

Respecting wildlife in the natural outdoors

The snow crunches underfoot, glistens in the white landscape, drifts through the cold, fresh air. Far from the hustle and bustle, you feel in touch with nature. With a bit of luck the silhouette of an ibex will appear on a rock ledge, or you will cross the tracks of an alpine hare.

In the cold of winter, chamois, rock ptarmigan and other wild animals have trouble finding food and so have to use their energy reserves carefully. If they are disturbed and forced to flee, this can threaten their survival. If the worst comes to the worst, they may die of exhaustion.

By showing respect and consideration for wild animals, we can enjoy the natural outdoors to the full.



Four rules to go

Follow these four simple rules on your trips, and you will help wild animals to survive the harsh winter.

- 1 Respect designated wildlife areas and wildlife reserves.** They provide wild animals with an undisturbed habitat.
- 2 Stay on paths and designated routes in the forest.** This allows wild animals to adjust to the presence of humans.
- 3 Avoid forest edges and snow-free surfaces.** This is where wild animals like to be best.
- 4 Keep your dog on a lead, particularly in the forest.** Wild animals run away from dogs running free.

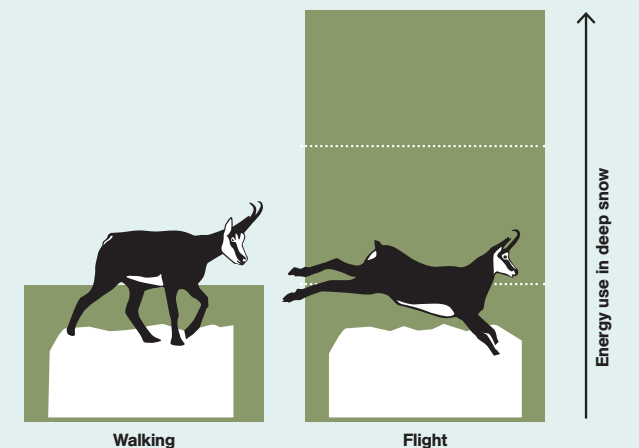
The following pages explain the behaviour of wild animals and so will help you understand how to act and enjoy your natural outdoor experience.

Stressful encounters

Wild animals flee when humans appear suddenly in their habitat or get too close to them.

Flight means stress, and is particularly exhausting in winter. Fleeing through deep snow requires a lot of effort for **chamois**, **Alpine ibex** and **deer**. **Grouse** burn up a lot of energy when they are startled out of their hiding places.

Animals which are disturbed repeatedly become weaker; in winter they are more likely to die and the following spring they are less likely to reproduce successfully. Repeated disturbances can be a threat to rare species.



Protected areas

Stressful encounters between humans and wild animals can be avoided if areas used intensively for winter leisure activities and the animals' main retreat areas are separated. This is why designated wildlife areas and wildlife reserves have been established.

These areas are marked on the map you can find online at www.respect-to-protect.ch/map and their boundaries are often signposted in the field.

If you do not keep to the permitted paths and routes in a legally protected wildlife area or wildlife reserve, you may risk prosecution or a fine. Thank you for also respecting the recommended wildlife areas, even without the fear of a fine.

Sign indicating a legally protected wildlife area.



Photo: Kurt Schmid

Respect habitats

In the winter, wild creatures remain where they can find food and feel protected.

