



Steese and White Mountains

Watchable Wildlife

View a slice of interior Alaska by visiting the 2.2 million acres of BLM-managed public lands that stretch from Fairbanks to the Yukon River at Circle City. Hike, bike, ski, snowmachine, paddle, or drive through the spruce and birch forests and mountain summits of Steese National Conservation Area and White Mountains National Recreation Area. The region's low, rounded mountain ranges and clear-water river valleys provide important habitat for the Fortymile caribou herd and many other species.



Craig McCaa, BLM

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

Species to See



NPS

Dall sheep - These bright white herbivores roam the Steese and White Mountains searching for food. Ewes (females) and rams (males) look similar with short, slightly curved horns until the age of three years. However, rams' horns continue to grow each year, becoming massive and curled. Remember to give Dall sheep plenty of space if you are lucky enough to see them.



Brandon Trentler

Northern wheatear - The northern wheatear has the longest east to west migration of any bird, flying across Asia to wintering grounds in Africa. They spend summers nesting and raising chicks in the rocky tundra of interior Alaska. Look for their distinct black -and -white tail pattern to identify this bird.



Andrea PokrzWinski

Gyrfalcon - The largest falcon in the world can be seen hunting other birds in the tundra. It is estimated that a breeding pair of gyrfalcons and their chicks require two to three pounds of food per day. This is equal to the whole family sharing about two to three ptarmigan each day.



NPS

Collared pika - The quick-moving, skittish pika is closely related to rabbits. They spend the summer darting around the alpine tundra, collecting vegetation they dry into hay for the winter months. These independent creatures do not hibernate and must rely on their hay pile to feed them under the snow all winter. Sometimes they steal from their neighbors to increase the size of their hay pile.



- Grizzly bear
- Black bear
- Canada lynx
- Gray wolf
- Caribou
- Moose
- Hoary marmot
- River otter
- Harlequin duck
- Lapland longspur
- Peregrine falcon
- Rock ptarmigan
- Arctic grayling
- Wood frog

