



ARCTIC KINGDOM

Wildlife Policies – Code of Ethics & Safety

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Objective: To identify clear wildlife viewing and interaction procedures designed around 1) ensuring the comfort and protection of the wildlife and their habitat, 2) mitigating any risks associated to the viewing, 3) providing a unique viewing experience for Arctic Kingdom guests.

Note to reader: This communication is intended solely for the use of Arctic Kingdom staff. At no time are these documents to be shared or copied without the consent of the Field Planning Manager.

P.O. Box #6117, Iqaluit, NU, X0A 0H0, CANADA

Tel: +1 888-737-6818 Fax: +1 416 887 0529

www.arctickingdom.com

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Wildlife Code of Ethics

As wildlife viewers, our goal is to watch animals behaving in natural ways in their natural habitats. We respect the needs of wild animals for space, natural vegetation, and ecological community. We recognize our responsibility to know the consequences of wildlife viewing.

As guiding principles, we agree:

- To view or photograph from a distance that respects the needs of wildlife, using proper equipment such as binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses.
- Before approaching wildlife, we will first learn the spatial needs of each species and recognize their alarm signals and behaviours.
- To avoid noises or actions that might stress wildlife or cause animals to waste energy in unnecessary flight. To be patient, remembering that we are guests in wildlife habitat.
- To be especially sensitive to animals that are breeding, nesting, brooding or raising young, because parents and young are especially vulnerable at these times. We will learn the places and times to step back from these situations.

Viewing Wildlife Safely

- Wildlife viewers should always be concerned about their own safety as well as that of wildlife.
- Animals are unpredictable. Do not approach wildlife, large or small. View from a safe distance.
- Feeding wildlife is illegal and is a safety hazard to both people and wildlife.
- Bears are always unpredictable and dangerous. Become informed on safety in bear country.
- In marine habitats, be aware of many safety issues. Waves, tides, and tidal rips are hazards of particular concern.

Referenced Sources:

- *British Columbia Parks*

Whale Interactions

Watching undisturbed wildlife in its natural environment is a great experience and a primary goal on all Arctic Kingdom trips. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. To avoid any disturbances when we are around whales, we will abide by the following guidelines.

Observing Whales from a Vessel:

Close encounters with humans can disturb a marine animal's behaviour. Using binoculars to watch safely will also minimize disturbances and perceived threats. When watching marine wildlife, you should never:

- Get too close
- Approach too fast
- Make too much noise
- Approach using aircraft
- Touch, feed, or disturb an animal

We will adhere to the following industry standard guidelines when approaching whales by boat:

- Zone 1 (3000-1500m) – Reduce speed to less than 10 knots and post a lookout for monitoring marine mammals.
- Zone 2 (1500-750m) – Reduce speed to 5 knots.
- Zone 3 (750m) – Reduce speed to <5 knots and approach from the sides.
- Zone 4 (200m) – Go no faster than wake speed. For ships (>20,000t), do not approach closer than 200m.
- Zone 5 (100m) – For small boats or kayaks, do not approach closer than 100m.

Do not approach any closer. Do not approach feeding baleen whales closer than 200m. 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 it off. Try avoiding abrupt changes in noise that may startle or disturb the animal.

Additional guidelines for observing from a vessel include:

- When observing an animal from a boat, we will stay with a single animal up to a maximum time of thirty minutes.
- If signs of disturbance or change in behaviour occur at any time during the stay with the animals, we will retreat slowly and quietly.
- Approaches will be made downwind, if possible, only from the side and slightly to the rear (4 or 8 o'clock position) and never from in front or behind an animal.
- Stay on the inshore side of the whale when they're travelling close to shore
- There will be no attempts to herd, separate, scatter or chase an animal.
- When multiple boats are being operated, they will stay together and communicate with each other to minimize disturbance.
- If a whale approaches a boat and it wants to interact, it may stay with the boat. In these instances, when it is deemed safe, we will allow our boat to drift passively. We will not make attempts to drift within the minimal acceptable distances to the animals.

