EASY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA WINTER EAGLES LEASHED DOGS

The Squamish Estuary

Skwelwil'em: a 673 ha wildlife management area at the mouth of the Squamish River, home to Canada's largest gathering of wintering bald eagles.

DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH FIRST. This is not a navigation tool and must not be your only source. Confirm everything with the land manager.

DIFFICULTY
Easy
Flat shoreline and water

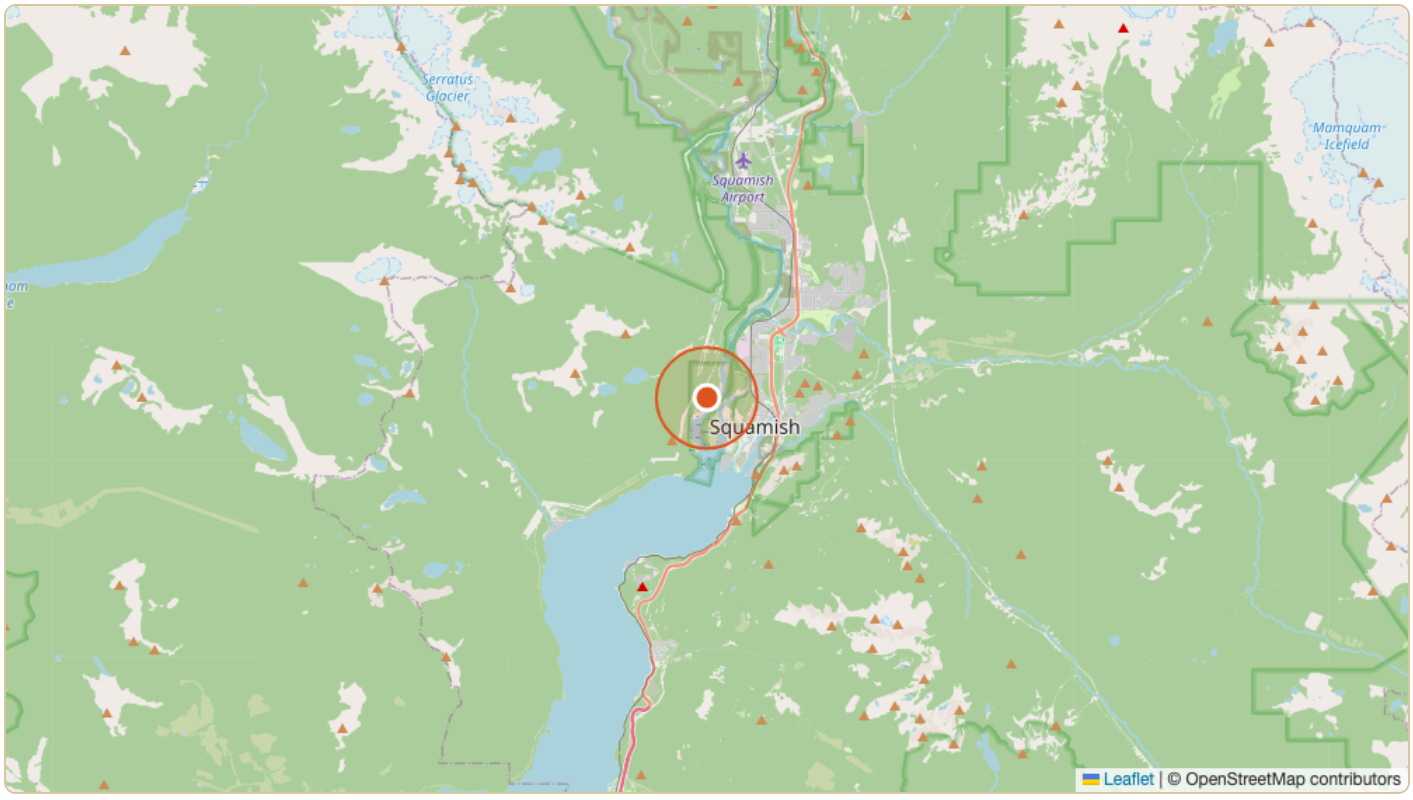
AREA
673 ha
Wildlife management area

EAGLES
Dec – Feb
Largest gathering in Canada

DOGS
Leashed
Wildlife Act

CAMPING & FIRES
Prohibited
Provincial notice

TIDES
Matter
See our tide guide



Approximate area only, not a trailhead or route. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Area	Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary WMA
Size	673 hectares
Eagles	Dec–Feb, spawning salmon
Dogs	Must be leashed
Camping & fires	Prohibited

Territory	Squamish Nation; co-managed

Overview

The Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary Wildlife Management Area covers about 673 hectares at the head of Howe Sound. It is on the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation, which is involved in managing it through the Squamish Estuary Management Committee, with enforcement by BC conservation officers.

From December to February wintering bald eagles gather on the estuary to feed on spawning salmon, in what sources describe as Canada's largest congregation of bald eagles.

Winter eagles · Leashed dogs · No camping or fires · Tidal

Visiting

Respect the place The estuary is a wildlife management area on Squamish Nation territory. Keep your distance from birds and stay on designated routes.

Tides The estuary is tidal. See our tide guide and Mamquam Blind Channel notes for paddling.

Birds See our birdwatching guide and the seasons guide.

Rules

Dogs The BC Wildlife Act requires dogs to be on a leash in designated wildlife management areas. Conservation officers and the District of Squamish patrol the area.

Camping, campfires, off-leash dogs A 2019 provincial release lists the Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary among wildlife management areas where camping, campfires and off-leash dogs are prohibited.

Eagles Wintering eagles are protected by the area's status, but people still need to keep their distance.

Questions

How big is the Squamish Estuary WMA?
About 673 hectares, according to Wikipedia and provincial sources.

