



## HUMAN-MARMOT CONFLICTS

Marmots may cause damage by eating crops, damaging gardens and making burrows on golf courses, sports fields and in and around buildings. Burrow openings can be a hazard for livestock and farm machinery. Marmots, like many other rodents, may chew on rubber hoses or other plastic products. They have been reported to damage automobile hoses and irrigation lines.

**All marmots are protected under the BC Wildlife Act. While trapping and relocating yellow-bellied marmots and woodchucks without a permit is allowed if they are causing damage on a person's property, it can be challenging to do so humanely and safely. WildSafeBC recommends exploring other options under 'Reducing Conflict' that may have longer-lasting results. If removal is necessary, consider contacting a qualified pest management contractor.**

Children should be taught not to feed or approach any wildlife; serious bites and scratches may result from an encounter with a marmot.



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The BC Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, registered charity that has been working in BC since 1969.

[www.bccf.com](http://www.bccf.com)

To report wildlife in conflict contact the Conservation Officer Service at

1.877.952.7277

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# MARMOTS



British Columbia Conservation Foundation







## REDUCING CONFLICT

Marmots are attracted to a wide variety of foods such as grasses and flowering plants, crops such as alfalfa, domestic fruit and gardens. Before considering removing marmots from your property, it is best to explore other options first.

**1. Manage attractants.** If possible, remove or manage crops that may be attracting marmots. Protect fruit trees with flashing wrapped around the trunk. Use chicken wire to build a perimeter fence around crops 1 m high, 30 cm below grade. The top should be bent horizontally outwards to make it challenging to climb over.

**2. Human harassment.** Discourage marmots when they first appear by expanding openings of burrow entrances or packing them with natural materials. BEFORE undertaking any forms of harassment, ensure there are no marmots in the burrows that are too young to move or adults hibernating.

**3. Change the habitat quality.** Marmots need to keep good sight-lines to their burrow entrances. Placing a 3 ft above-grade silt fence (buried 30 cm underground) around a colony may prevent it from spreading or encourage them to relocate. This may be less effective with urbanized marmots that have adapted to living in disturbed environments.

**4. Prevent access to buildings.** Inspect the perimeter of structures and porches for damage and access points. Block access by using wire mesh (1.25 cm size). Ensure the property is tidy and that unused equipment, such as lumber and discarded machinery, is removed as that may provide shelter for marmots and other rodents.

## ! MARMOT SAFETY

Like all wildlife, never feed or approach a marmot. A marmot that feels threatened may chatter its teeth, hiss, squeal or even growl. Always give them an escape route.

**Marmots, like other wildlife, may have internal or external parasites that can be vectors for disease. Never handle a dead animal with bare hands and avoid contact with feces or urine.**

Be aware that other animals may use marmot burrows such as snakes. Never place your hands or face near openings.



Marmots live in colonies and have many predators. They never stray far from their burrows and will sound an alarm if threatened. Their abandoned burrows can be homes for many other animals such as burrowing owls and snakes.

Marmots are the largest of the ground squirrels. They are stocky rodents with bushy tails about a quarter the length of their body. There are four species of marmots in BC. The hoary (*Marmota caligata*), yellow-bellied (*M. flaviventris*), woodchuck (*M. monax*) and Vancouver Island (*M. vancouverensis*).

The woodchuck (aka groundhog) is found in much of mainland BC but is generally absent from the Coast and dry grasslands of the Interior. The hoary marmot is typically found in mountainous areas throughout mainland BC while the Vancouver Island marmot is restricted to its namesake geographic range.

**Of the four species, yellow-bellied marmots (aka rockchucks) and woodchucks (aka groundhogs) are the ones most likely to be found in conflict as their ranges overlap dense human developments. Yellow-bellied marmots are well-adapted to living in disturbed sites.**

Their territory can extend two to three hectares around several summer burrows. A colony may have 10 to 20 individuals. Like most marmots, they are diurnal but are most active in the mornings and late afternoons. Yellow-bellied marmots breed shortly after emerging from their dens and will give birth to an average of four young about one month later.



Clockwise from top left: hoary marmot, yellow-bellied marmot, woodchuck and Vancouver Island marmot.



## MARMOT FACTS:

- The Vancouver Island marmot is a species at risk with approximately 200 individuals in the wild.
- Marmot tracks show 4 toes in the front and 5 in the back.
- Marmots are generally herbivorous (plant-eating) rodents but will also eat insects, snails, bird eggs and other small animals.
- Marmots have many predators such as coyotes, wolves, bears, weasels and raptors. Young may be predated by snakes.
- All marmots are true hibernators and may take as little as one breath every few minutes. They may sleep as little as 3 months for woodchucks and as much as 8 for hoary marmots in the alpine.
- Marmots build elaborate burrows for denning and protection from predators. Abandoned marmot dens can be homes for other animals. Larger animals like coyotes and badgers may use them after expanding the openings.



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