- If we are lucky enough to witness the social behaviour of breaching, tail lobbing and flipper slapping, understand that in these instances, whales may not be aware of our boats and thus will maintain a safe distance. We will be cognizant of obstacles, such as shorelines, to ensure an animal is never boxed in. We will ensure all animals have a wide berth and a clear exit.
- If Orcas (Killer Whales) approach kayaks and begin spy hopping behaviour (hold their heads of the water in order to visually inspect the environment above the water line), we will cease the activity and move paddlers to a safe location.
- We will not park our boat in their path
- We will not approach them when they're resting
- When observing whales from the floe edge, we will keep our noise to a minimum, making an effort to avoid sudden and loud noises that may startle an animal and change its course.

Animals may alter their behaviour if they are disturbed. We will keep watch for the following behaviour, which could indicate that the animal is agitated and no longer interested in staying close to our boat.

- Changes in travelling direction
- Regular changes in direction or speed
- Moving away from the area
- Apparent general agitation
- Hasty dives and/or frequently

Where this behaviour is noted, we will let the animal depart and when safe, move away slowly.

Observing Whales from in the Water:

Swimming, snorkelling or diving with whales is not permitted as per Canada's department of Fisheries and Oceans. If, while performing these activities, whales are observed in the area, the activity must be ceased and not restarted until the whales have left the vicinity.

DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

Referenced Sources:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Government of Canada.
- International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators
- US Fish & Wildlife

Polar Bear Interactions

Watching undisturbed wildlife in its natural environment is a great experience and a primary goal on all Arctic Kingdom trips. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. Polar bears are naturally curious and predatory, which are factors that increase risk to humans. To avoid disturbances or dangerous situations when we are around polar bears, we will abide by the following guidelines.

Most polar bears avoid people and have historically inflicted few human injuries and fatalities. However, the combination of curious and occasional sudden, aggressive behaviour creates the potential for human injury. In addition, polar bears spending extended periods of time on land without an adequate food source may be nutritionally stressed animals and potentially more dangerous. All trip participants will be fully briefed on polar bear safety prior to embarking on a trip.

Guidelines – Polar Bears on Land & Ice:

- We will not approach bears closer than 100m. If bears approach closer, that this distance, do not exhibit any signs of distress and the encounter is deemed safe and manageable by our lead Inuit guide(s), the encounter will be permitted to continue.
- We will make no attempt to herd, chase or separate any polar bears we encounter.
- We will attempt to stay downwind whenever possible and will not block their access to land, water or ice.
- A clear exit will always be available for both the bear(s) and the group of observers.
- When a bear is feeding on a carcass, we will keep our distance from the area and observe with binoculars or camera lenses so as not to elicit an attack by a bear protecting its food or cause it to abandon its hard-earned dinner.
- When viewing denning mothers and cubs, a minimum distance of 100m will be maintained to avoid disturbance during this sensitive period. Locations to view denning mothers and cubs are limited to designated areas. In Nunavut, we will notify the Department of Environment regarding newly identified locations for viewing mother and cubs.
- Trip leaders will always be vigilant while out on the land being aware of the areas that polar bears frequent.
- In fall, winter and early spring, caution will be exercised on the sea ice around the floe edge. Bears often hunt seals along the edge, open water leads and along pressure ridges. Bears and seals can also be found in places where the ice is thin and cracked, such as tide cracks in land-fast ice or at the toes of glaciers.
- During the ice-free summer season, polar bears can be found anywhere, but typically they hunt and scavenge along coastlines, beaches and rocky islands, and it is in these places where extra vigilance is required.
- When traveling to or from viewing sites, trip leaders will avoid approaching incidental young or baby polar bears encountered.