Are dogs allowed?
Only on a leash. The BC Wildlife Act requires leashes in designated wildlife management areas.

When are the eagles here?
Wintering bald eagles gather from December to February to feed on spawning salmon.

Can I camp?
No. A 2019 provincial release lists the estuary among wildlife management areas where camping and campfires are prohibited.

Safety checklist

Tell someone your plan Leave your route, group size and expected return time with someone you trust, and check in when you are back. BC AdventureSmart (adventuresmart.ca) has a free trip-plan form.

Check conditions the same day Look at the weather, road and trail conditions, closures and (in snow season) the avalanche forecast on the day you go, not last week. Use the land manager's page for this guide.

Set a turnaround time Pick a time to turn back whatever happens, start early, and carry a headlamp. Most trips go wrong in the last hours of the day.

Carry the essentials Water, food, navigation (map and offline GPS), light, first aid, extra layers, sun protection, a whistle and fire or shelter. A phone alone is not a plan.

Emergencies Call 911. Cell coverage is unreliable or absent in much of the Sea to Sky backcountry, so consider a satellite messenger and know your location.

Water and wildlife Wear a life jacket on the water: cold water can disable you in minutes. Carry bear spray where bears are present, keep food secured and give wildlife space.

Sources & disclaimer

This guide draws on Wikipedia: Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary WMA; BC Government news release (2019); Squamish Trails: Estuary Trails.

Last checked November 18, 2026. Figures marked ≈ are approximate, and sources sometimes disagree. Always confirm with the land manager before you go.

Outdoor recreation involves risk, including serious injury and death. This guide is general information compiled from the public sources listed above and was last checked on November 18, 2026. Conditions, access, closures, fees and rules change, and some figures differ between sources. It is not a substitute for current information from the land manager, for proper skills, equipment and preparation, or for your own judgment. You are responsible for your own safety and decisions. To the extent permitted by law, Sea to Sky Trails and its authors accept no liability for loss, injury or damage arising from use of this guide.

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