



A Guide to Best Practice for Watching Marine Wildlife





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Contents

- Introduction 2
- What is disturbance? 4
- Best practice guidance for:
 - Whales, dolphins and porpoises 6
 - Basking sharks 16
 - Seals 24
 - Birds 32
 - Otters 42
 - Turtles 50
- Dealing with cumulative impacts 54
- Annex 1: Reporting and recording 58
- Annex 2: Other more specialist codes 62
- Annex 3: Further reading 66
- Acknowledgements 68



INTRODUCTION



The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code is designed to be simple and concise, and easily understood by anyone who may wish to watch marine wildlife. In practice, avoiding disturbance of marine wildlife is far from simple for example, what may be disturbing to an otter in the water may not be disturbing to a seal hauled out on the rocks. Some basic knowledge and understanding of different species groups is useful. This Guide seeks to address this need while at the same time offering more detailed advice on best practice for watching marine wildlife. It is important that anyone who watches marine wildlife on a regular basis, or who takes others out to watch marine wildlife, is familiar with this guidance.

This Guide is designed for those actively watching marine wildlife. It is intended to complement *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code*. The first section addresses the nature of “disturbance” and what it means in practice. The second section offers guidance on wildlife watching by major species groups: cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), basking sharks, seals, birds, otters and turtles. For each species group the status of some key species in Scotland is summarised; the kinds of disturbance that can occur and implications for the animals’ welfare are discussed; signs of stress or agitation are described; and sensitive times and places identified. Practical guidance is then offered on how to behave responsibly, in rather more detail than that provided in the Code itself. It also highlights the law as it applies to each group.

The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code deals mainly with minimising disturbance from individual encounters. There will inevitably be times and places where the number of encounters with wildlife increases to the point where the longer term well-being and survival of animals is compromised. We need mechanisms to deal with this. This Guide therefore also includes a section which provides information on **Dealing with cumulative impacts** through the development of local wildlife management initiatives and improved marine planning.

A set of annexes to the Guide provides additional advice on what to do if you encounter injured or stranded animals, reporting and recording your sightings of marine wildlife, and a list of more specialist codes of conduct and guidance targeted at particular users or species groups.

The better you know the animals, the better you will be able to avoid disturbance. Reading this booklet is a start, but do more. Learn as much as you can before you venture out. Ask local guides and other knowledgeable people about the wildlife itself and about sensitive times and places.

Knowledge makes wildlife watching more enjoyable for you and helps you to avoid disturbing the wildlife.



WHAT IS DISTURBANCE?

The *Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code* is primarily concerned with minimising disturbance. Different people interpret the word differently. A working definition has therefore been developed based on a review of literature, and on discussions with scientists, wildlife operators and other user groups.

The term “disturbance” as used in *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code* means:

The result of direct or indirect interaction with people that changes the behaviour of an animal or changes the environment, which in turn affects the well-being or survival of an animal in the short, medium or long term.

This might include, for example:

- Direct injury (collisions, propeller damage).
- Changes in distribution.
- Disruption of communication, migration, breathing, breeding, nursing, feeding or resting.
- Excessive use of energy and eventually loss of condition caused by continual or repeated avoidance or flight.

- Increased vulnerability of an individual or population to predators or physical stress.
- Damage to habitat.

Indicators of disturbance and stress are discussed in each of the species group sections below, but typically include signs of being startled (heads up, freezing, sudden diving, and swimming or flying away).

Many forms of disturbance will have little detectable impact on marine wildlife. However, several factors can transform what appears to be minor into significant disturbance:

- Repeated disturbance.
- Disturbance associated with large numbers of watchers.
- Disturbance at sensitive times or in sensitive places.

There is now a substantial body of evidence to show that disturbance can have serious long term impacts – to the detriment of the animals themselves, to the wildlife watching business, and to future generations.



WHALES, DOLPHINS AND PORPOISES



Twenty-one species of whales, dolphins and porpoises (collectively known as **cetaceans**) have been recorded in Scotland over the last hundred years. Of these, seven species are relatively common: the harbour porpoise; the bottlenose dolphin; the white-beaked dolphin; the common dolphin; the Risso's dolphin; the killer whale; and the minke whale. However, if you are lucky you could see several other species, especially as you go further offshore. The waters around Scotland are amongst the finest in Europe for whale watching.

Why we need to be careful

In places where whale watching has become very popular whales, dolphins and porpoises can suffer. They may use a good deal of energy interacting with humans – or avoiding them. The presence of boats can disrupt communication, make them move more, feed less, rest less and nurse their calves less. All of these may affect an animal's well-being or survival.

In some cases cetaceans may simply move away – to the detriment of wildlife business and recreational water users alike. There is some evidence from around the world that dolphins and whales choose to avoid boats and swimmers.

Direct boat impacts

Collisions are not uncommon with all types of vessel, and some cetaceans show scarring caused by propellers. Calves can be separated from their mothers, especially if there are several boats around. Animals can feel trapped if they are surrounded in any way, or feel hunted if they are being actively followed.

Noise

Noise is usually thought of as a form of disturbance, but some noise is not necessarily a bad thing. It warns the animals that you are coming, and lets them know where you are. This in turn can reduce the chances of the animals being startled.

Sound is the primary sense used by cetaceans to interpret their environment. It is essential for communication, feeding and navigation. Engine and other noise may interfere with communication between animals, and drown out sound from predators or prey. In severe cases resonance may occur in the balance organs causing disorientation or injury to the ear. Porpoises in particular may avoid boats with echo sounders.

Different species of cetaceans are sensitive to different types of sound. Much engine noise is actually below the hearing range of small cetaceans, but high pitched noises – mainly associated with



speedboats and jet skis, or with “cavitation” associated with damaged or incorrectly specified propellers – may be disturbing. Whales are more sensitive to the low frequency sounds usually produced by boat engines.

Speed

Collisions can occur. Speed increases the likelihood of collisions and the severity of injury. Noise and other forms of disturbance may also be associated with increased speed. Most codes of conduct recommend less than 6 knots as an appropriate speed when close to marine animals. However, there are occasions when boats travelling faster than this are approached by dolphins or whales, in which case the recommendation is to maintain a steady speed and course.

Feeding

Feeding cetaceans is not recommended for several reasons:

- The animals may seem tame but become aggressive close up and potentially harmful.
- They may become dependent on feeding – and therefore vulnerable when it is no longer available.
- The food offered may be unsuitable.
- They learn to come too close, risking collision and propeller damage.
- There may be transmission of disease between humans and cetaceans.

Swimming

Swimming with cetaceans is not considered best practice. There are several good reasons for this:

- If people are swimming close to marine animals, support vessels are likely to be operating close to them also, and the risk of general disturbance, collision and propeller damage is increased.
- Cetaceans are wild animals and therefore potentially dangerous. They have been known to bite and butt people.

- Swimming is likely to increase the time that people spend with cetaceans and increase the chances of significant disturbance through cumulative impacts.
- There may be transmission of disease between humans and cetaceans.



Signs of disturbance

The most obvious sign of disturbance is if the animals move away, but there are more subtle signs:

- Sudden and erratic movements (although these may also be associated with play or feeding).
- Bunching together.
- Tail or head slaps on the water surface.
- Changes in diving behaviour and less frequent surfacing.
- Changes in breathing patterns.
- Increased vocalisation (which you will be able to hear if you have a hydrophone).
- Aggression directed at watchers or at each other.



