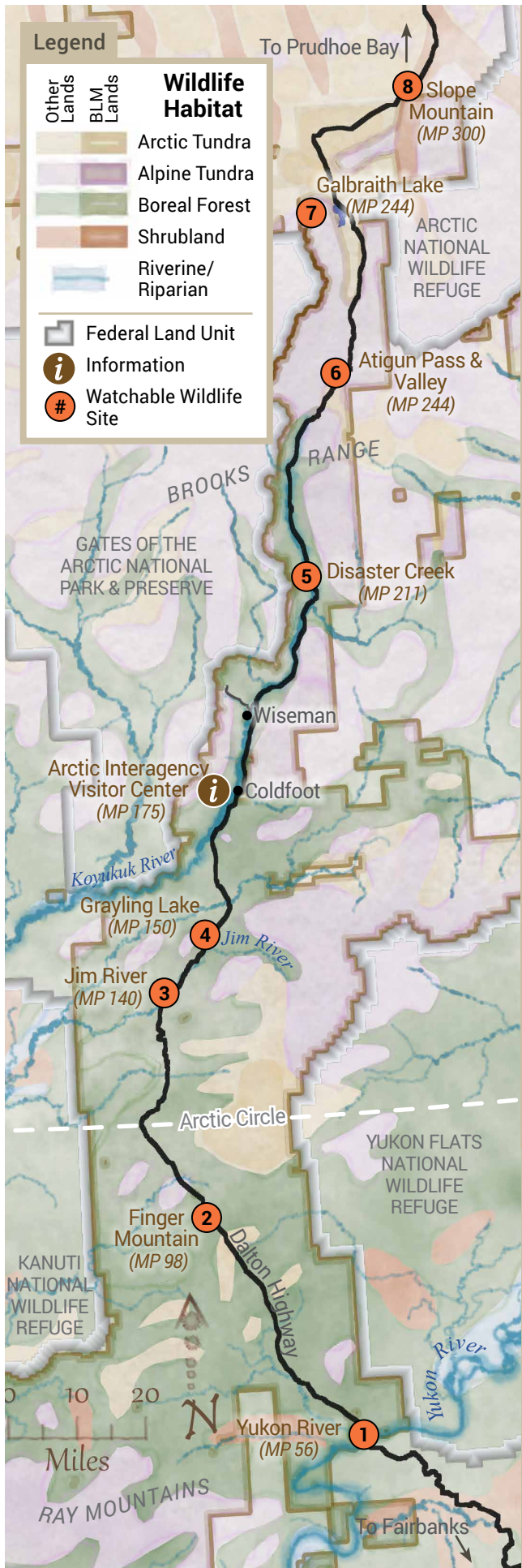
- Brown bear
- Black bear
- Gray wolf
- Canada lynx
- Moose
- Caribou
- North American beaver
- Alaska marmot
- Bluethroat
- Golden eagle
- Northern wheatear
- Peregrine falcon
- Rusty blackbird
- Arctic char



### Wildlife Viewing Tips

The Dalton Highway is an industrial road. Be alert to truck traffic. Do not stop on the road or on bridges.

Review the Dalton Highway Visitor Guide for safety tips and recommended equipment when traveling on this road.



## Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Yukon River** (Dalton Highway (DHW) MP 56) - The Yukon River flows west for more than 2,000 miles from Canada to its delta in the Bering Sea. Its extensive lowlands are prime riparian habitat for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, and fish. Spend time reading the interpretive panels and stop in the visitor station on the north side of the river.
- 2 **Finger Mountain** (DHW MP 98) - This alpine tundra ridge offers impressive vistas to look for peregrine falcons, northern harriers, caribou, and wolves. In the summer, learn more about the landscape by following the short interpretive trail to Finger Rock. Look for tracks and trails left by voles, shrews, and other small mammals.
- 3 **Jim River** (DHW MP 140) - See Arctic grayling and salmon in the river during the brief summer. Watch for lesser yellowlegs feeding on aquatic insects along the water's edge. Canoe the river or eat lunch on its bank for a greater chance of seeing wildlife up close. You may be serenaded by a Swainson's thrush or look up to see a moose walking slowly through the thick riparian vegetation.
- 4 **Grayling Lake** (DHW MP 150) - Visit these freshwater lakes for a chance to see moose and waterfowl, such as trumpeter swan, northern shoveler, American wigeon, and northern pintail. In May through early July, listen for savannah sparrow singing in open areas and the distinct song of the white-crowned sparrow along the road.
- 5 **Disaster Creek** (DHW MP 211) - Stop at the pull-off near Disaster Creek and look for tracks. In the winter, watch for lynx, snowshoe hare, moose, and red fox tracks.
- 6 **Atigun Pass and Atigun Valley** (DHW MP 244) - Scan the hillsides for bands of Dall sheep foraging in alpine meadows and golden eagles soaring high above the valley. Look for caribou from the Central Arctic Herd anywhere from Chandalar Shelf northward.
- 7 **Galbraith Lake** (DHW MP 275) - Galbraith Lake, Tea Lake, and a few smaller lakes are all that remain of a large glacial lake that once occupied the entire Atigun Valley. Lake trout, grayling, Arctic char, and burbot swim in their cold waters. Watch for long-tailed jaegers coursing the tundra for a meal. Listen for yellow-billed loons and upland sandpipers.
- 8 **Slope Mountain** (DHW MP 300) - Look for grizzly bears digging up roots and feeding on vegetation in the open country around Slope Mountain and for colonies of Alaska marmots in the rocky habitat on its slopes. Listen for the cackling of willow ptarmigan and look for their footprints in the soil and snow.

## Other Notable Locations

- **Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, National Park Service.** This rugged 8.4-million-acre park spans much of the central and western Brooks Range and is home to beaver, caribou, Dall sheep, migratory birds, grizzly bear, wolverine, mink, river otter, and more.
- **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.** Often called "the last great wilderness," Arctic Refuge encompasses the dramatic, sparse landscape of Alaska's eastern North Slope. This area contains a high density of polar bear dens and is calving habitat for the Porcupine caribou herd.
- **Dalton Highway Milepost 300 to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska Department of Natural Resources.** Wide expanses of Arctic tundra provide viewing opportunities for wolves, muskox, bears, caribou, and over 200 bird species.