



# animal nature

YOU MIGHT NOT  
SEE ALL OF THESE  
CREATURES FROM A  
ROCKY MOUNTAINEER  
WINDOW – BUT  
THEY’LL SEE YOU

by Sheri Radford

**COUGAR** The stealthy cougar is so elusive that a photo of one is likely as close as you’ll ever get. Also known as a mountain lion, puma or catamount, this powerful cat is capable of great bursts of speed and can kill an animal as large as an elk or a moose.



John Marriott/wildernessprints.com

**BIGHORN SHEEP** Every winter, the bighorn sheep of the Rocky Mountains, left, squeeze into a smaller range due to urban sprawl and fragmentation of their habitat. Bighorn In Our Backyard, based in Radium, BC, is an education and research project that studies and protects these brawny ungulates.

**BEAVER** “Nature’s lumberjack,” below, uses its orange incisors to cut down more than 200 trees each year for its lodge. Well-adapted to aquatic life, it has waterproof fur and valves in its nostrils and ears that close underwater. Demand for its pelt in the 1800s almost drove Canada’s national animal to extinction.



Thomas Kitchin & Victoria Hurst

**OSPREY** Also called a fishing eagle or fish hawk, the osprey likes to make a splash by diving feet-first into the water from great height and reappearing moments later with a fish in its claws. The bird’s dense plumage keeps it almost dry during watery fast-food ventures. Until recently, the majestic raptor was featured on the back of the Canadian \$10 bill.



cougar and osprey by Thomas Kitchin & Victoria Hurst

**MOOSE** This natural athlete can swim for hours, dive in shallow depths and run up to 55 km (34 mi) per hour. Every year, males grow new, larger antlers that eventually reach a width of up to two m (6.5 ft). New antlers have a soft covering called "velvet," which the moose scrapes off on trees and bushes.

**COMMON LOON** Its haunting cry is familiar to anyone who has spent time near the lakes and wetlands where it nests. Unlike the hollow bones of most birds, the loon's are almost solid; this decreases its buoyancy, making the bird well-suited for diving. Its image graces Canada's one-dollar "loonie" coin.



loons and bear John Marriott/wildernesprints.com



moose by Thomas Kitchin & Victoria Hurst

**MUSTANG** For at least two centuries they have roamed BC's Cariboo-Chilcotin region. Bears, mountain lions and grey wolves all prey upon these easily spooked, non-territorial quadrupeds. Descendants of escapees from farms and ranches, the horses continue to cause strife among governments, conservationists and First Nations groups over whether they should be protected for their noble ancestry or slaughtered as nuisances.



Patrice Halley

**GRIZZLY BEAR** Despite its fearsome image as a mighty carnivore, the grizzly bear munches on berries, roots and grasses most of the time.

To glimpse this formidable creature up close, check out the Grizzly Bears of Knight Inlet trip offered by Rocky Mountaineer Vacations.

