

Appendix 11.9 IAATO Marine Wildlife Watching Guidelines



Introduction

IAATO's General Information for Wildlife Watching and related Guidelines aim to provide guidance to IAATO operators for viewing cetaceans, seals, and birds in their marine environment. These guidelines minimize potential environmental impacts to wildlife and suggest ways to comply with Annex II (Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora) of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The guidelines do not replace any domestic governmental laws, but provide an additional code of conduct to help reduce potential disturbance to the marine environment. Some countries have guidelines or regulations stricter than these, which may override IAATO's guidelines. Violation of national regulations may be punishable by fines, imprisonment and, in extreme cases, seizure of vessel. IAATO operators should be aware that compliance with the IAATO guidelines might be insufficient to prevent violation of, and penalties resulting from, national laws and regulations.



Compliance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea has priority over these guidelines at all times.

Are intended to be used by IAATO members operating:

- Any type of vessel e.g. ship, sailboat, yacht, Zodiac, small boats, kayak, etc. (Note: The use of jet- skis, surfboards or windsurfers should not occur in areas of known wildlife)
- By the officers, crew, expedition staff and visitors involved in navigating in wildlife-rich areas during viewing sessions

The Guidelines Aim to:

- Minimize wildlife disturbance;
- Protect cetaceans, seals and seabirds while ensuring a high quality wildlife-watching experience through responsible observation. (Many passengers are concerned about the welfare of wildlife and expect high standards of conduct by operators);
- Avoid harmful impacts on marine wildlife populations by ensuring that the normal patterns of daily and seasonal activity of the animals are maintained in the short and long term. Competent, careful boat handling avoids harming wildlife and leads to better wildlife watching.

Reduce Possible Impacts from Vessels

Possible negative impacts from vessel operations include physical injury, interference with or disruption of normal behaviour, stress, underwater noise and possibly increased exposure to predators.

In addition, animals could be exposed to increased levels of environmental contaminants such as oil from leaking outboard engines and discharged bilges.

The recommended guidelines will help minimize the level of potential disturbance and should prevent the following from occurring:



- Displacement from important feeding areas;
- Disruption of feeding;
- Disruption of reproductive and other socially important behaviours;
- Changes to regular migratory pathways to avoid human interaction zones;
- Stress from interaction;
- Injury;
- Increased mortality or decreased productivity/ survivorship (and therefore population decline).



Aircraft and Helicopter operations

- Aircraft (including helicopters) should follow the guidelines laid out in Antarctic Treaty Resolution 2 (2004) 'Guidelines for the Operation of Aircraft near Concentrations of Birds in Antarctica.'

Entanglement and strandings

- Any animals entangled in fishing equipment etc., should be assisted where possible. Please only use experienced staff/crew for these situations and take the necessary precautions such as protective clothing – seal bites are particularly prone to disease.
- Photographs of the entanglement should be taken. Please complete a report and send it to IAATO.
- Should you not be able to assist, please record details including geographic position (expressed as coordinates in latitude and longitude), species, and type of entanglement.

Please report the event as soon as possible, so assistance may be sought from other vessels with experienced staff onboard.

- Details of dead (floating) animals and 'strandings' (beached) cetaceans should be recorded and reported to IAATO. Where possible, please take photographs recording the front and side of the head of the animal (for species identification). Please include a scale of measurement (e.g., a ruler or Zodiac paddle) in the photographs. If the state of decomposition of the animal allows, please also take photographs of the fluke (tail) and the dorsal fin (if present) to allow recognition of potentially known individuals (i.e. using photo-identification).

Identification and data collection

Identifying and, in many cases, recording species for the voyage log purposes is part of most onboard naturalists' remit. Logs, which include these records coupled with latitude and longitude of sightings, species identification, and any additional information such as identification photographs, are of immense value. Information on citizen science projects collecting these data can be found through IAATO website or by contacting iaato@iaato.org



Appendix 11.9 IAATO Cetacean Watching Guidelines



General code of conduct around marine mammals:

	Stay with the animal up to a maximum time of one hour. If signs of disturbance or change in behaviour occur at any time during the stay with the animals, retreat slowly and quietly.
	Never herd (surround), separate or scatter a group of marine mammals, particularly mothers and young. Where appropriate, stay where they can see you. Never chase animals.
	When close to marine mammals keep voices low, don't whistle or shout.
	Keep radio volume down.
	Communicate with other boats to minimise disturbance to animals.
	Avoid sudden movements that might startle the animal.
	Never attempt to touch or feed animals.
	Playback of underwater sound of any kind should not occur. If hydrophones are used from small boats to listen to the underwater sounds it is preferable to have the engines of the small boats shut down.