Guidelines – Polar Bears in the Water:

- Polar bears can swim long distances and are often very well hidden when in the water. Bears swimming with only their noses out of the water are virtually invisible and they can remain under the water for five minutes at a time. The best way to search for a polar bear in water is to look for their wake.
- Boat drivers must exercise extra caution particularly in ice-filled water.
- In large concentrations of ice, we will be particularly cautious when seals are hauled out on floating ice.
- Encounters with polar bears in water will reflect the size and mobility of the boat, the sea conditions, and the behaviour and stress level of the individual bear(s). Encounters will be brief and no longer than 10 minutes assuming the polar bear is in good condition and not over exerted. The trip leader or lead guide may choose to be more conservative regarding the distance and duration of the encounter.
- In cases where there is both a mother and cub observed in the water, no approach will be made.
- Motorized boats will maintain a distance of 100m from any polar bear in the water.
- Boats will never come between a bear and the shore or nearby ice floe.
- If a bear is sighted while kayaks are in the water, it is our policy to cease the activity and move all paddlers to a safe location as quickly as possible.

Polar Bear Behaviour:

Be aware of bear behaviour. Since individual animals' reactions will vary, we will carefully observe all animals. Polar bears that stop what they are doing to turn their head or sniff the air in our direction may have become aware of our presence. These animals may exhibit curious, threatened or predatory behaviour.

- Curious polar bears typically move slowly, stopping frequently to sniff the air, moving their heads around to catch a scent, or hold their heads with ears forward.
- A threatened or agitated polar bear may huff, snap its jaws together, stare at you (or object of threat) and lower its head to below shoulder level, pressing its ears back and swaying from side to side. These are signals for immediate withdrawal. If ignored, the polar bear may charge. Threatened animals may also retreat, withdraw, or run away.
- Predatory behaviour may involve a polar bear that is sneaking or crawling up on an object it considers prey. Another form of predatory behaviour is a bear that is approaching in a straight line at a constant speed without exhibiting curious or threatened behaviour. This behaviour is indicative of a bear about to attack.

It is Arctic Kingdom's policy to make every effort to view bears without disturbance. If bears are alerted to our presence, groups can continue to observe if the bear is exhibiting curious behaviour. If an animal exhibits threatening or predatory behaviour and our group is away from camp, we will retreat slowly and remove the group from the area. In some cases, deterrents may need to be used.

If the bear is approaching camp or a group, trip leaders and local guides will follow this procedure:

1. Make sure everyone is aware there is a bear in the area and gather everyone together.
2. Use noise deterrents to encourage the bear to turn around and choose a different direction, such as a loud voice, air horns, whistles, revving of an engine, or using noise makers such as blanks, bangers or screamers.

3. If the bear continues to approach and is close enough, fire non-lethal shots at the ground near the bear or at the bear itself. Bean bag rounds, lead shot or rubber slugs can be used.
4. When it is determined that people are in immediate danger, lethal shots may be required.

On most of our trips, the level of escalation and the subsequent action taken will be determined by our trip leader and senior local guide. All staff and trip participants will follow their instructions. Let the wildlife come to you. Let them define how comfortable they are in coming close.

DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

Referenced Sources:

- *Parks Canada*
- *Recommendations from Inuit guide partners in Nunavut*
- *Bear Safe Planning Training (Derrick Pottle - Nunatsiavut)*

Seal Interactions

Watching undisturbed wildlife in its natural environment is a great experience and a primary goal on all Arctic Kingdom trips. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. To avoid any disturbances when we are around seals, we will abide by the following guidelines.

Guidelines:

- Be cautious and quiet during all interactions.
- Try not to break their horizon or tower over the hauled-out seals – stay low.
- When viewing seals, do not surround or separate them, especially mothers and pups. Stay on the side where they can see you.
- Avoid getting between seals and the sea.
- Seals hauled out on ice are sensitive to the noises, smells and sights from human presence, which may elicit a reaction. Pay attention and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
- Do not approach within 10m of an adult seal. They can be very aggressive, especially when protecting their young.

