



Denali Highway Region

Watchable Wildlife

This rugged 135-mile stretch of primarily gravel highway offers a taste of wild Alaska with its wide-open vistas of mountains, glaciers, tundra, forests, lakes, and rivers. Visitors may see grizzly bear and moose throughout the journey between Cantwell and Paxson. In August, large numbers of migrating caribou may be visible from the many waysides and pullouts.



Bob Wick, BLM

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

Species to See



Yumi Kawaguchi

Northern flying squirrel - In the nighttime hours, this small, quarter-pound mammal glides from tree to tree using lateral skin folds called patagia. Alaskan subspecies of flying squirrel prefer to live in old growth forests where they find cover from predators, nest in tree cavities, and raise their young. They survive the winter months by entering torpor, a state similar to hibernation.



Alan Schmierer

Arctic warbler - Listen for the loud trill of an Arctic warbler singing from willows near streams. This warbler is one of the few birds that flies to North America from Asia. Most of the individuals of this species breed in northern Asia and Europe, but a small population flies from Asia to breed in Alaska each summer. Watch for them flitting from bush to bush along the Denali Highway.



Jeremy Matlock, BLM

North American beaver - Look for this distinct reddish-brown rodent swimming through streams and ponds. Beavers are the largest rodents in North America and are known as “ecosystem engineers” for their environment-altering lifestyle. Beavers use their large teeth to cut down trees and place them to build lodges and dam rivers, creating new still-water pools that provide habitat for many other species.



Donna Dewhurst, USFWS

Trumpeter swan - This graceful white bird is the largest waterfowl species in the world, with a typical weight of 21-30 pounds and a wingspan of up to six feet. Their huge mass requires a long, approximately 300-foot, “runway” for them to take off from water. Mating pairs of swans pluck aquatic plants to build nests in the marshes adjacent to freshwater lakes. These nests can be up to 12 feet in diameter and two feet above the water.

Other Resources

[Denali Highway Georeferenced Map](#) | [Denali Highway Brochure](#) | [Gulkana Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Tangle Lakes Archaeological District Brochure](#) | [Delta Wild and Scenic River Guide](#)



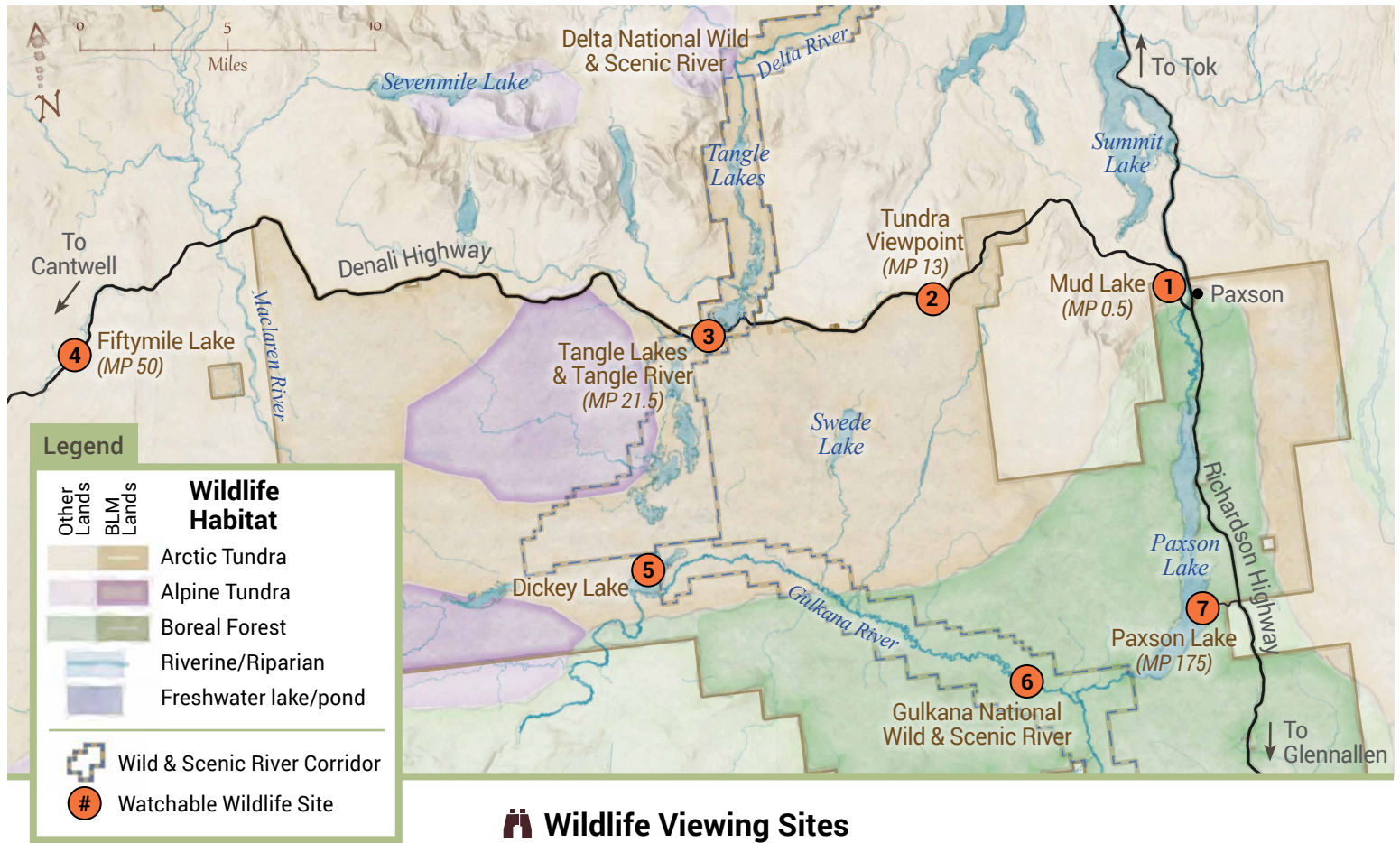
- Grizzly bear
- Gray wolf
- Wolverine
- Red fox
- Moose
- Caribou
- River otter
- Hoary marmot
- Muskrat
- Common loon
- Long-tailed jaeger
- Willow ptarmigan
- Salmon (5 species)
- Arctic grayling



