

# FEDERAL LAWS PROTECTING WILDLIFE

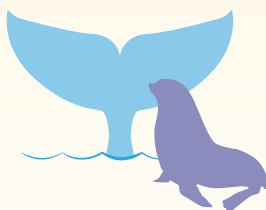
## Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)

This law prohibits actions such as feeding, hunting, harassing, killing, capturing, injuring, disturbing or changing the behavior of a marine mammal.

- For more information please visit:  
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/mmpa>

## Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The ESA protects all plant and animal species in danger of extinction. This law prohibits feeding, harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, collecting an endangered species or attempting to engage in any such conduct.



- For more information please visit:  
<https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/pr/species>

**IT IS ILLEGAL TO HARASS, PURSUE, FEED, HUNT, CAPTURE OR KILL WILD WHALES, SEALS AND SEA LIONS IN THE UNITED STATES.**

SOME EXCEPTIONS TO THIS EXIST FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FOR ALASKA NATIVE SUBSISTENCE HARVEST AND HANDICRAFT.

Please report violations to NOAA Fisheries Enforcement at: **(800) 853-1964**

Report stranded, entangled or injured marine mammals at: **(877) 925-7773**



**NOAA FISHERIES**  
Alaska Region

Alaska Regional Office  
<https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/>

## How to Observe Marine Mammal Behaviors and Minimize Your Impact

- Act with caution! Your actions should not cause a change in the behavior of the animals.



### Guidelines For Using Drones

- Take a precautionary approach and avoid flying drones in the vicinity of marine mammals. See:  
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/uas.html>

## How to View Marine Mammals From an Airplane or Helicopter

- Maintain a 1500-foot minimum altitude when viewing marine mammals from the air.
- Buzzing, hovering, landing, taking off, and taxiing near marine mammals on land or in the water is likely to harass the animals.



*Stay High and Fly By!*

## Additional Guidelines For Responsible Whale-Watching



Look for the Whale SENSE logo to choose responsible operators, and adopt Whale SENSE principles when operating your own vessel near whales.

- Use reduced vessel speed as you approach and depart whales.
- Limit time spent with mom-calf pairs and cooperative feeding groups.

**Each disturbance builds on the next. Whales need time and space to feed without disruption from vessels.**

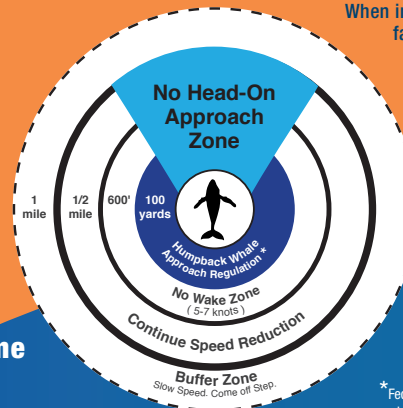
Please visit: <https://whalesense.org>

## HUMPBACK WHALE APPROACH REGULATIONS

### Alaska Humpback Whale Approach Regulations

Federal regulations require that you:

- Not approach within 100 yards of a humpback whale.
- Not place your vessel in the path of oncoming humpback whales causing them to surface within 100 yards of your vessel.
- Operate your vessel at a slow, safe speed when near a humpback whale.

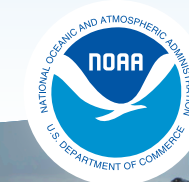


When in transit, stay as far as practicable from whales. When viewing whales, start slowing speed at 1 mile.

\* Federal regulations prohibit approaching humpback whales in Alaska closer than 100 yards.



# Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines for Alaska



**NOAA FISHERIES**

Alaska Region





**Alert!** Be cautious, slowly back up



**Disturbed** Back off slowly



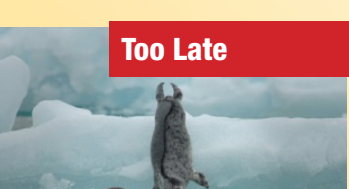
**Too Late**



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**Too Late**

## Seals and Sea Lions

**Give animals space. Move away at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.**

Seals and sea lions on land are easily disturbed and may change position, move away, flee, and trample or abandon pups. Animals may become stressed and repeated interruptions may be harmful to their health. It may not be possible to see these reactions; maintain your distance to make sure you are not disrupting their behavior.