- Females manoeuvring to shield their calves.
- Increased swimming or travelling speed.



Sensitive times and places

Most cetaceans range over very large areas. At certain times of year they may aggregate to take advantage of abundant food supplies. The length of breeding cycles and seasonality of breeding varies between species but areas used specifically for breeding have not been identified in Scottish waters. Cetaceans should therefore be considered as being particularly sensitive whenever young are present.

How to watch whales, dolphins and porpoises responsibly

Remember that there are lots of good places around Scotland's coast to sit and watch cetaceans. You do not have to go out in a boat. However, to ensure good views, it is important to use binoculars or a telescope.

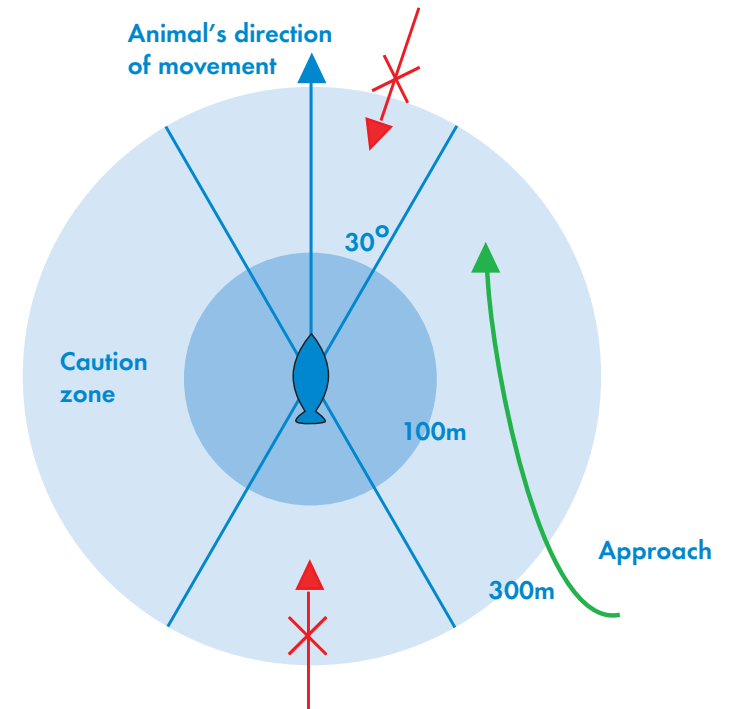
In some places there are local wildlife management schemes or initiatives aimed at protecting particularly vulnerable species or populations. Make yourself aware of these and follow their guidance.

The key to good practice when watching cetaceans on the water is the manner of the approach and behaviour while watching the animals. Distance is an issue, but specifying exact distances is problematic, not least because distances are difficult to judge on the water, and whales and dolphins often actively approach vessels.

The key is to let the animals decide how close they want you and to have a good encounter – one which is enjoyable for you and non-threatening or invasive to the animals. There are times when cetaceans will appear not to be disturbed by your presence, and other times when it is best to leave them alone.

Always approach cautiously. In practice this means slowing down to less than 6 knots when you are a good distance away - at least 300m though some recommend as much as 1km. This is sometimes referred to as the *caution zone*.

Figure 1: Recommended approach to moving animals



Once in the caution zone, do not approach directly. This is more threatening to the animals, and they are more likely to move off. Approach at an oblique angle (see Figure 1) and keep above the recommended minimum distance. If animals are moving in a consistent direction, maintain a steady parallel course.

Do not approach from directly behind, and do not cut them off by moving across their path.



Do not go too close. Use your judgement according to species and circumstance and the behaviour of the animals. Widely accepted *rules of thumb* for minimum approach distances are:

- 50m for dolphins and porpoises;
- 100m for whales;
- 200-400m for mothers and calves, or for animals that are clearly actively feeding or in transit.

However, these must be applied flexibly according to circumstances. Factors to consider are listed in Box 1.

If you find yourself unexpectedly close to whales, slow down or stop and allow them to pass. Put the engine into neutral to ensure there is no danger of propeller injury. Remember to have a good look around before re-engaging the propellers.

Box 1: How close? Factors to consider

- Are there any signs of agitation?
- The size of your vessel and the number of people watching.
- The number of other vessels.
- Are there mothers and calves in the group? They may be nursing.
- Are you particularly vulnerable (e.g. in a kayak or on a jet ski)?
- Are they used to being watched? Are they accustomed to your boat?
- Are they clearly going somewhere or doing something (e.g. feeding, nursing, resting) and are you about to get in the way?

If dolphins or other cetaceans approach your vessel and bow ride, maintain a steady course and speed, and remain vigilant. Try not to present propellers to approaching animals.

Never chase them. If they move off faster than you, they probably don't want you around.

Be predictable. Minimise changes in direction, speed, gear or engine noise so that the animals are not surprised or startled. Avoid turning a motoring boat stern-on to a group of cetaceans, as they may be startled by the sudden increase in propeller noise or come too close to the propellers.

If you are in a sailing vessel try to *minimise sudden snatching and flapping sails* and be particularly careful to keep your distance and avoid collision – without engine noise the animals have fewer clues as to your whereabouts.



Be particularly careful not to interfere with *mothers and calves* and never separate them.

Don't crowd them. It is not possible to say how many vessels are acceptable near whales and dolphins, but a rule of thumb is probably a maximum of two at any one time within the *caution zone*, as long as they keep to one side and do not encircle the animals. It is important for boat operators to communicate with each other to ensure orderly watching and minimise any negative interactions.

Do not feed whales, dolphins or porpoises.

Swimming with cetaceans is not recommended for your own safety and that of the animals. If you are diving or snorkelling and have a chance encounter, follow the relevant *Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code* user code and do not directly approach cetaceans.

Minimise your time with the animals. This allows others to watch as well, while reducing the total amount of disturbance. Again there is no science to help here – it all depends on the species, the nature of the encounter, whether the animals are used to the presence of boats, the number of vessels present and the intensity of the “watching pressure” over the longer term. A good rule of thumb is 15 minutes if there is more than one boat and 30 minutes if you are alone. *But if at any time you see signs of agitation or stress depart as slowly and carefully as you arrived.* Make sure you take a good look before making any change of direction. There may be animals all around you.

Avoid flash photography, especially at close range. Flash is rarely needed but is a default setting on many modern cameras. Check your settings before your trip.

If you own a boat, *keep the engine and propellers well maintained* to minimise noise. If possible fit a propeller guard. This is not always possible or suitable for some vessels and engines, but if you are a regular whale watcher it should be considered.

Neither fixed wing aircraft nor helicopters should be used for whale watching. Never “buzz” them. Keep a minimum of 1000ft altitude when over cetaceans, as long as it is safe and legal for you to do so.

The law

Cetaceans are offered protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, as amended, and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It is an offence:

- to deliberately or recklessly capture, kill, injure or disturb any whale, dolphin or porpoise;
- to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any whale, dolphin or porpoise;
- to deliberately or recklessly harass any whale, dolphin, or porpoise.

Bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise are both listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive 1992 as species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). All whales, dolphins and porpoises are listed on Annex IV as species of community interest in need of strict protection, referred to as European Protected Species.

For more information on which species are protected please contact SNH for a copy of the booklet *Wildlife, the Law and You*.