General guidelines for viewing all marine mammals

- Marine mammals may approach vessels and if it wants to interact, it may stay with the vessel. This is when it is best for the vessel to drift passively, however, allowing a vessel to drift within acceptable distances to the animals could constitute an intentional approach.
- Do not chase or pursue animals.
- Animals may alter their behaviour if they are disturbed, when in doubt, err on the side of caution and give the animals time and space.
- Keep a watch for the following behaviour, which could indicate that the animal is agitated and no longer interested in staying near the vessel. Where this behaviour is noted, let the animal depart and when safe, move away slowly:
 - ▶ Changes in travelling directions
 - ▶ Regular changes in direction or speed
 - ▶ Moving away from the area
 - ▶ Apparent general agitation
 - ▶ Hasty dives
- Breaching, tail lobbing and flipper slapping may be an indication that the whales are socialising and may not be aware of boats. Keep your distance.
- If a cetacean approaches a vessel to bow-ride, maintain a relatively constant course and speed.



- Do not enter a group of dolphins to encourage them to bow-ride.
- If a cetacean surfaces in the vicinity of your vessel, take all necessary precautions to avoid collisions, while avoiding sudden changes in speed or direction. This may include, slowing down, slowly coming to a stop, and/or steering away from the animal.
- Be aware of other boats and obstacles, e.g. shorelines to ensure the animal is never boxed in. Ensure that travel and exit routes for the animal are clear and that a "Tunnel" of small boats does not form.
- When watching animals in the water, it is suggested that a maximum of two ships or 4 small craft are in zone 4 (200m) at any one time.
- Boats watching animals together should be next to each other to ensure the animals have a large open avenue to depart through.
- If Killer Whales approach Kayaks and begin spy hopping behaviour, ensure that safety small boats are close to the kayaks and consider transferring paddlers from kayaks to small boats.

Approaching whales in water

When approaching marine mammals in water

Zone 1 – 3000-1500m (2-1 mile) reduce speed to less than 10 knots and post a lookout for monitoring marine mammals.

Zone 2 – 1500-750m (1-1/2 mile) - reduce speed to 5 knots.

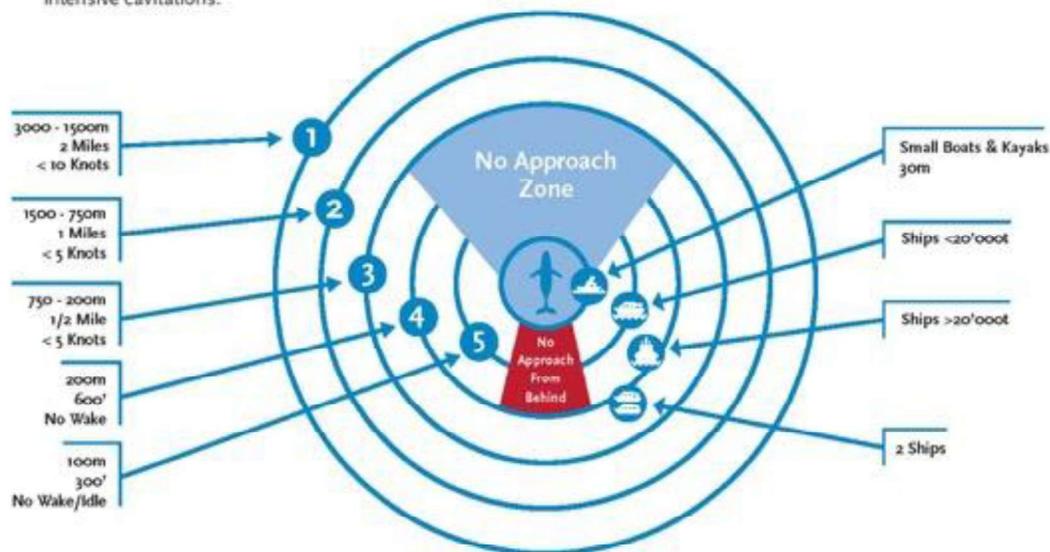
Zone 3 - 750m (1/2 mile) reduce speed to <5 knots, approach from sides.

Zone 4 – 200m (600 feet) go no faster than wake speed.

- ▶ Don't approach feeding baleen whales closer than 200m.
- ▶ Approach cetaceans from parallel to and slightly to the rear (4 or 8 o' clock position), not from the front or directly behind the animal.
- ▶ Attempt to stay downwind of animal.

Zone 5 – 30m (100feet) for small boats or 100m (300feet) for ships - Do not approach any closer.