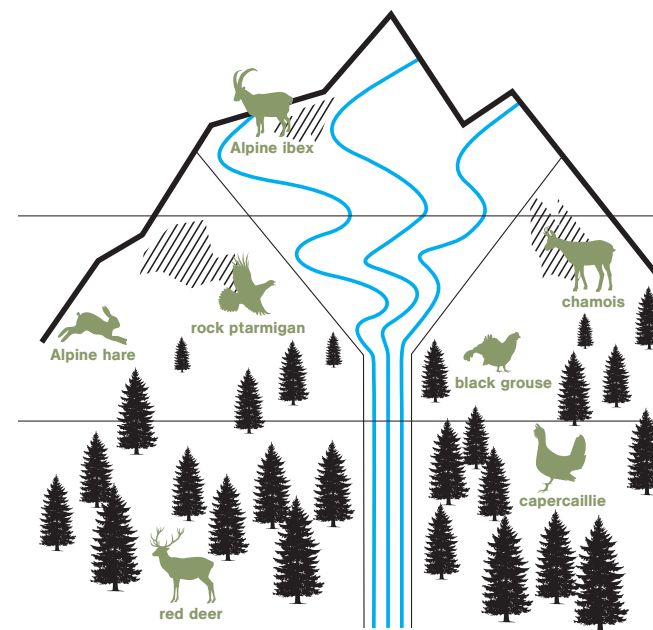
Above the tree- and shrub-line it is unusual to find animals on the snowy slopes. You can therefore roam here freely to a large extent. However, some creatures can be found in this area:

- the **rock ptarmigan** (wind-swept crests and heaths);
- **Alpine ibex** and **chamois** (rock ledges and snow-free surfaces);
- the **Alpine hare** (at night).

Forest and forest edges provide a suitable winter habitat for many wild creatures. So here you will find:

- the **black grouse** (upper forest line);
- the rare **capercaillie** (light, open forest);
- **chamois** and **deer** (forest, preferably on sunny, south-facing slopes).

If you see a wild animal, observe it from a distance. Avoid it if possible or give it enough time to move away quietly.



The closer you get to the forest, the more you should restrict the area you cover. Keep to the forest tracks and designated routes. This way you will avoid the wildlife and avoid causing it stress.

You can find more information about the wildlife pictured here on the reverse of this leaflet.

Plan your trip carefully

Plan your trip carefully using maps, guide books and the internet. Take account of the weather and avalanche conditions (www.slf.ch), the length and difficulty of your trip, and of the group members, their experience and capabilities. You should take with you an avalanche transceiver, shovel and avalanche probe as part of your standard equipment. Keep checking the conditions, terrain and the state of the group members. Turn back in good time.

Take also account of the wildlife when planning your trip:

- Look to see if your trip takes you through a designated wildlife area or wildlife reserve. If it does, keep to the permitted paths and routes.
- Take account of animal habitats, keeping to paths in the forest and to the routes marked in the planning instruments below:

Planning instruments:

- www.respect-to-protect.ch/map
- swisstopo snowshoe and ski tour maps
- SAC guide books



www.sac-cas.ch (training courses, guide books, further literature)



Avalanche danger

If you go touring in non-controlled avalanche terrain you need expertise in avalanche hazard assessment. You can learn what you need to know in an avalanche training course.

Danger level	Comments
1: low	Generally favourable conditions. Be aware of wet snow avalanches due to daytime warming. Beware of the danger of falling!
2: moderate	Favourable conditions, for the most part. Choose your route carefully! Beware of wet snow avalanches due to daytime warming! Avoid slopes steeper than 35.
3: considerable	Critical situation. Experience in avalanche hazard assessment required. Inexperienced riders should keep to marked and open routes!
4: high	Unfavourable conditions. Beware of avalanche runout zones!
5: very high	Inexperienced riders should keep to marked and open pistes!

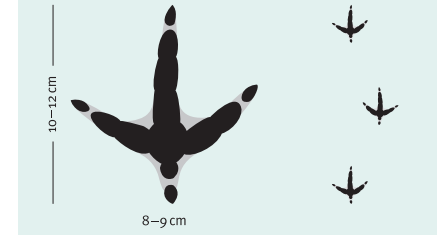
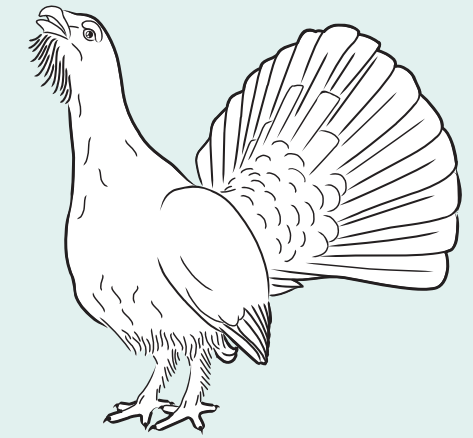
Rules of thumb