BASKING SHARKS



At up to 11 m in length the basking shark is the largest fish in UK waters, and the second largest fish in the world. Basking sharks are seasonal visitors, mainly along the west coast in the summer months near tidal fronts where mixing water generates the abundant plankton (tiny plants and animals that drift freely in water) on which they feed. Sightings usually peak around August – but are very variable depending on the whereabouts and amount of food.

Basking sharks are usually observed moving slowly at or near the surface, and can usually be distinguished from cetaceans by the lack of surfacing and diving and the oddly shaped tail, which often appears above the water.

Why we need to be careful

Basking sharks are long-lived and don't breed until they are around 20 years old. They are slow moving and appear to be relatively unaware of other water users. This combination makes them vulnerable, and historically it has taken a long time for over-exploited populations to recover.

Basking sharks can weigh up to seven tonnes, so collisions can result in serious injury to both parties. Users of personal water craft and RIBs (rigid inflatable boats) should be particularly vigilant, irrespective of whether or not they are specifically seeking or watching them.

Swimming

Swimming with basking sharks is not recommended. There are several good reasons for this:

- If people are swimming close to marine animals, support vessels are likely to be operating very close to them also, and the risk of general disturbance, collision and propeller damage is increased.
- Basking sharks are wild animals and potentially dangerous.
- Swimming is likely to increase the time that people spend with basking sharks and increase the chances of significant disturbance through cumulative impacts.

However, if you do swim with basking sharks follow the guidance offered in *How to watch basking sharks responsibly*.

Signs of stress and disturbance

The most obvious sign of disturbance is if a basking shark dives, in which case you are too close and should move away. Individuals will usually resurface quickly and continue feeding. Keep your distance to avoid basking sharks performing multiple dives.

You should also watch out for tail lashes. Most of the time basking sharks' movements are fairly predictable, but sudden movements of



the tail may indicate that they are about to breach. For your own safety you should make sure that you keep clear.

Sensitive times and places

Basking sharks are usually seen in Scottish waters between May and October, with a peak in August. They occur mainly along the west coast, although sightings appear to be increasing in waters around the Shetland Isles.

Basking sharks often aggregate at the surface in a number of discrete areas. Particular care should be taken here, as they represent areas in which the sharks gather to reproduce as well as feed.



How to watch basking sharks responsibly

The key to good practice on the water is the manner of approach and your behaviour while you are watching the animals. Distance is an issue, but specifying exact distances is problematic, not least because distances are difficult to judge on the water. The distance will also vary depending on the amount of plankton in the water; when basking sharks are busy feeding in dense plankton they do not appear to react as readily to the presence of boats.

The key is to *let the animals decide how close they want you*, and to have a good encounter – one which is enjoyable for you and non-

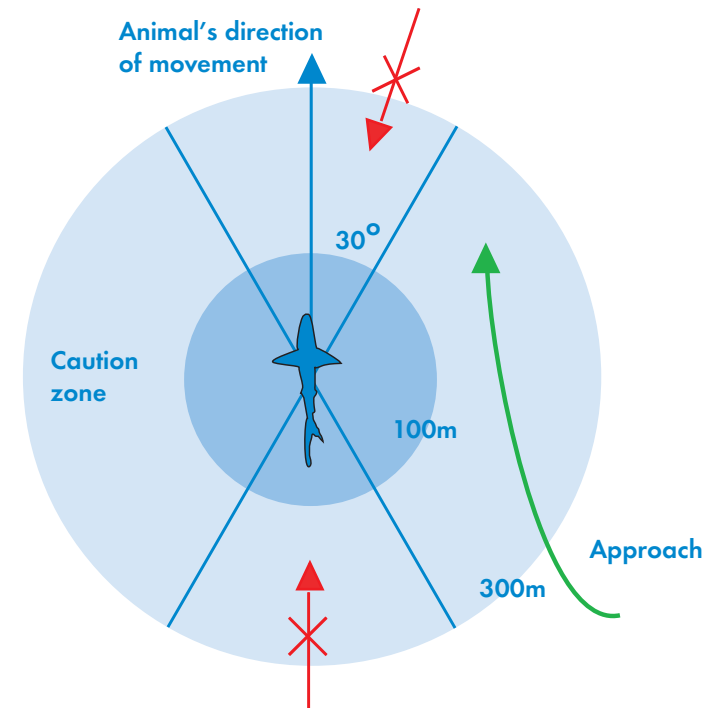
threatening or invasive to the animals. There are times when basking sharks will appear not to be disturbed by your presence, and other times when it may be best to move away or keep your distance, such as when breaching is observed or groups are present.

Always approach cautiously. In practice this means slowing down to less than 6 knots when you are a good distance away at least 300m but up to as much as 1 km. This is sometimes referred to as the *caution zone*.

Once in the caution zone, *do not approach directly.* This is more threatening to the animals, and they are more likely to move off. Approach at an oblique angle (see Figure 2) and keep above the recommended minimum distance. If a shark or sharks are moving in a consistent direction, maintain a steady parallel course.

Do not approach from directly behind, and do not cut them off by moving across their path.

Figure 2: Recommended approach to moving animals



Box 2: How close? Factors to consider

- Are there any signs of agitation?
- The size of your vessel or the number of people watching.
- The number of other vessels.
- Are young present?
- Are you particularly vulnerable (e.g. in a kayak or on a jet ski)?
- Are they used to being watched? Are they accustomed to your boat?
- Are they clearly going somewhere or doing something (e.g. feeding, resting) and are you about to get in the way?

Do not go too close. A widely accepted *rule of thumb* for minimum approach distance is 100m. However, this must be applied flexibly according to circumstances. Factors to consider are listed in Box 2.

If you find yourself unexpectedly close to sharks, slow down or stop and put the engine into neutral to ensure there is no danger of propeller injury. Remember to have a good look around before re-engaging the propellers.

When groups are in sight, beware of others close by and under water.

Avoid disturbing dense groups of sharks, particularly where animals are swimming very close together nose to tail, as you may disrupt courtship behaviour.

Do not approach areas where basking sharks have been observed breaching.

Never chase them. If they move off faster than you, they probably don't want you around.

Be predictable. Minimise changes in direction, speed, gear or engine noise so that the animals are not surprised or startled. Avoid turning a motoring boat stern-on to a group of sharks, as they may be startled by the sudden increase in propeller noise or come too close to the propellers.

If you are in a sailing vessel try to *minimise sudden snatching and flapping sails* and be particularly careful to keep your distance and avoid collision – without engine noise the animals have fewer clues as to your whereabouts.

Don't crowd them. It is not possible to say how many vessels are acceptable near basking sharks, but a rule of thumb is probably a maximum of two at any one time within the *caution zone*, as long as they keep to one side and do not encircle the animals. It is important for boat operators to communicate with each other to ensure orderly watching and minimise any negative interactions.

Do not feed basking sharks because they feed on plankton – tiny plants and animals that drift freely in water.





If you are diving, snorkelling or swimming, follow the **In the sea** user code in *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code* and do not directly approach basking sharks. In addition follow the advice offered in the *Basking Shark Code*:

- Restrict the number of swimmers in the water at any time to four.
- Avoid entering the water if visibility is less than four metres.
- Groups of swimmers should stay together and ideally remain at the surface.
- Maintain a distance of at least four metres from the animal and be wary of the tail.
- Do not try to touch the sharks.
- Avoid flash photography.
- Do not use underwater propelled devices.

