

# 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 & 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](http://www.wildwhales.org) or  
(604) 659-3429

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

OrcaNetwork  
[info@orcaneetwork.org](mailto:info@orcaneetwork.org)

### Need more information?

#### Canada:

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

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

Straitwatch  
(Johnstone Strait and Northern Vancouver Island) [www.straitwatch.org](http://www.straitwatch.org)

#### US:

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

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

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

