

Yellowstone National Park Snowmobile Safety Training

Curriculum design, instructional design, research & writing
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Sample of course developed for print media.

This course was developed in response to new laws permitting a limited number of snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park. Snowmobilers were issued the course booklet and required to pass a test prior to receiving a permit to enter the Park.

I served as instructional designer, researcher and writer of the eight-section course booklet and test. The following sample contains one section and related test questions.

Please note: The sample shows text and rough layout, prior to addition of photos and illustrations.

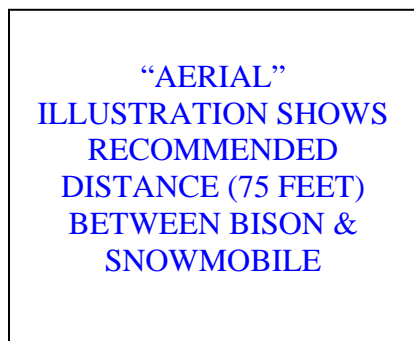
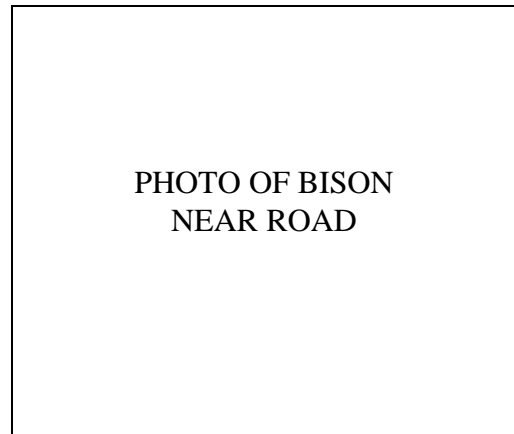
Section 4: WILDLIFE

Scenarios: A group of bison are on the road ahead of you. They appear to be running toward you. What should you do?

Buffalo are passing you on both sides of your machine. What can you do to protect yourself?

Learning Objectives: After completing this section, you should:

1. Understand how to deal with wildlife for their protection – and yours.
2. Know strategies for dealing safely with wildlife on the road in a variety of situations.



Part of Yellowstone’s beauty is its wildlife. While watching wildlife is a fundamental part of enjoying the park, remember to watch from a distance. **Wild animals are unpredictable and dangerous**, and there have been many injuries in the park over the years. You, too, could be injured if you get too close.

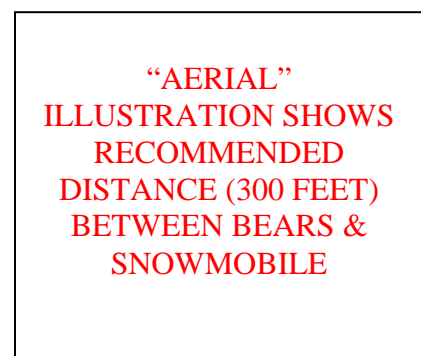
Never approach wildlife. Stay at least **75 feet** (25 yards) away from all wildlife except bears.

You must stay **300 feet** (100 yards) away from bears. In the rare event that you see a bear during the winter season, notify a park official as soon as possible.

When wild animals are nearby, stay on your machine and keep it running. **Never get off your machine or leave the road** to get closer to the animals; they may think you’re chasing them.

Never feed the wildlife. Coyotes, ravens and other wild animals can easily get used to being fed. If wild animals expect people to feed them, they become aggressive. As a result, the animals may have to be moved or destroyed.

Never chase or molest wildlife. It’s difficult for animals to survive the harsh winter months. They live on stored reserves of fat in winter, and even minimal movement can use up too much energy. Wild animals need all their energy simply to survive until spring. **If you disturb them, they may die.**



Never leave food, personal belongings, or keys in any compartment of your machine. If you leave your snowmobile to go hiking or skiing – or even to enter a building for a short time – take your belongings with you, including your keys. Ravens, coyotes, and other animals are masters at retrieving items from snowmobiles, even objects you think are safely stored. Ravens have been known to steal keys and items from billfolds, as well as food.

Stay away from eagles’ nests. Obey the restrictions posted in areas where eagles nest.

Ask Yourself:

- How can I protect wildlife while I’m snowmobiling?
 - How can I protect myself and my belongings?
 - Do members of my group understand how to protect wildlife and themselves?
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Wildlife on the Road

During winter, wild animals survive on reserves of fat stored in their bodies. Their bodies use most of this stored energy just to survive.

Walking and moving around burns calories the animals need for survival. Plowed roadways are easier to walk on, so animals move from the fields to the roads during winter. That means **you’re likely to encounter animals on the road during your snowmobile trip.**

Wildlife *always* have the right of way. Drive slowly and watch for animals. Coyotes, in particular, tend to be hit and killed by snowmobiles.