Minimise your time with the animals. This allows others to watch as well, while reducing the total amount of disturbance. Again there is no science to help here – it all depends on the nature of the encounter, whether the animals are used to the presence of boats, the number of vessels present and the intensity of the “watching pressure” over the longer term. A good rule of thumb is 15 minutes if there is more than one boat and 30 minutes if you are alone. But if

at any time you see signs of agitation or stress depart as slowly and carefully as you arrived. And make sure you take a good look before making any change of direction. There may be animals all around you.

Avoid flash photography, especially at close range. Flash is rarely needed but is a default setting on many modern cameras. Check your settings before your trip.

If you are aboard your own boat, *keep the engine and propellers well maintained* to minimise noise.

If possible *fit a propeller guard*. This is not always possible or suitable for some vessels and engines, but if you are a regular wildlife watcher it makes a lot of sense.

Neither fixed wing aircraft nor helicopters should be used for watching basking sharks. Never “buzz” them. Keep a minimum of 1000ft altitude when over basking sharks, as long as it is safe and legal for you to do so.

The law

Basking sharks are offered protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It is an offence:

- to deliberately or recklessly capture, kill, injure or disturb any basking shark;
- to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any basking shark;
- to deliberately or recklessly harass any basking shark.

For more information on which species are protected please contact SNH for a copy of the booklet *Wildlife, the Law and You*.



SEALS

There are now more seals in Scotland than anywhere else in Europe. We have more than a third of the world's grey seal population, and more than half of the European population. We have around 5% of the world population of common (or harbour) seals and more than a third of the European sub-population.

Grey seals breed on wave-exposed rocky coasts, sometimes on sand or shingle beaches at the foot of cliffs, often on relatively remote islands. Large groups of pregnant females return to traditional breeding sites in the autumn to give birth. They disperse once the breeding season is over. The pups have white hair that thins steadily over the first three weeks of life.

Common seals prefer more sheltered waters, and adults are more faithful to a particular range. Females usually give birth in shallow water, sometimes on land in early summer.

Why we need to be careful

Seals are naturally curious animals, sometimes slipping into the water to come and have a closer look. They represent a tremendous resource for wildlife tourism, and a means to reconnect people with nature. Unnecessary disturbance undermines the opportunities – by making seals more nervous, and in turn more easily disturbed. So it is in both in our interests and theirs, to be as careful as possible.

If you get too close to pups they may get frightened and the mothers agitated. Susceptibility to disturbance is site specific – a relatively close approach may be tolerated at one site while at an adjacent site there may be no tolerance at all. You should always be alert to signs of stress before individuals start to move away – or show aggression.

Pups can be separated from their mothers at sea or on land. Apart from the stress this will cause, it may reduce nursing times and affect the survival of the pup. Equally, pups are often left alone while their mothers forage out at sea, and a lone seal pup may be distressed by people close by and move to a new location, making it difficult for the mother to find.

When hauled out along the coast, seals may be disturbed by being closely approached from the sea or land, including by people on foot. In practice, however, much will depend on the situation and location, and the degree to which the seals are used to the presence of humans. Seals do get used to visitors, and indeed learn to recognise particular boats.

The distance at which seals show signs of agitation varies tremendously, depending on the location, the type of approach, whether the animals are used to being watched and whether or not they have pups with them.



Signs of disturbance

When alarmed, seals resting on rocks or the shore may stampede into the water. This undoubtedly constitutes disturbance and should be avoided whenever possible.

If the seals slip gently into the water one by one, this may be just curiosity – to get a better look at you; but it may be to ensure that they are safe and that you are not threatening. In most cases this is not a problem, although it may become so if seals are repeatedly leaving their haul-out sites as a result of disturbance.

Greater caution is required where adults and pups are together, especially on the shore. While they may not appear to be upset by your presence, this may simply be because it is difficult for them and their pups to move.

Sensitive times and places

Seals spend a large proportion of their time in the open sea, but come ashore to pup, moult and rest.

Common seals produce their pups in early summer, (June to July) and may be encountered at sea or on sandbanks or rocks throughout the summer, especially during their annual moult in August. Grey seals produce their pups in autumn (October to December) at traditional breeding sites, and the pups stay ashore for

several weeks. Adults and pups disperse in the spring, often once the moult is completed, post-weaning.

Nursing mothers with pups tend to be found in relatively isolated locations, and boats venturing into these areas should take particular care.



How to watch seals responsibly

In some places there are local wildlife management schemes or initiatives aimed at protecting particularly sensitive animals. Find out about these and follow their guidance.

The key to good practice when watching seals is the manner of the approach and behaviour while watching the animals. Distance is an issue, but specifying exact distances is problematic, not least because these are difficult to judge, and seals sometimes approach vessels.

The key is to let the *animals decide how close they want you to be*, and to have a good encounter – one which is enjoyable for you and non-threatening to the animals.

Do not approach directly, whether they are on land or at sea. Approach at an oblique angle and stop or pass by at a reasonable distance. On land, don't creep up silently and directly towards them; they may be startled when they finally do see you.

Box 3: How close? Factors to consider

- Are there any signs of agitation?
- The size of your vessel and the number of people watching.
- The number of other vessels, groups or individuals watching.
- Are there mothers and pups in the group? They may be nursing.
- Are you particularly vulnerable (e.g. in a kayak or on a jet ski)?
- Are they used to being watched? Are they accustomed to your boat?
- Are they clearly going somewhere or doing something (e.g. feeding, nursing, resting) and are you about to get in the way?

Use your judgment to decide how close to go according to circumstance and experience, and be responsive to the behaviour of the animals (see Box 3). When one or two heads come up, that's close enough. If several scramble into the water, that's too close. In some cases seals have become habituated to the presence of people and some boats in particular, and relatively close approaches may be possible without undue disturbance. Always remember that the best way to get close is by using binoculars.

On land and especially at breeding colonies, keep your distance and *don't touch or feed*. Seals can move surprisingly fast even on land and may bite if they feel threatened.

Never separate pups from mothers, and leave lone pups alone. The mother may only be foraging for food.

Don't stay too long. Other people may wish to see them, and they need some peace.

Avoid flash photography, especially at close range. Flash is rarely needed but is a default setting on many modern cameras. Check your settings before your trip.

Don't crowd or encircle them. If there are other boats or other people on foot keep to the same side of the animals and leave them an escape route to the sea.

Remain as quiet as possible and avoid sudden movements.

Never land or camp near a haul-out site or at a breeding colony.

If you are exploring the coastline seriously, or intend to camp on remote beaches, ask around locally (wildlife operators, SNH) before you go, and put a map together of places to go and places to avoid.

Neither fixed wing aircraft nor helicopters should be used for watching seals. Never "buzz" them. Keep a minimum of 1000ft altitude when over colonies or groups of seals as long as it is safe and legal for you to do so.



The law

The Conservation of Seals Act (1970) protects grey seals during a close season from 1 September to 31 December and common seals from 1 June to 31 August. It is an offence to take or kill any seal except under licence during these periods, which coincides with their respective pupping seasons. The Act also prohibits certain methods of taking or killing seals including poisons and inappropriate firearms.