- 1 The first sunny day after a snowfall tends to be especially dangerous.
- 2 New snow and wind mean increased avalanche danger.
- 3 The steeper the slope, the greater the danger.
- 4 Fresh avalanches and whumping are signs of increased avalanche danger.
- 5 Rapid, distinct warming leads to a short term increase in avalanche danger.

www.slf.ch (avalanche bulletin, info sheet 'caution - avalanches!', whiterisk app, literature)

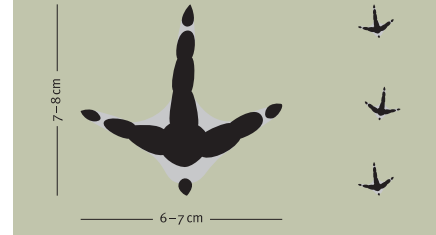


Capercaillie



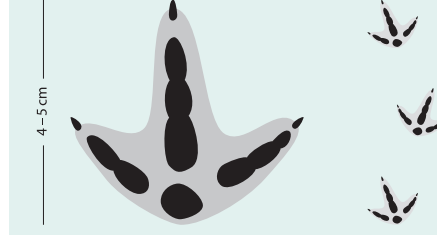
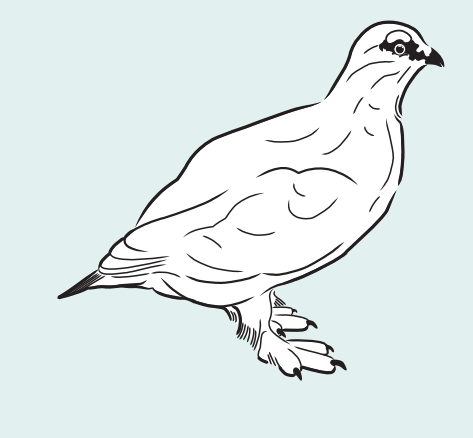
Population 450–500 cocks in Switzerland, **Habitat** Structured forest with glades and scrub (up to 1800m) **Mainly active** in early morning and evening, usually sleeps in trees, **Size** 60–85 cm, **Weight** 1.5–4.4 kg, **Special info** Forms very few fat reserves.

Black grouse



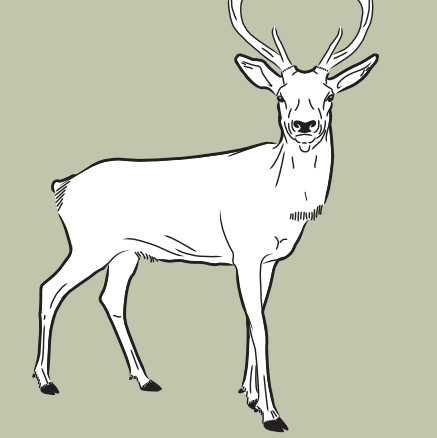
Population 7500–10 000 pairs in Switzerland, **Habitat** sparse forest, heath and moorland at forest edge (up to 2300m), burrows in snow for protection, uses burrow only once **Mainly active** in early morning and evening, **Size** 35–40 cm, **Weight** 0.75–1.4 kg, **Special info** Forms very few fat reserves.

Rock ptarmigan



Population 12 000–15 000 pairs in Switzerland, **Habitat** open areas above treeline (1500–3600m), **Mainly active** in early morning and evening, **Size** 35 cm, **Weight** 0.4–0.6 kg, **Special info** Does not form fat reserves, even in winter.