Bison are the most commonly-encountered animals on winter roads. Herds of bison often move to specific areas of the park and use certain routes for their travel. These routes include Fountain Flats Drive north to Madison, and west of Madison to Seven-Mile Bridge (used to cross the river toward Cougar Meadows). They use the same routes for their return trips. If you are near one of these destinations and are having trouble passing a bison herd, be patient. Wait for the animals to leave the road when reach their destination.



PHOTO OF COYOTES
WALKING ON ROAD

If you see wildlife on the road...

- **Stop when you first see an animal or herd.** Stop at least 75 feet (25 yards) away from bison and other wildlife.
- Note which side of the road the animals are standing on, **and pull over as far as possible to the opposite side of the road.** This way, the animals will only be able to pass you on one side, rather than trapping you in the middle of a herd.
- **Stay on your machine and leave the engine idling.** Do not rev the engine, and do not make any sudden or erratic movements.
- **Observe the animals and assess their movements and temperament.** Which direction is the animal or herd moving? Are they moving toward you or away from you? If you encounter a herd, are the animals acting aggressively (for example, butting heads or pushing each other)? The information you gain from watching the animals for a few minutes can save a great deal of time and trouble.
- Give the bison or other wildlife a chance to walk past you or move off the road. Once the road is clear, you can continue on your way.
- **When possible, use plowed pullouts** to get around the bison or other wildlife. This is the best approach to passing wildlife. If the herd is moving away from you, try waiting for the animals to get to the next pullout, then pass them.
- **If the animals are standing calmly,** inch toward them and assess their behavior. If they remain calm, pass on the opposite side of the road at a moderate speed.

“AERIAL” ILLUSTRATION SHOWS SNOWMOBILES PARKED ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FROM BISON ON THE OTHER SIDE (SEE BULLET POINT #2)

“AERIAL” ILLUSTRATION SHOWS SNOWMOBILES IN TIGHT FORMATION PASSING BISON HERD (SEE LAST BULLET POINT)

- The animals you encounter may still be agitated from machines that passed before you arrived. **If an animal appears agitated, do not attempt to pass** as this may cause the animal to charge.
- **Groups of snowmobiles should stay in tight formation** when passing herds. This will prevent animals from moving between the machines. Note that the lead snowmobiler is at the biggest risk when your group passes animals.

A few basic tips:

- **Never stop next to an animal**, and never stop in the middle of a group of animals.
 - When passing animals, **sit squarely on the seat of your snowmobile** so you don't tip over.
 - **Use a slow, even speed** when passing bison and other wildlife. Do not accelerate sharply.
 - **Do not chase animals** or cause them to stampede.
 - **If you need to get off your snowmobile**, stand with the machine between you and the animal or herd. **Never expose yourself to a herd without cover.**
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What if...

Animals are moving in the same direction you're moving.

1. Slowly approach the herd; avoid causing animals to run.
2. If they are concentrated on one side of the road, move to the other side as far as possible and pass at the widest point in the road.
3. Slowly move past the group, traveling at a speed that just maintains your forward momentum. (Moderate or fast speeds can frighten the animals, causing them to run and expend much-needed energy.)
4. If the animals start to run, back off. Park far to the side and give them time to settle down. Then slowly approach the herd and try the same technique again.

Animals are walking or running toward you.

If possible, turn your snowmobile around.

Move to a safe place to reassess the situation.

If you can't turn around:

1. Move your snowmobile as far as possible to the side of the road opposite from the animals.
2. Get off your machine and stand to the side of it, keeping the machine between you and the animals.

“AERIAL” ILLUSTRATION OF
TURNING SNOWMOBILE
AROUND SO IT'S HEADING IN
THE SAME DIRECTION AS THE
HERD (AND LEADING THE
HERD)

Animals are being pushed toward you by oncoming traffic.

First, try to retreat, even if it requires you to back up. If retreat isn't possible:

1. Pull over as far to the right as you can.
2. Stay on your machine. Place both feet on the right-hand running board and hold the hand grips so you can jump off the machine if a bison tries to tip it over.
3. If you jump off the machine, keep it between you and the animals.
4. If the machine tips over, jump off it. Again, keep it between you and the animals.

ILLUSTRATION OF
SNOWMOBILER WITH BOTH
FEET ON RIGHT-HAND
RUNNING BOARD, HOLDING
THE SNOWMOBILE'S
HAND GRIPS

Animals are moving around you on both sides.