Conservation Orders may be made under the Conservation of Seals Act which effectively extend close season restrictions on taking or killing seals, except under licence, in the area and period covered by the Order.

Both species are listed as protected species under Annex II and Annex V of the EC Habitats Directive 1992. Species listed on Annex II are those considered to be of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Species listed on Annex V are those whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures. Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) this has been transposed as a list of prohibited indiscriminate methods by which seals may not be taken or killed.

For more information on which species are protected please contact SNH for a copy of the booklet *Wildlife, the Law and You*.



BIRDS



Scotland is an exceptional place to watch seabirds, waders and waterfowl. Almost six million seabirds nest on our sea cliffs in summer. We are host to more than half the world's great skuas, almost half the world's northern gannets and one third of the Manx shearwaters. We also hold more than 10% of the European or Atlantic populations of seven other species.

Many species of seabird have stable populations or are increasing in numbers, but the picture is not universally positive. Some seabird populations in the Northern Isles, for instance, have suffered severe declines in recent years.

Eighteen species of wader regularly over winter in Scotland. Some of these such as black-tailed godwit and curlew are increasing in numbers but others appear to be in decline. These include knot and bar-tailed godwit.

Scotland also supports internationally important populations of overwintering ducks, swans and geese, many of which frequent our shores and estuaries. Although the populations of some species have increased since the mid-1970s others, such as pintail duck, red-breasted merganser and goosander are declining.

In recent years many visitors to the west coast have been fortunate to see the white-tailed sea eagle, which was re-introduced to Scotland in the 1970s and 1980s. This bird has a wingspan of over 2m and is

the fourth largest eagle in the world. It has bred successfully since the mid-1980s and there are now around 20 pairs.

Why we need to be careful

Many birds are well used to the presence of humans and live in harmony with them. But as more and more people venture out on the water and visits to isolated islands increase, birds may be subject to higher levels of disturbance. This applies in particular to breeding sites, which may be on cliffs, in burrows or directly on the ground either hidden in vegetation or in the open but well camouflaged.

Possible direct and indirect impacts of people on birds include:

- Disturbance at breeding grounds resulting in delayed and less successful breeding, reduced fledging weight, and lower juvenile survival.
- Increased destruction or predation of eggs or chicks when parent birds are flushed, or death of eggs due to exposure.
- Attraction of potential predators such as gulls through food litter.
- Introduction of non-native or feral predators such as mink and rats.
- Changes to breeding habitat, such as loss of cover or erosion.



- Disturbance at a colony site leading to desertion by all or part of a breeding population.

Burrow nesting species (such as Atlantic puffins, shearwaters and petrels) are vulnerable to trampling and burrow collapse, and disturbance when they arrive and leave burrows – for shearwaters and petrels this is typically at dawn and dusk. Many burrow nesters are especially vulnerable because they lay only a single egg with a long incubation period. Burrows may be in use for three to six months.



Ground nesting species (such as terns) are sensitive to approach, and will leave the nest readily. If this happens regularly, they may abandon disturbed sites if others are available. Seabirds may also shift to less favourable zones within a site if the previously favourable areas are disturbed too often. The “critical approach distance” at which breeding seabirds will leave the nest varies from species to species, and also depends on how accustomed the birds are to people, but is typically 50-150m and up to 300m for very sensitive species.

The effects of disturbance on feeding depend much on the species. Larger birds such as northern gannets feed their chicks around twice per day whilst terns are fed as often as every hour. Disruption of feeding may have serious effects particularly on chicks that require more frequent feeding.

Many birds feed in flocks or groups, and when a patch of food has been found – a shoal of fish for example – they will gather from far and wide. If you frighten the birds away – or the fish on which they are feeding – they may not get a similar chance for some time.

Birds offshore, whether alone, in small groups or large rafts may also be vulnerable. In addition to feeding they may be engaged in other essential activities – rest, preening, courtship and moulting.

Signs of stress and disturbance

Birds at sea will usually paddle gently away from an approaching boat or swimmer. If you get uncomfortably close, birds will begin to paddle more rapidly, typically turning their heads from side to side to keep you in view before finally taking off or diving. If you are a wildlife watcher and this happens, clearly you have been too close!

Birds on the land typically take off as you approach and usually settle again behind you as you pass. Some birds make a loud alarm call and may circle a nest site calling repeatedly or become aggressive, diving at anyone considered to be too close. Others may remain on the ground in an attempt to draw you away from the nest by pretending to be injured, the so called “broken wing” display. If this happens, you are obviously too close to a nest site. Some birds will lie low and freeze until the last possible moment, offering little warning of disturbance and reinforcing the need for vigilance.

Signs of imminent flight by cliff nesting birds include head turning, bobbing and wing flapping. If you go any closer or create further disturbance they are likely to leave their nests.

Sensitive times and places

The seabird breeding season is typically from April to mid-July, although burrow nesting Atlantic puffins, shearwaters and petrels may not fledge and leave their burrows until August.

The effects of disturbance at the time of courtship can be particularly severe, disrupting the whole breeding cycle. Abandonment of nests tends to occur more often earlier in the breeding season, before the chicks have hatched. Disturbance when chicks are close to fledging may also be severe as older chicks will disperse from the nest and even jump from cliff ledges when disturbed.





There are particularly sensitive times at most seabird colonies when disturbance can have more serious effects:

- late afternoon and early evening;
- during the hottest part of the day;
- during wet and/or cold weather;
- on moonlit nights;
- when eggs or chicks are in their nests.

Birds are also vulnerable during the winter when disturbance of feeding or roosting can be costly. They are often more prone to disturbance whilst at their roosts and extra care should be taken when approaching them. In the winter birds need to conserve their energy to keep warm. If disturbed they may have to expend more energy getting away from you than they are able to replace, especially if their food is covered by the high tide. When seriously disturbed, some wader flocks may simply continue to fly throughout high tide, using precious energy.

Birds at sea may be engaged in a variety of activities, including rest, feeding, preening, bathing and courtship. In summer they may be moulting and unable to fly e.g. the large groups of eider seen in coastal waters in summer.

How to watch birds responsibly

In some places there are local wildlife management schemes or initiatives aimed at protecting particularly vulnerable species or populations. Find out about these and follow their guidance.

How you approach and how close you can go without causing significant disturbance depends on the species, local circumstances, and how used to people the birds are. Some birds, such as nesting terns, are very sensitive and disturbance may make them abandon a nest site altogether. Puffins are sometimes more tolerant and may approach and leave burrows in the close presence of humans, although you should be wary of collapsing burrows and avoid walking through colonies.

Where possible:

- Use binoculars or a telescope.
- Understand the birds' situation and behaviour and recognise signs of stress. If you seem to be disrupting their behaviour in any way, back off.
- Use bird hides or observe from a vehicle or boat.
- Approach birds slowly, and if on foot adopt a prone position whilst observing.



Be careful that the size of your group does not in itself disturb the birds, particularly if they are not used to people watching them.

Dogs often cause alarm to birds so if you do take your dog with you keep it under close control.

Avoid flash photography, especially at close range. Flash is rarely needed but is a default setting on many modern cameras. Check your settings before your trip.

Be very careful not to leave any litter, and don't leave food "for the birds". It is likely to attract predatory gulls and do far more harm than good.

Neither fixed wing aircraft nor helicopters should be used for watching birds. Keep a minimum of 1000ft altitude when close to colonies or large aggregations of birds.