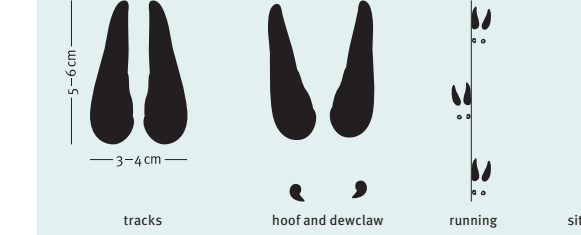
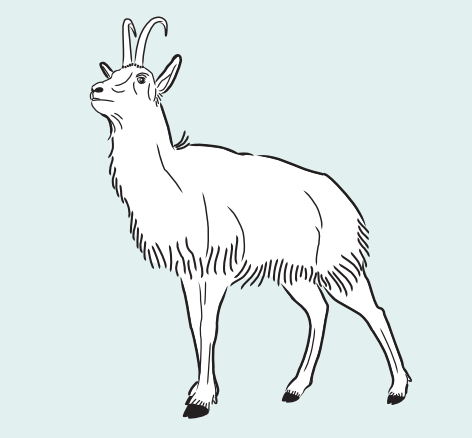
Red deer



Population approx. 26 000 in Switzerland, **Habitat** woods, fields and meadows (up to 2000m), **Mainly active** during the day, **Shoulder height** 120–150 cm, **Weight** 140–220 kg (♀ ca. 2/3 ♂).

Red deer eat mainly fibrous plant food (bark, branches, buds) in winter. When they need more energy (e.g. if they have to flee often) they tend to eat the shoots of young trees, which reduces the protective function of forests. Respecting wildlife therefore also means protecting the forest.

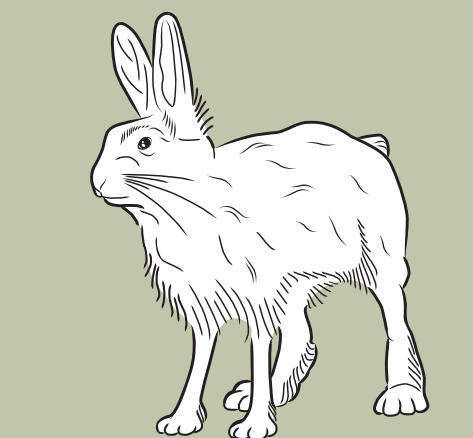
Chamois



Population approx. 95 000 in Switzerland, **Habitat** Steep slopes at forest edge, mountains (1000–2500m), **Mainly active** during the day, **Shoulder height** 70–85 cm, **Weight** 35–50 kg.

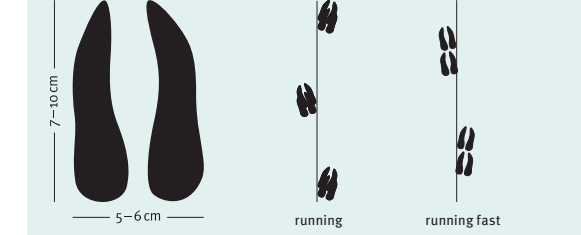
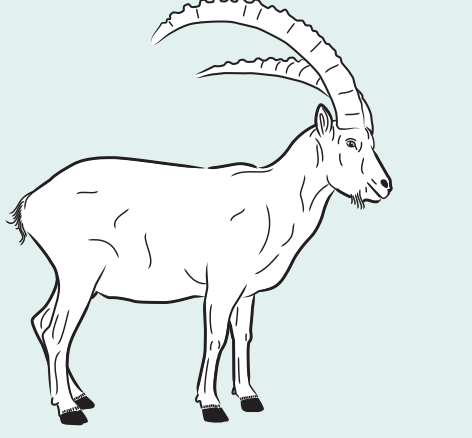
Chamois which have low energy reserves in the winter (e.g. if they have to flee often) make up the loss by eating the shoots of young trees, which can lead to problems in protection forest. Respecting wildlife therefore also means protecting the forest.

Alpine hare



Population approx. 14 000 in Switzerland, **Habitat** open areas above treeline (1200–3600m), **Mainly active** during the night, **Length** 50–60 cm, **Weight** 1.8–3.5 kg.

Alpine ibex



Population approx. 14 000 in Switzerland, **Habitat** high mountains (1600–3200m), **Mainly active** during the day, **Shoulder height** up to 80 cm (♀) or 95 cm (♂), **Weight** 40–50 kg (♀), 70–120 kg (♂).

N&L Nature & Leisure

www.respect-to-protect.ch

Respect to protect is a campaign to protect wildlife and is supported by sport, trade, tourism, conservation and hunting circles.

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