

Be Whale Wise

Guidelines for watching marine wildlife



Whale Watching:

1. BE CAUTIOUS and COURTEOUS: approach areas of known or suspected marine mammal activity with extreme caution. Look in all directions before planning your approach or departure.
2. SLOW DOWN: reduce speed to less than 7 knots when within 400 metres/yards of the nearest whale. Avoid abrupt course changes.
3. AVOID approaching closer than 100 metres/yards to any whale.
4. If your vessel is unexpectedly within 100 metres/yards of a whale, STOP IMMEDIATELY and allow the whales to pass.
5. AVOID approaching whales from the front or from behind. Always approach and depart whales from the side, moving in a direction parallel to the direction of the whales.
6. KEEP CLEAR of the whales' path. Avoid positioning your vessel within the 400 metre/yard area in the path of the whales.
7. STAY on the OFFSHORE side of the whales when they are traveling close to shore. Remain at least 200 metres/yards offshore at all times.
8. LIMIT your viewing time to a recommended maximum of 30 minutes. This will minimize the cumulative impact of many vessels and give consideration to other viewers.
9. DO NOT swim with or feed whales.

Porpoises and dolphins:

1. OBSERVE all guidelines for watching whales.
2. DO NOT drive through groups of porpoises or dolphins for the purpose of bow-riding.
3. Should dolphins or porpoises choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, REDUCE SPEED gradually and avoid sudden course changes.

Seals, sea lions and birds on land:

1. AVOID approaching closer than 100 metres/yards to any marine mammals or birds.
2. SLOW DOWN and reduce your wake/wash and noise levels.
3. PAY ATTENTION and back away at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
4. BE CAUTIOUS AND QUIET when around haul-outs and bird colonies, especially during breeding, nesting and pupping seasons (generally May to September).
5. DO NOT swim with or feed any marine mammals or birds.

Viewing wildlife within Marine Protected Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Reserves and Parks:

1. CHECK your nautical charts for the location of various protected areas.
2. ABIDE by posted restrictions or contact a local authority for further information.

To report a marine mammal disturbance or harassment:

Canada:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada:
1-800-465-4336

US:

National Marine Fisheries Service
Office for Law Enforcement: 1-800-853-1964

To report marine mammal sightings:

BC Cetacean Sightings Network
www.wildwhales.org or (604) 659-3429

The Whale Museum Hotline
(WA state): 1-800-562-8832 or
hotline@whalemuseum.org

OrcaNetwork
info@orcaneetwork.org

Need more information?

Canada:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Marine Mammal Monitoring Project (M3)
(Victoria and Southern Gulf Islands):
(250) 480-2656 or www.salishsea.ca

Straitwatch
(Johnstone Strait and Northern Vancouver Island)
www.straitwatch.org

US:

Soundwatch Boater Education Program
(Washington State, Haro Strait Region)
(360) 378-4710 or www.whalemuseum.org

NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region
www.nwr.noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries, Office of Protected Resources
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/MMWatch/MMViewing.html