PHOTO OF SNOWMOBILER
"LOOKING SMALL" WITH
HEAD LOWERED NEAR GAS
TANK (SEE ITEMS #1 & #2)

1. Stop completely, curl up in your snowmobile, and try to appear as small and non-threatening as possible.
2. Keep your head down (close to the gas tank). Don't close your eyes, however; watch the animals' movements and keep track of where they are.
3. Hold onto the machine so you won't be thrown off in case it is bumped or jostled by the animals.
4. Try to remain still. Don't make any sudden movements.

Ask Yourself:

- What would I do if a herd of buffalo were standing in the road ahead? If they were crossing the road? If they were approaching me, or walking away?
 - Do I understand the basic strategies for dealing safely with wildlife on the road? Do the members of my group understand the strategies, too?
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In Summary:

Viewing wildlife is one of the most interesting activities at Yellowstone. It's also potentially dangerous, both for you and the animals.

Wild animals live on fat reserves during winter months. Even minimal activity, such as crossing the road to get out of your way, forces the animal to expend too many calories. If they move too much in the winter, they may not survive.

On the other hand, you should never feed the animals, even the birds and smaller mammals. If they get used to being fed, they'll become aggressive and may have to be moved or destroyed.

To protect the wildlife and yourself, stay away from the animals at least 75 feet (300 feet for bears).

Wild animals are dangerous and unpredictable; never approach or chase them. And remember that wildlife *always* have the right of way.



PHOTO OF WILDLIFE EATING
DURING WINTER MONTHS

You're likely to see animals on the road during winter because it's easier for them to travel on roads and they're trying to conserve their energy. This section includes strategies for dealing with wildlife in a variety of situations. It's important to know these strategies, and to make sure you (and other group members) can use them if needed.

Learning Checklist

After reading this section, I can:

- Explain why it's important not to chase wild animals or make them move.
- State the minimum distance to stay away from bears and other wildlife.
- List at least three rules for dealing with wildlife.
- Explain why keys and personal belongings should never be left in an unattended snowmobile.
- Explain why it's important to stop and observe animals in the road.
- List at least three general strategies for dealing with animals standing in the road.
- Describe what to do if animals are moving toward my snowmobile or away from it.
- Describe what to do if a herd is being pushed toward me by an oncoming vehicle.
- Describe what to do if animals are moving past my snowmobile on both sides.

Snowmobile Safety Training Course – Quiz Questions

NOTE: Read all answers before selecting one.

Section 4: WILDLIFE

1. You should never feed wildlife because...
 - a. The animals might not like the food.
 - b. There may not be enough food left for you.
 - c. **The animals may become aggressive if they get used to being fed.**
 - d. The animals may refuse the share the food you give them.
 - e. Both A & B.
 - f. All of the above.

2. During winter, wildlife...
 - a. Tend to be on the roads more often.
 - b. Can die if they move around too much.
 - c. Live on their own fat.
 - d. Always have the right of way on the road.
 - e. A & D above.
 - f. **All of the above.**

3. If you see wildlife on the road...
 - a. **Keep your engine running.**
 - b. Pull over and turn off your machine so it isn't idling.
 - c. Move ahead to push the animals out of the way.
 - d. Drive off the road and pass the animals.
 - e. Both A & D.
 - f. Both B & D.

4. If an animal appears agitated...
 - a. Pass as quickly as possible.
 - b. It may be getting ready to charge.
 - c. Do not pass the animal.
 - d. Pass at a moderate speed.
 - e. **Both B & C.**
 - f. Both C & D.

5. If you need to get off your snowmobile around wildlife...
 - a. Turn off the engine so it won't idle.
 - b. Rev the engine first to see if the animals will move out of the way.
 - c. **Keep the machine between you and the animals.**
 - d. Never get off your snowmobile for any reason.
 - e. Both A & C.
 - f. Both B & C.

6. If animals are being pushed toward you by oncoming traffic...
 - a. Get off your snowmobile and hide until they've passed.
 - b. Be prepared to jump off the machine.
 - c. Pull over to the left as far as you can.
 - d. Drive off the road to avoid them.
 - e. Both A & D would work.
 - f. All of the above.

7. If animals are moving around both sides of your machine...
 - a. Try to look as large and threatening as possible.
 - b. Try to look as small and non-threatening as possible.
 - c. Move your arms to let them know you're there.
 - d. It's ok to close your eyes.
 - e. Both A & D.
 - f. Both B & D.

8. In general...
 - a. Stay with your machine if possible.
 - b. Run for cover if possible.
 - c. Drive as quickly as possible past the herd.
 - d. Stop when you first see wildlife on the road.
 - e. Both A & D.
 - f. Both C & D.