**Be considerate of mothers and pups.**

Seals and sea lions come ashore to rest, regulate body temperature, and nurse their young. It is normal for mothers to leave pups behind while feeding offshore (up to 24 hours). Keep your distance so mom can return to care for her pup.

**Keep pets away and on a leash.**

Pets can disturb or harm wildlife, or may separate mothers from their pups. These are wild animals that can injure or spread disease to pets and humans.

**For your safety and the health of the animals.**

We recommend staying at least 100 yards away from all marine mammals on land and at sea. Observe carefully, as animals may be disturbed at even greater distances.

## Harbor Seals in Glacial Fjords

Voluntary guidelines to avoid disturbance to harbor seals in sensitive glacial habitats (all vessel types, year-round, as practicable):

- Strive to maintain 500 yds (about 0.25 mi) from seals without compromising safe navigation. Make an approach plan to avoid surprising seals. Be equally cautious when departing the fjord as arriving.
- Minimize wake, avoid abrupt changes in course or engine pitch, and avoid loud noises near seals. Consider avoiding use of PA systems.
- Minimize travel through thick ice, which serves as nursery habitat. The absence of seals on the ice doesn't mean the area isn't being used.
- When possible, target visits during early morning and evening hours when fewer seals are hauled out.

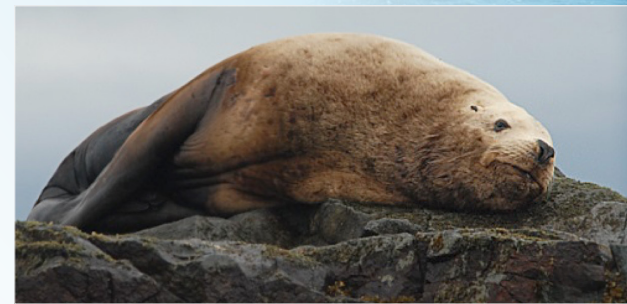
Area-specific protections: During pupping, from May 15-June 30, corridors for travel are recommended to minimize vessel overlap with seals in Disenchantment Bay (near Hubbard Glacier and Yakutat) and Tracy Arm (south of Juneau).

- See: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/hs-approach-guidelines.pdf>

## Steller Sea Lions

All major Steller sea lion haulouts and rookeries throughout Alaska are protected by regulation. Extra caution is needed in these areas to prevent harassment of Steller sea lions in their critical habitat. In Southeast Alaska, critical habitat includes the air, land and sea surrounding the site to 3,000 ft in all directions. In Western-Southcentral Alaska, critical habitat includes a 20 nautical mile buffer around all major haulouts and rookeries, as well as associated terrestrial, air and aquatic zones, and three large offshore foraging areas.

- For a list of these protected sites, see: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/pr/ssl-critical-habitat>



## Northern Fur Seals

Regulations prohibit entry to northern fur seal rookeries on St. Paul and St. George Islands without special permission between June 1 and October 15.



## TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR VIEWING EXPERIENCE



**ENJOY FROM A SAFE DISTANCE**



**AVOID SURPRISING MARINE WILDLIFE**



**NEVER FEED OR ATTEMPT TO FEED MARINE WILDLIFE**



**DISPOSE OF TRASH PROPERLY**

**Watch from a distance... for your safety and their protection**

In Alaska, we're lucky to share our waters with whales, seals, and sea lions. With that privilege comes responsibility. Responsible wildlife viewing helps to ensure protection and long-term survival for marine mammals in the wild, as well as to keep you safe.

- For additional information please visit: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/pr/mmvviewing-guide>