Birds on the shore

Try to establish what the birds are doing. If they are feeding or resting try to keep at least 50m away. If they are moving, try not to deflect them from their path – move in the same direction parallel to the birds.

Be alert to the possibility that birds may have eggs or young – and these may be on the shore, in the dunes or in adjacent grassland. Some parents may show signs of alarm, for example a loud call and agitated circling flight. Others give no warning until seconds before flight.

Look around to determine where the birds are – don't separate young from parents. You may disturb some birds unwittingly while carefully watching another group.

Don't get close to areas where you know birds nest. You may inadvertently trample on nests as both eggs and chicks can be extremely well camouflaged.

Try to keep at least 200m from colonies of ground nesting birds such as terns.

Box 4: How close? Factors to consider

- Are there signs of agitation?
- Are they breeding, feeding or roosting?
- Are they accustomed to you, your group or your boat?
- How big is your group or vessel, and how many others are around?

Birds at sea

Reduce speed to less than 6 knots as you approach. We recommend a minimum approach distance of around 50m, although this may be varied according to species and circumstance.

Birds nesting on cliffs

If you are watching from a boat, reduce speed to the minimum compatible with safety as you approach. We recommend a minimum approach distance of around 50m, although this may be varied according to species and circumstance (see Box 4). If you go too close and cause panic departure, eggs or chicks may be dislodged from nesting sites.

Birds nesting in burrows

Look out for and keep your distance from burrows. If you walk over an area with burrows you may cause them to collapse, and you may deter birds from entering or leaving the burrows. Please follow any agreed information aimed at avoiding damage and disturbance. In some cases and/or at certain times of year this may include keeping to specific routes to protect the burrows.

The law

Birds are offered protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It is an offence:

- to kill or injure, take or keep any bird or its egg;
- to take, damage, destroy or otherwise interfere with any bird's nest whilst it is in use;
- to intentionally or recklessly disturb or harass any specially protected bird at its nest, or its young before they are wholly independent;
- to obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest;
- to interfere with the nest or nest sites of the white-tailed sea eagle at any time;
- to harass the white-tailed sea eagle at any time.

For more information on which species are protected please contact SNH for a copy of the booklet *Wildlife, the Law and You*.



OTTERS



Otters in Scotland

The Eurasian otter, also known in north-west Scotland by their Gaelic names *Dobhran* and *Beaste Dubh* (black beast) belongs to the same family as badgers, weasels, stoats, pine marten and mink.

The species is found throughout much of Europe and Asia and part of North Africa. Following a major decline in the UK as a whole in the 1960s and 1970s, otters have recovered and have now re-colonised most of their original range. Otters in the northern half of Scotland were not affected by this decline and the region has remained a long-term stronghold for the species. Otters hunt in both fresh water and sea water, so the Scottish coastline, with a mix of sea and freshwater lochs and rivers is ideal for them. In 2003 the total Scottish population was estimated at around 8000.

A male otter can grow to at least 1m and weighs about 9kg. They have a long tail thick at the base and tapering to the end, which is used for steering and balance when swimming. They swim very flat on the water surface and when diving for prey the long tail flips over and can be seen clearly. Otters have a high-pitched squeak or whistle when calling to other otters and a "whickering", loud angry chatter when threatening. When on land otters run with a lolling gait, holding their tail off the ground.

Otters are territorial and their territories can be as small as 1-3 km of shoreline in the best coastal habitats, and 20-30 km or more in length along rivers and lakes. Males occupy larger territories than females and frequently overlap the territories of more than one female. They live on land and will shelter in a "holt" – a hole or hollow under tree roots, in a peat bank, under rocks, or even in an old rabbit warren. Above ground resting sites known as "couches" are also commonly used.

The diet of otters in coastal habitats comprises mainly fish and crabs, but they will eat birds and small mammals if their preferred prey is scarce. In freshwater areas, amphibians can form an important component of their diet, especially in the spring. On catching a small fish in the sea the otter may tread water and eat, this is sometimes mistaken for "lying on its back" but is actually more vertical in the water. It will carry larger prey to shore to eat.

Why we need to be careful

The otter is listed in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red Book as 'vulnerable to extinction'.

The main threats to otters in Scotland come from humans, through incidental capture in fishing gear and lobster creels and from being hit by vehicles when crossing roads. In some areas otters have

suffered from contamination with pesticide residues and heavy metals, although this is far less of a problem than it was formerly.

Otter populations build up slowly and take time to recover. The average life expectancy in the wild is only 3-4 years and they first breed when they reach two years old. Typically one to three young are born in a litter, but not all survive to adulthood. Cubs become independent at around 18 months.

Signs of stress and disturbance

The most obvious sign of disturbance is if the animals move away – in which case you have failed as a wildlife watcher in any case. The first sign of disturbance is "head up" behaviour. If in water the otter will stop swimming to raise itself higher out of the water whilst looking around and even at you. The otter may dive then disappear from view. If on land, the animal's first reaction is again "head up" when disturbed. If under stress when on land the animal may vocalise by "whickering" its threatening call. In either situation back off. You may have disturbed a female with dependent cubs hidden nearby. If you hang around she may abandon them.



Sensitive times and places

There is no set breeding season and cubs can be born at any time of the year, although in Shetland there is a peak in births during the summer months. In other areas a peak in births has been observed in the winter. It depends on the availability of food.

Females with cubs are extremely sensitive to disturbance, so look out for these at any time of year.

Holts and couches may not be noticed and can be damaged easily.

How to watch otters responsibly

In some places there are local wildlife management schemes or initiatives aimed at protecting particularly vulnerable populations. Find out about these and follow their guidance.

The key to good practice when watching otters is the manner of the approach and behaviour while watching the animals. Distance is an issue, but specifying exact distances is problematic because they are difficult to judge, and because circumstances vary enormously (see Box 5). For example, females with cubs will be much more alert, cautious and vulnerable to disturbance. The key is to be quiet and still, and to let the animals decide how close they want you to be.

Box 5: How close? Factors to consider

- Are there signs of agitation? If you see "head up" behaviour do not attempt to get closer.
- Are they with young?
- Are they accustomed to you, your group or your boat?
- How big is your group or vessel, and how many others are around?

Otters' strongest senses are those of smell and hearing. Otter eyesight is better underwater than above but they do have good visual memory of their territories so camouflage and remaining below the skyline is essential.

Females with cubs are extremely vulnerable to disturbance. If a female is aware of you, back off. Do not attempt to follow if she moves away. Do not get between mother and cubs and do not attempt to approach cubs.



If you are camping look out for otters and their paths and holts. In coastal areas, otter paths can be very obvious. They are typically 12-15cm wide, often marked with otter droppings (spraints) and run from the seashore inland into areas of dense vegetation or to freshwater pools. Avoid camping near these paths, if possible, as they comprise the otters' main routes to the water.

To minimise disturbance:

- Remain quiet and keep your distance; use binoculars.
- When watching from on land, move only during the otter's hunting dive. This is usually between 10 and 20 seconds but sometimes as much as 60 seconds.
- If you see any signs of agitation stop moving or back off quietly. Do not attempt to follow if the animal moves away from you.

- Do not get between mother and cubs and do not attempt to approach cubs.
- Do not encircle or entrap – if there are several groups or boats, keep to the same side of the animal.
- If you are camping look out for otters and their holts and avoid camping near their main route to water.