Wildlife Viewing Tips

The Denali Highway is open mid-May to October 1. It is gravel most of the way and has very limited services. Prepare to be self-sufficient.

Hunting season in September and October brings crowds to the area, especially near the road system. Wear bright clothing.



Wildlife Viewing Sites



Wolf tracks

Erin Julianus, BLM

1 Mud Lake (Denali Highway (DNHW) MP 0.5) - Walk the short trail to this shallow lake for a chance to see moose, trumpeter swans, and bald eagles. Look in the water for brightly colored red salmon.

2 Tundra Viewpoint (DNHW MP 13) - As you head west, the land around the highway opens into expansive tundra. Watch carefully for moose, caribou, wolf, ptarmigan, long-tailed jaegers, fox, and bear.

3 Tangle Lakes & Tangle River (DNHW MP 21.5) - Trumpeter swans, long-tailed ducks, common mergansers, common loons, and Arctic terns splash in this network of lakes and rivers all summer while songbirds nest in the surrounding shrubs. Launch a boat to explore the **Delta National Wild and Scenic River**. Watch for grizzly bear, moose, and caribou in the surrounding alpine tundra.

4 Fiftymile Lake (DNHW MP 50) - Bald eagles, trumpeter swans, moose, caribou, and grizzly bear roam nearby. Beavers swim and build in the waters. This lake can be viewed from the Denali Highway.

5 Dickey Lake - Visit this pristine lake south of the Denali Highway. Careful wildlife observers may see ptarmigan, bald eagle, moose, bear, and a variety of waterfowl.

6 Gulkana National Wild and Scenic River - This large system of lakes connected by the West Fork of the Gulkana River, part of the Copper River Watershed, offers nesting habitat to about 30% of the world's trumpeter swans. Extended canoe trips through this seldom-visited area reward the adventurer with numerous opportunities to view wildlife.

7 Paxson Lake (Richardson Highway MP 175) - Camp, launch a boat, or just relax at this large scenic lake. Eagle nests and eaglets are common in the area, while moose or caribou may be seen near the water.

Other Notable Locations

■ **Wrangell St. Elias National Park**, National Park Service. The largest national park in the United States offers the opportunity to see many different animals, including caribou, moose, mountain goats, and Dall sheep.

■ **Copper River**, multiple land managers. Flowing from interior to the Gulf of Alaska, the Copper River is famous for its salmon runs and the bears that feed on the fish.

■ **Susitna River**, multiple land managers. Moose, beavers, waterfowl, and all five species of salmon thrive in this large glacially fed river.

■ **Lake Louise**, Department of Natural Resources. The 37 square miles of this state recreation area provide the opportunity to see bear, fox, Dall sheep, trumpeter swan, and gulls.