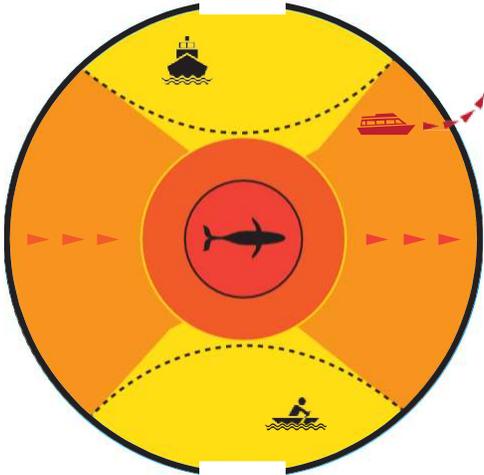
- ▶ Put engines in neutral and allow engine to idle without turning off.
- ▶ If you want to turn the engine off, first idle for a few minutes before turning off.
- ▶ Try avoiding abrupt changes in noise that may startle or disturb the animal, including excessive engine use, gear changes, manoeuvring or backing up to the animal.
- ▶ Avoid the use of bow or stern lateral bow thrusters to maintain position as these can produce high pitched noise and intensive cavitations.



Departure from whale watching in water

- Move off at a slow no-wake speed to 100m, avoid engaging propellers within the minimum approach distance if possible
- When moving away, avoid moving in front of the animal, always move towards the rear
- Do not chase or pursue departing animals

During the 2017 IAATO Meeting the new whale watching guideline was adopted and will be further integrated into the IAATO guidelines in due course.



Appendix 11.9 IAATO Seal Watching Guidelines



General code of conduct for viewing seals on land and ice:



When viewing seals do not surround or separate them, especially mothers and pups. Stay on the side where they can see you.



On beaches, avoid getting between seals and the sea, walk 'above' them.



Suggested minimum distances from seals ashore are 5-15 meters/ 16-50 feet – some species, or behaviors, require a further distance to be kept (see below).

Understanding seal behavior

Seals hauled out on land, rock or ice, are sensitive to boats and human presence. Noises, smells and sights may elicit a reaction.

Be aware of seal behaviour that indicates a seal has been disturbed. Such behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- An increase in alert or vigilance,
- Head turning
- Change in posture from lying to erect,
- Hurriedly moving away from the approaching vessel,
- Open mouth threat displays (e.g. such as in leopard seals on ice, or elephant seals on land),
- Aggressive displays or bluff charges in your direction.



Viewing seals on land and ice

- Try not to break their horizon or tower over hauled-out seals – stay low.
- Pups are often left alone when the mother is feeding. They are not abandoned and should be left alone and not touched.
- Any seal response other than a raised head should be avoided.
- If an individual or a herd moves towards the water or there is a hurried entry into the water by many individuals, you should retreat slowly and carefully.
- Be aware that fur seals and sea lions are highly mobile on land and might charge (and potentially bite) if approached too closely - keep at least 15 metres / 50 feet from them
- Be aware of animals in tussock grass areas. Ideally, a field guide should lead, carrying walking stick or equivalent.
- Keep a minimum distance from jousting bull elephant seals of 25 meters (82 feet).

Appendix 11.9 IAATO Bird Watching Guidelines



Viewing birds on shore

On approach to shore - birds such as penguins may be subject to disturbance by small boat operations close to landing sites or colonies.

- Approach or depart a landing site or colony slowly to minimize any disturbance.
- Staff/crew should assess the best landing point – ideally as far from groups of birds as possible.
- This is particularly important if birds are moulting near the shore.
- Avoid boat operations in waters where birds enter and exit, are bathing, or are feeding close to colonies.
- Be aware of birds in the water; slow down and/or alter course to avoid collision.

Once on shore

- Walk slowly and encourage passengers to simply sit and watch the animals.
- Avoid blocking 'walkways' in colonies and water entry and exit points.
- If parent birds are blocked from returning to their nests, increased predation of eggs and chicks may occur by skuas and gulls. In addition, parent birds will waste precious energy by avoiding human obstacles on their way to their nests or being displaced from the shortest access route.
- Take care in tussock grass where birds may be nesting, including in burrows under bare earth.
- If skuas (jaegers) or terns start dive-bombing, they may be protecting young or nests. Retreat in the direction you approached from. Be aware that eggs and young are well camouflaged and might be hidden from your view.
- Under no circumstances should 'chumming' (depositing fish guts or oil) occur to attract birds.
- Never feed wild birds.



Recommended approach distances to birds

- 5-10 meters/16-33 feet from nesting seabirds.
- Keep 10 meters/16 feet from nesting, and 25 meters/82 feet from displaying albatrosses.
- Southern Giant Petrels seem particularly prone to disturbance whilst nesting;
 - ▶ stay 25-50 meters/82-164 feet away, if possible.



Viewing Birds on water

Sometimes spectacular concentrations of seabirds may be found out at sea – rafts of birds either feeding on the surface, diving from it, or simply resting and bathing. Many of these birds may have flown hundreds or thousands of miles, often to find food for their young.

- Stay on the fringes of these concentrations.
- Ships should stay 100 meters/328 feet and small boats.
- Zodiacs 30 meters/98 feet away.



Very rarely, swimming penguins can find themselves in a small boat when they 'porpoise', landing on the deck. Occupants should remain quiet and wait for the penguin to find its own way over the side and return to the water. It is normally not necessary to assist.