

# Be Whale Wise

## Marine Wildlife Guidelines for Boaters, Paddlers and Viewers *(Revised 2011)*

**ALERT:**  
Check out updated guidelines and new regulations!

Seeing killer whales and other marine wildlife in their natural environment can be a thrilling experience.

In our excitement, we sometimes forget that our presence has an effect on wildlife and their habitat. Just like us, marine animals need space to find food, choose mates, raise young, socialize and rest.

When we get too close, approach too fast, or make too much noise, we may be disrupting these activities and causing the animals unnecessary stress. In some cases, we may be threatening their lives. Set an example for others, and help protect our spectacular marine resources.

Be Whale Wise – Follow these guidelines and local laws in the presence of marine wildlife.

### Why do we need guidelines?

The diversity and complexity of marine life in the coastal waters off British Columbia and Washington is truly extraordinary.

It is a fragile world. Pollution, global climate change and other impacts are taking their toll at all levels of the coastal food web. Many species of marine wildlife, such as the endangered Southern Resident killer whales, are showing signs of vulnerability.

Meanwhile, vessel traffic in our waters is steadily increasing, placing added pressures on marine animals and their habitats.

### We need to minimize our impact.

These guidelines are designed to help you enjoy your wildlife encounter, and reduce the risk of disturbing marine wildlife.

### To report a marine mammal disturbance or harassment:

#### CANADA:

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

#### US:

NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement:  
1-800-853-1964

[www.bewhalewise.org](http://www.bewhalewise.org)

### To report marine mammal sightings:

BC Cetacean Sightings Network (BC)  
[www.wildwhales.org](http://www.wildwhales.org) or 1-866-1SAW ONE

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

Orca Network (WA state)  
[info@orcaneetwork.org](mailto:info@orcaneetwork.org) or 1-866-ORCANET

### Need more information?

#### CANADA:

Victoria and Southern Gulf Islands,  
Johnstone Strait and Northern Vancouver Island,  
West Coast Vancouver Island:  
Straitwatch  
[www.straitwatch.org](http://www.straitwatch.org) or 250-590-7723

Robson Bight (Michael Bigg) Ecological Reserve:  
[www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco\\_reserve/robsonb\\_er.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/robsonb_er.html)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada:  
[www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

North Island Marine Mammal Stewardship Association:  
[www.nimmsa.org](http://www.nimmsa.org)

#### US:

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

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:  
[www.wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/orca/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/orca/)

NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region:  
[www.nwr.noaa.gov](http://www.nwr.noaa.gov)

NOAA Fisheries, Office of Protected Resources:  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing.htm)

Pacific Whale Watch Association:  
[www.pacificwhalewatch.org](http://www.pacificwhalewatch.org)

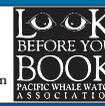


BCParks



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Pêches et Océans Canada



### Guidelines for whales, porpoises and dolphins:

1. BE CAUTIOUS and COURTEOUS: approach areas of known or suspected marine wildlife 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, porpoise or dolphin. Avoid abrupt course changes.
3. **KEEP CLEAR of the whales' path.** If whales are approaching you, cautiously move out of the way.
4. **DO NOT APPROACH** from the front or from behind. Always approach and depart from the side, moving in a direction parallel to the direction of the whales, porpoises or dolphins.
5. **DO NOT APPROACH or position your vessel closer than 100 metres/yards to any whale, porpoise or dolphin.\***
6. If your vessel is not in compliance with the 100 metres/yards approach guideline (#5), place engine in neutral and allow whales to pass.
7. **STAY** on the OFFSHORE side of the whales when they are traveling close to shore.
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, touch or feed marine wildlife.
10. **DO NOT** drive through groups of porpoises or dolphins to encourage bow or stern-riding.
11. Should dolphins or porpoises choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, avoid sudden course changes. Hold course & speed or reduce speed gradually.

### Killer Whales:

\* Killer whales have special protection in Canadian and U.S. waters. Be sure to educate yourself about new protections, including regulations with specific distances and recommendations for viewing killer whales.

### Seals, sea lions and birds on land:

1. BE CAUTIOUS AND QUIET when around haul-outs and bird colonies, especially during breeding, nesting and pupping seasons (generally May to September).
2. **REDUCE SPEED**, minimize wake, wash and noise, and then slowly pass without stopping.
3. **AVOID** approaching closer than 100 metres/yards to any marine mammals or birds.
4. **PAY ATTENTION** and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
5. **DO NOT** disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife, including seal pups. If you are concerned about a potentially sick or stranded animal, contact your local stranding network where available.

### Marine Protected Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Reserves & 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.

### The Laws:

Regulations in Canada and the U.S. prohibit the harassment and disturbance of marine mammals. Many species are threatened or endangered and subject to additional protections under the Endangered Species Act (U.S.) and the Species at Risk Act (Canada).

### Learn about and follow all local laws.

#### What is a disturbance?

Disturbance is when we interfere with an animal's ability to hunt, feed, communicate, socialize, rest, breed, or care for its young.

These are critical life processes, necessary for healthy marine wildlife populations.

### BE WHALE WISE!

**DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT MARINE WILDLIFE FROM HARASSMENT AND DISTURBANCE.**

**FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES AND ALL LOCAL LAWS .**