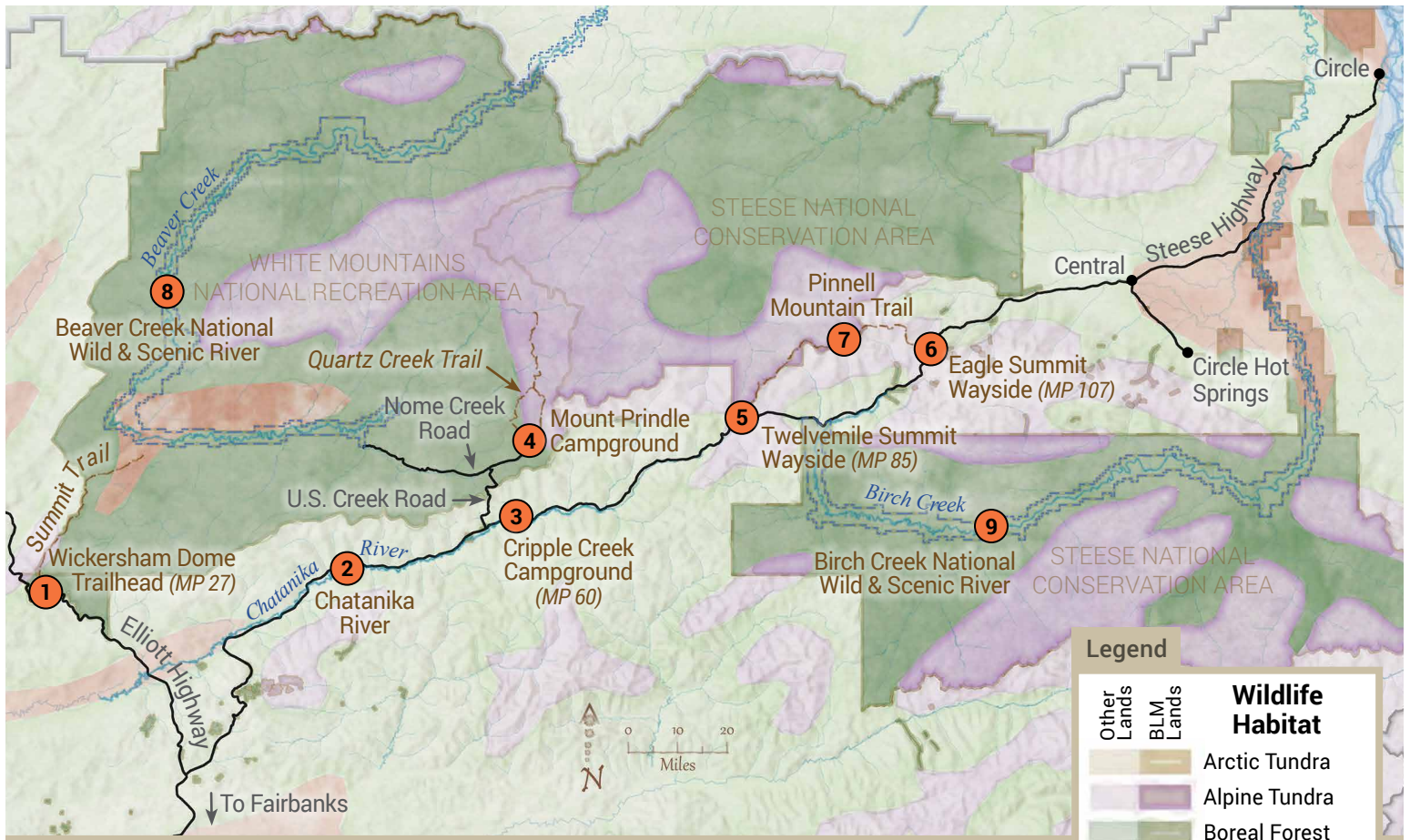


Wildlife Viewing Tips

The Steese Highway is unpaved after milepost 80.

Other Resources

[Steese and Elliott Highway Travel Guide](#) | [Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River Guide](#) | [Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail Guide](#) | [White Mountains Winter Trails](#) | [Steese National Conservation Area Digital Public Information Map](#) | [White Mountains National Recreation Area Digital Public Information Map](#)



Wildlife Viewing Sites

- 1 **Wickersham Dome & Summit Trail** (Elliott Highway MP 27) - Climb through the white spruce into alpine areas where marmots whistle from the rocky outcrops.
- 2 **Chatanika River** - This river parallels the Highway and contains a series of old mine tailing ponds which draw moose and waterfowl. Fish, such as king (Chinook) salmon, northern pike, least cisco, whitefish, and burbot, swim in the river and attract bears, wolves, and scavenging birds.
- 3 **Cripple Creek Campground** (SHW MP 60) - The short nature trail to the Chatanika River provides opportunity to spot northern waterthrush and various flycatchers and warblers. The sounds of Swainson's and varied thrush fill the air. Otters and ermine may be seen along the river.
- 4 **Mount Prindle & Quartz Creek Trail** - The high peaks, rocky ridges, and glaciated valleys of this area provide ideal habitat for Dall sheep. Bird species such as white-crowned sparrow, hermit thrush, and Wilson's warbler nest in shrubby thickets. Alpine wildflowers and their pollinators add spots of color to the landscape.
- 5 **Twelvemile Summit** (Steese Highway (SHW) MP 85) and
- 6 **Eagle Summit** (SHW MP 107) - Caribou from the Fortymile herd may be seen from the highway or by scanning the alpine tundra during a hike. Caribou feed upon the dense carpets of lichens. These points mark the ends of the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail.

- 7 **Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail** - Look for gyrfalcon and ptarmigan along this 27-mile trail. Listen for the whistles of marmots and high-pitched pika chirps. Enjoy the breeding calls and displays of the northern wheatear, Lapland longspur, surfbirds, and American golden plovers.

- 8 **Beaver Creek &**
- 9 **Birch Creek National Wild & Scenic Rivers** - A summer float trip down either of these creeks may reward visitors with sightings of beaver, river otter, moose, caribou, black bear, brown bear, and wolves. Watch for the aerial acrobatics of peregrine falcons hunting.

Other Notable Locations

- **Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Alaska's largest boreal wetland basin is essential breeding habitat for millions of waterfowl.
- **Lower Chatanika River State Recreation Area**, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Hike, berry pick, or camp around Olnes Pond, and watch for the moose that frequent the area.
- **Yukon River**, multiple land managers. The bluffs, oxbows, and expansive riparian habitat of the Yukon River attract bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and moose.