Be aware of seal behaviour that indicates a seal has been disturbed:

- An increase in alert or vigilance
- Change in posture from lying to erect
- Hurriedly moving away from an approach
- Aggressive displays or bluff charges in your direction
- Any seal response other than a raised head should be avoided.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

Observing Seals from a Vessel:

When you encounter seals:

- Reduce boat speed, minimize wake, wash and noise then slowly pass without stopping
- Avoid approaching closer than 100 metres regardless of whether the seals are at sea or on land
- Avoid sudden changes of speed or direction
- Move away slowly at the first sign of disturbance or agitation as indicated above

You should not:

- Feed them
- Swim or dive with them
- Land on or near haul-out sites
- Move them, including seal pups

Referenced Sources:

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- Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Government of Canada
 - Chateau Madelinot Harp Seal Viewing Guidelines (Magdalen Islands)
 - International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators

Caribou Interactions

Watching undisturbed wildlife in its natural environment is a great experience and a primary goal on all Arctic Kingdom trips. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. To avoid disturbances to caribou, we will abide by the following guidelines.

All trip participants will be fully briefed on caribou viewing guidelines prior to embarking on a trip.

Guidelines – Caribou on Land:

- We will make no attempt to herd, chase or separate any caribou we encounter.
- We will avoid using motorized vehicles when caribou are sighted to minimize stress to the animal(s)
- We will attempt to stay downwind whenever possible and will not block their access to land or water
- A clear exit will always be available for both the caribou and the group of observers.
- When caribou are feeding or grazing, we will keep our distance from the area and observe with binoculars or camera lenses to minimize stress to the animal.
- When viewing caribou, a minimum distance of 100m will be maintained to avoid disturbance.

Guidelines – Caribou in the Water:

- Caribou will often swim long distances crossing lakes and rivers.
- Encounters with caribou in water will be avoided whenever possible. We will not approach swimming caribou.
- Boats will never come between caribou and the shore.
- If caribou are sighted while kayaks are in the water, it is our policy to cease the activity and move all paddlers to an alternate location as quickly as possible.

It is Arctic Kingdom's policy to make every effort to view caribou without disturbance. If caribou are alerted to our presence, groups can continue to observe if the caribou are exhibiting curious behavior. If an animal exhibits a flight response, we will retreat slowly and remove the group from the area.

We will let the wildlife come to us and let them define how comfortable they are in coming close.

DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any wildlife.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

References Sources:

Parks Canada

Recommendations from Inuit guide partners in Nunavut

Walrus Interactions

Watching undisturbed wildlife in its natural environment is a great experience and a primary goal on all Arctic Kingdom trips. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. To avoid any disturbances when we are around walrus, we will abide by the following guidelines.

Guidelines - Walrus on Land & Ice:

- Mothers with calves are much more sensitive to disturbance than bulls and stampedes may cause calves to be trampled resulting in injury or death. We will keep a minimum distance of 150m from mothers with calves.
- A minimum distance of 100m from a large group of mature walrus will be maintained at all times.
- A minimum distance of 100m from an individual or small group of walrus will also be maintained at all times.
- When our groups are travelling by boat, landing sites to visit large haul outs on land will be chosen downwind of the haul-out and will be a minimum distance of 300m from haul-out site.
- Groups of people or boats will approach from one side of the walrus group and stick together.
- Approaching walrus groups from various directions will be avoided.
- When approaching the animals, pay attention to the instructions given by your local guide and trip leader.
- They will instruct you to stick together and walk slowly, staying low or behind cover, if possible, while taking breaks and observing the reactions to our presence.
- Please keep your voice low and avoid any sudden or loud noises.
- Boat engines will run at a steady pace, avoiding sudden changes in speed.

Signs of disturbance may include:

- Several individuals raising their heads simultaneously
- Increased vocalizations
- Increased interactions among individuals in the herd
- Movement towards the water
- Hurried entry into the water

If signs of disturbance are noted, your local guide or trip leader will instruct you to slowly and calmly retreat.

Guidelines - Walrus in the Water:

- Walrus are very powerful animals and agile swimmers. Being in the water at the same time as a walrus is risky and considered very dangerous.
- For trips where snorkeling and kayaking are activity options, these activities will not be conducted when walrus are visible in the area. This includes areas where walrus are hauled out on land, as there are usually satellite animals in the water.
- If an activity has already commenced, it is our policy to cease the activity and move trip participants back to safety.