If you follow this simple guidance, you will be able to see otters behaving normally in their day-to-day activities, and your encounter may be prolonged and memorable.



The law

Otters are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). It is an offence to:

- intentionally or deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or take an otter;
- deliberately or recklessly disturb an otter, (whether in its place of shelter or not);
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to an otter shelter or breeding site (whether intentionally, deliberately, recklessly or not).



Holts and couches are protected whether or not an otter is present.

Otters are listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive 1992 as a species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Otters are also listed on Annex IV as species of community interest in need of strict protection, referred to as European Protected Species.

For more information on which species are protected please contact SNH for a copy of the booklet *Wildlife, the Law and You*.



TURTLES



Turtles in Scotland

Five of the world's seven species of marine turtle have been found in UK and Irish waters, but they are rarely seen.

The leatherback turtle is the largest of the seven marine species of turtle and is the most widely distributed reptile in the world. It nests on tropical beaches but forages in tropical and temperate waters, feeding mainly on jellyfish. It is easy to identify because of its large size, the black coloration with white spots, and the pronounced longitudinal ridges along the back. They are spectacular animals and the largest specimen ever recorded stranded on a Welsh beach in 1988, weighed 960 kg and was 2.9m in length.

Unlike other turtle species, the leatherback is able to feed in cooler waters as it is better able to control its body temperature. The large adults are regular migratory visitors to the coastal waters around the UK and Ireland and most sightings occur in late summer and autumn. Peak numbers occur in August. Juvenile leatherback turtles are not recorded in UK waters and tend to be restricted to warm climates with sea surface temperatures warmer than 26°C.

While in UK waters, leatherbacks are known to feed on species such as moon jellyfish, compass jellyfish, lions-mane jellyfish, blue jellyfish, mauve stinger, barrel jellyfish and sea firs.

The leatherback population foraging in UK waters is probably of mixed genetic stock. Adult leatherback females tagged at the French Guiana rookeries have been recorded in the waters off France, Spain and Morocco, and one was washed up dead at Carmarthen Bay, Wales, in 1997.

Three other species of marine turtle have also been recorded around Scotland: the loggerhead, Kemp's ridley and green turtles. The hawksbill turtle has been recorded off southern Ireland. Unlike the leatherback, the occurrence of these latter species in Scottish waters is not a normal part of their life history - they are effectively strays. UK waters in general, and Scottish waters in particular, are too cold for them.

Although numbers of marine turtles occurring around Scotland are relatively low, they are likely to be very under-recorded because they are hard to spot. Until recently, there was no co-ordinated recording effort. However, from the mid-1990s this changed with the introduction of Scotland-wide, and then UK and Ireland-wide turtle recording schemes. Between 2002 and 2004 there were 28 records of marine turtles in the waters around Scotland.





Why we need to be careful

Turtle populations worldwide are declining and we need to protect them. In UK waters turtles are at risk from:

- Marine litter, especially plastic, which turtles mistake for jellyfish. Once swallowed, plastic can block a turtle's gut leading to starvation. Fishing gear discarded at sea may also entangle and kill turtles.
- Boat collisions. Turtles often bask on the surface and also need to surface to breathe, leaving them vulnerable to boat strike.

Signs of disturbance

Leatherback turtles will dive rapidly if approached too close or at speed.

How to watch turtles responsibly

If you encounter a healthy turtle at sea, don't chase or harass it in any way. Be aware also that they have very powerful flippers, and can bite. Don't follow the turtle if it swims away. If you don't know what sort of turtle it is and you have a camera, without getting too close, take a photograph for identification and report your sighting to Scottish Natural Heritage.

The law

Turtles are offered protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. It is an offence:

- to deliberately capture, kill, injure or disturb any marine turtle;
- to possess or trade dead turtles or their shells unless they were lawfully acquired.



DEALING WITH CUMULATIVE IMPACTS



Whenever you walk along a beach or go out in a boat you have the potential to disturb wildlife. Occasional disturbance is a perfectly natural part of life and its impact may be insignificant. As water sports and wildlife watching increase, however, there is the danger that repeated minor disturbance will begin to take its toll.

The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code deals mainly with minimising disturbance from individual encounters. We try to deal with cumulative effects by urging people not to stay with wildlife too long, especially when there are others who also wish to watch. But there will inevitably be times and places where the number of encounters with wildlife increases and does begin to have an effect on the well-being and survival of animals. And there are many other pressures from human activity which may add to the overall impact. We need mechanisms to deal with this.

The most appropriate mechanism will depend on local circumstances and will need to be dealt with at a local level. The Dolphin Space Programme in the Moray Firth is an example of a local initiative designed to address precisely this kind of situation. The bottlenose dolphins associated with the Moray Firth have become a significant tourist attraction, and although commercial wildlife boats make up a small percentage of total boat traffic in the area, local operators are careful. They undergo training, operate in prescribed areas, follow set routes, and follow a code of conduct at least as strict as

The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code in terms of approach behaviour, speed and distance. They, and the dolphins, need other water users to exercise the same care.

There are also particular locations – such as National Nature Reserves – which attract large numbers of tourists, where specific local guidance has been developed with the full support of local wildlife tour operators.

A range of different kinds of measures or protocols may be introduced at the local level, including, for example:

- Information and educational materials to raise awareness of marine life, both on and off site including information boards, leaflets and interpretation centres.
- Ranger services and reporting initiatives.
- Agreement on particular routes for boats or walkers observing marine wildlife – taking account of the interests of wildlife, the safety of the observers, and the interests of other groups.
- Provision of other supporting infrastructure such as hides.
- Permanent or seasonal exclusion zones to protect wildlife in critical places or at critical times.

- Minimum approach distances or other protocols appropriate to local circumstances, perhaps for particular species at sensitive times or places.
- Limits on the total number of boats, groups or individuals observing marine wildlife at any one time, or within a specified period, or at a particular location.
- Licensing schemes for commercial wildlife watching.
- Local bye-laws (which can be introduced by both local government and a range of public bodies) consistent with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.



Different stakeholders may see the need to initiate or facilitate measures or protocols:

- Commercial wildlife operators are often well placed to monitor and assess the need for local measures.
- Environmental NGOs, marine biologists, and members of the general public may also see the need or opportunity to initiate local management in response to particular issues.
- Recreational user group representative organisations would often wish to be involved, and have shown increasing interest and initiative in developing best practice initiatives.

- Firths Partnerships and Coastal Partnerships are well placed to facilitate marine management initiatives, especially where the number of stakeholders is large, and where there are differing perspectives.
- Local Authorities have a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further biodiversity and promote sustainable development, and may identify particular needs and opportunities.
- As the government's statutory conservation adviser, Scottish Natural Heritage has a role in promoting and advising on local conservation and sustainable development initiatives.

By working together, these various interests should be able to develop local management measures which ensure the health of the wildlife, the sustainability of the commercial wildlife watching sector, and enjoyable encounters with wildlife for many people now and in the future. The key to success in many cases will be to bring in a neutral but informed facilitator who can both drive the process and "broker" agreed measures and protocols.



ANNEX 1: REPORTING AND RECORDING



We can only look after our marine life and understand the impacts that we are having, if we understand the status and trends of populations. Wildlife watchers can provide invaluable information on these issues.

Reporting live stranded or injured marine wildlife

Emergency number for live, stranded marine wildlife, including cetaceans and turtles: Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 0131 339 0111 (www.scottishspca.org) or British Divers Marine Life Rescue 01825 765546 (www.bdmlr.org.uk).

In the case of a cetacean, having first contacted the Scottish SPCA, please call the Scottish Agricultural College's Veterinary Investigation Centre, Inverness, on 01463 243030. They are part of the National Whale Stranding Recording Scheme, which covers all cetaceans and turtles, and provides valuable national information.

Animals with tags should also be reported to the Sea Mammal Research Unit on 01334 462631 (www.smub.st-and.ac.uk).

Reporting dead animals

Please do report dead cetaceans, basking sharks, seals and turtles to the appropriate body, as below. They may wish to do a post-mortem.

Cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises) and basking sharks

Scottish Agricultural College Veterinary Investigation Centre, Inverness, on 01463 243030 or out of hours on 07979 245893.

Seals (especially with tags)

Sea Mammal Research Unit on 01334 462631 or at www.smub.st-and.ac.uk

Turtles

To the Scottish Agricultural College as above, and to Scottish Natural Heritage on 01463 725000. Dead turtles can also be reported to www.euroturtle.org/turtlecode

Birds

RSPB Annual Beached Bird Survey, last weekend in February, on 0131 311 6500 or www.rspb.org.uk



Recording schemes

Providing information on sightings to particular institutions or projects helps conservation, management, education and awareness raising. It also promotes identification skills.

Cetaceans

Seawatch on 01865 717276 or
www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/forms.htm

Basking sharks

Marine Conservation Society – records must be submitted via the internet at www.mcsuk.org/baskingsharks.html

European Basking Shark Photo-Identification Project at
www.baskingsharks.co.uk

Egg cases (skate and ray)

The Great Egg-case Hunt, Shark Trust on 01752 672020 or at
www.sharktrust.org/eggcase

Fish

United Kingdom Marine Fish Recording Scheme on 01752 275216
 or at www.national-aquarium.co.uk/fishreports

Jellyfish

Marine Conservation Society on 01989 566017 or at
www.mcsuk.org

Molluscs

Conchological Society Marine Recording Scheme on
 01483 417782 or at www.conchsoc.org/

Seashore wildlife

Porcupine Marine Natural History Society at www.pmnhs.co.uk

British Marine Life Study Society's Shorewatch on 01273 465433
 or at www.ourworld.comuserve.com/homepages/BMLSS

MarLIN at www.marlin.ac.uk

Turtles

Marine Conservation Society at www.mcsuk.org/ or on
 0131 226 6360

Birds

BTO reporting system for ringed birds, at
www.bto.org/ringing/ringinfo



ANNEX 2: OTHER MORE SPECIALIST CODES



The following codes are compatible with *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code*, in that they are at least as stringent. We have drawn on these existing codes to a great extent in drawing up the national code.

Some offer very specific advice for particular areas, particular users or particular species. To find a copy of these codes, or to find out more about the organisation promoting it, follow the contact details below.

Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators' Code of Conduct

Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators' Association
www.merger.demon.co.uk/smwoa

Dolphin Space Programme

DSP, PO Box 5890, Forres IV36 1WY (07921 106144)
www.dolphinspace.org

Basking Shark Code

Marine Conservation Society (01989 566017)
 The Shark Trust (01752 672020)
www.sharktrust.org

Minimising Disturbance to Cetaceans from Recreation at Sea

UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
www.defra.gov.uk

WDCS Cetacean Watching Code of Conduct

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (0870 870 0027)
www.WDCS.org

WiSe code

Shark Trust (01752 672 020)
 WiSe scheme, MER Consultants (01326 310313)
www.wisescheme.org

The Divers' Code of Conduct

British Sub-Aqua Club (0151 350 6200)
www.bsac.org

Sea Kayaking – A Guide to Good Environmental Practice

Scottish Canoe Association (0131 3177314)
www.canoescotland.com

The Underwater Photographers' Code

Marine Conservation Society (01989 566017)
 British Society of Underwater Photographers
www.bsoup.org

The Seashore Code

Marine Conservation Society (01989 566017)
www.mcsuk.org



Tayjet Dolphin, Whale & Porpoise Policy & Code of Conduct

Tayjet Personal Watercraft Club, 34 Dundee Road, Broughty Ferry,
Dundee DD5 1LX.

www.tayjet.com

The Turtle Code

Marine Conservation Society (01989 566017)

www.euroturtle.org

The Birdwatchers' Code

www.sbbo.co.uk

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Scottish Natural Heritage (01463 725000)

www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Best Practice Guideline: Watching Wildlife by Boat

Wild Scotland (01463 723013)

www.wild-scotland.co.uk



ANNEX 3: FURTHER READING



In drawing up *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code* and the accompanying guidance we drew heavily on the codes listed above, and the advice of people working with associated organisations. We also reviewed relevant literature from all over the world. The following are a few selected documents and resources which may be useful to those with a special interest in guidance and codes for wildlife watching.

American Birding Association. *Principles of Birding Ethics*.
www.americanbirding.org/abaethics.htm

Carlson, C., 2003. *A Review of whale watch guidelines and regulations around the world*. International Fund for Animal Welfare Yarmouth Port MA.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Marine Mammal Regulatory Consultations: Making Changes - Amending the Marine Mammal Regulations. Consultation Workbook. Submission by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

Hambrey Consulting. 2005. *The Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code. Position Paper*. May 2005.
www.marinecode.org/

Lien, J., 2001. *The conservation basis for the regulation of whale watching in Canada by the Department of Fisheries and oceans. A precautionary approach*. Canada Canadian Technical Report of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 2363.

National Marine Sanctuaries/National Ocean Service, NOAA. 2005. *Responsibly Watching California's Marine Wildlife: Draft Handbook for Ocean Users*.
sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/library/national/wwhandbook.pdf

Reid, J.B., Evans, P. and Northridge, S. 2003. *Atlas of Cetacean Distribution in Northwest European Waters*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Sustainable tourism Cooperative Resource Centre. *Green Guide to Whale Watching/Blue Seas/4WD tours/Scuba Diving Tours*. STCRC, Griffith University, Gold Coast, QLD, Australia.
www.crctourism.com.au

WBM Oceanics Australia & Gordon Claridge, 1997. *Guidelines for managing visitation to seabird breeding islands*, for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Westcott, S.M. and Stringell, T.B. 2003. *Field observations on the disturbance of grey seals in North Wales*, 2003 Marine Monitoring Report No: 15 CCW/Welsh Assembly

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SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

is a government body responsible to the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament.

Our mission

Working with Scotland's people to care for our natural heritage.

Our aim

Scotland's natural heritage is a local, national and global asset. We promote its care and improvement, its responsible enjoyment, its greater understanding and appreciation and its sustainable use now and for future generations.

Our operating principles

We work in partnership, by co-operation, negotiation and consensus, where possible, with all relevant interests in Scotland: public, private and voluntary organisations, and individuals.

We operate in a devolved manner, delegating decision-making to the local level within the organisation to encourage and assist SNH to be accessible, sensitive and responsive to local needs and circumstances.

We operate in an open and accountable manner in all our activities.

Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness
IV3 8NW

Tel: 01463 725000
www.snh.org.uk



PHOTOGRAPHS:

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