- Our boats will keep a steady speed in areas where walrus are swimming. In the event a walrus approaches one of our boats, we will slowly retreat, maintaining a safe distance. An overly curious or aggressive walrus may be dissuaded by using a paddle to push it away firmly on the nose.

Signs of disturbance while swimming may include:

- Rapid changes in direction or swimming speed
- Erratic swimming patterns
- Grouping up and head bobbing to investigate the source of the disturbance
- Escape tactics such as prolonged diving or rapid swimming at the surface
- Females attempting to shield a calf with her body or by her movements

If any of these behaviours are noted, our boats will retreat slowly and leave the immediate area.

DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

Referenced Sources:

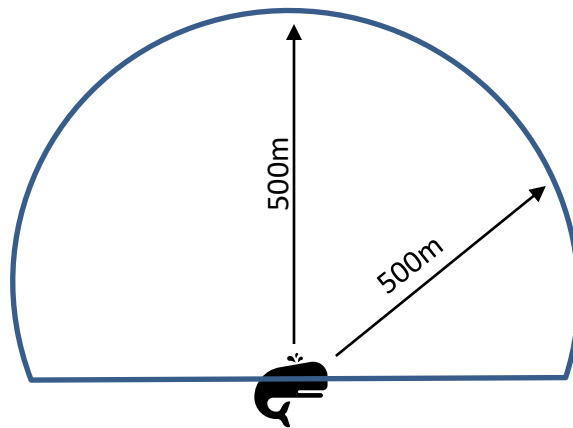
- *US Fish & Wildlife*
- *Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators*

Aerial Viewing

Viewing wildlife from the air provides a unique vantage point to see animals in their natural environment. This viewing can take place in both manned and unmanned aircraft. We expect all trip participants to follow the wildlife code of ethics and be responsible for their own safety. To avoid any disturbances when we are viewing animals from the air, we will abide by the following guidelines.

Guidelines – Helicopter:

- Maintain a minimum altitude of 500m
- Maintain a minimum horizontal radius of 500m



- Avoid buzzing, hovering, landing, taking off and taxiing near wildlife on land, ice or in the water. These activities are likely to cause stress.
- Never approach an animal head-on for the purposes of observation
- Never land on water for the purpose of observing a marine mammal
- Avoid camps, hunters or other groups on the land
- Avoid caribou calving grounds during calving season
- When flying for the purposes of filming or observation, always include a local guide as part of the helicopter team to provide information on known hunting areas to avoid and assess signs of wildlife disturbance.
- If any signs of disturbance are noted, move away from the observation area.

Guidelines – Drones:

- Maintain a minimum altitude of 100m
- Maintain a minimum horizontal radius of 100m
- Avoid buzzing and hovering near wildlife on land, ice or in the water. These activities are likely to cause stress.
- Never approach an animal head-on
- Avoid camps, hunters or other groups on the land unless you have permission
- If any signs of disturbance are noted, move the drone away from the observation area
- At any time, lead guides can ban the use of drones and this instruction will be followed.

ALWAYS FOLLOW the instructions of your local guide and trip leader. They are the most knowledgeable regarding animal behaviour and are there to keep you safe and ensure we have as little impact as possible.

Referenced Sources:

- *Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Northwest Territories*
- *NOAA, Alaska Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines and Regulations*

Notes:

- *Inuit Animal Harvesting: We position our trips in areas with large concentrations of wildlife. We use the most experienced local hunters as guides and occasionally find ourselves in the same areas as local Inuit hunting parties. We support the aboriginal right to hunt as part of a lifestyle that has supported the Inuit people over thousands of years in one of the harshest climates on earth. We enjoy the hospitality of the people of the North and have established valuable relationships of trust and mutual respect. Occasionally, on our trips, there may be hunting activity relatively near our activities. Participants should expect to see evidence of hunting within the local towns and surrounding areas.*
- *Professional photographers, filmmakers & scientists: We will evaluate needs and consult with local HTOs and applicable regulatory agencies for special permits to deviate from the tourism guidelines.*
- *These policies are updated based on current industry best practices, new legislation and community feedback.*