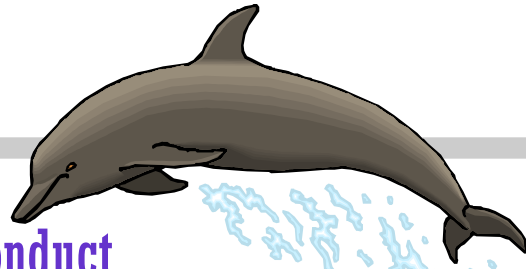


# Respect The "Wild" in Wildlife...

## Keep Your Distance



### Wildlife Law Definitions

- **Take** is defined as *"to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal."*
- **Take** is further defined by regulation to include feeding or attempting to feed a marine mammal in the wild.
- **Harassment** is defined in the MMPA as *"any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild; or has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering."* Some exceptions are made for specifically authorized scientific research.

### The Code of Conduct

Viewing wildlife in its natural habitat can be a wonderful and educational experience. Although tempting to try to get close enough to interact with wild animals, it's important to remember that their behavior can be unpredictable and aggressive. Thus, it's always best to view all wildlife from a safe and respectful distance, remembering that wild animals are just that – wild.

It's also tempting to feed a wild animal. It seems like such an innocent and harmless thing. But feeding wild animals can have deadly consequences for them and can place people in real danger. That's why feeding wildlife in national parks and refuges is illegal. In many states, feeding certain wild animals is punishable by fines and/or imprisonment.

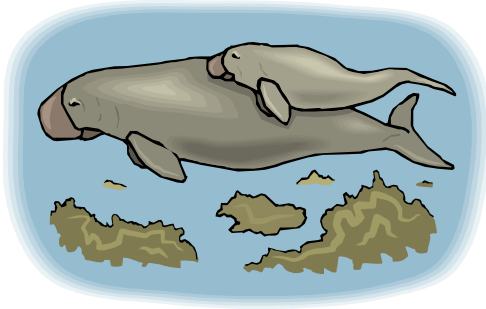
These concepts apply to aquatic as well as terrestrial animals. The Marine Mammal Protection Act specifically addresses marine mammal issues and protects these animals by making it **illegal** to **feed, pursue, or chase** them in U.S. waters. In the Bahamas, the Wild Animals Protection Act prohibits the same activities.



The National Watchable Wildlife Program is promoted by an informal group of wildlife experts from government agencies and private organizations. The program has developed a list of "viewing tips" that can help you have a safe and enjoyable experience with wildlife while protecting our natural animal resources.

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums has adapted the Watchable Wildlife Guidelines and developed the golden rules on the next page for watching wildlife, especially marine mammals. As a member of the Alliance, Dolphin Encounters will provide you with a fun, safe and educational interaction with our dolphins. We also hope you leave with a greater knowledge of these magnificent mammals and encourage you to take an active part in protecting the Ocean.





## Watchable Wildlife Guidelines

**Keep your distance.** Generally, try to remain a safe and respectful distance of **100 yards** from animals. Use binoculars or zoom lenses to get a close-up look.

**If on the water, avoid excessive boat speed or abrupt changes in speed or direction.** Stay fully clear of a

dolphin's, whale's, or manatee's path. Endangered manatees have been sliced by propellers when boaters ignore speed limits. If approached by these animals, put the engine in neutral and allow them to pass.

**If on land, observe animals such as seals or sea lions that are "hauled out" without alerting them to your presence.**

The pups of seals and sea lions have been trampled by adult animals startled by disruptive tourists.

**Limit time spent observing animals.** Encounters with people can be stressful to animals and can alter their normal behaviors. Half an hour is reasonable. Chances are you haven't been the only one to approach the animal that day.

**Stay clear of mothers with young.** Nests, dens, and rookeries are especially vulnerable to human disturbance. Never herd, chase, or separate a mother from its young or try to handle pups.

**Resist the temptation to "save" animals, especially**

**"orphans."** Mom is usually watching from a safe distance. If an animal appears sick, get professional help by calling animal control officers or, if appropriate, a local zoo or aquarium.

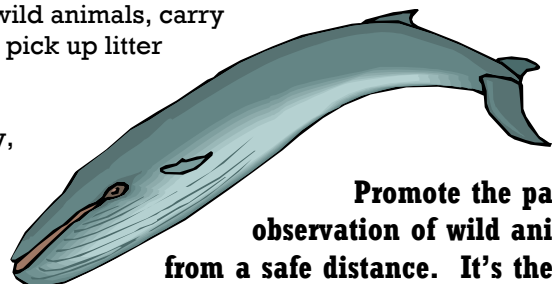
**Never surround an animal.** Always leave an "escape" route. Dolphins, whales, and manatees should not be trapped between boats, or between boats and shore.

**Keep pets on a leash or leave them at home.** Both pets and wild animals can be hurt if bitten. There is also danger of disease transmission.

**Don't litter.** Leave a habitat better than you found it. When enjoying nature and watching wild animals, carry along a trash bag and pick up litter when you see it.

And, most importantly,

**don't feed wild animals!**



**Promote the passive observation of wild animals from a safe distance. It's the best thing for the safety of wild animals and for us!**

## Don't Feed Wild Animals

**Wild animals fed by people can:**

... get **"hooked" on handouts.** They can lose their ability to find and catch their own food. For example, dolphins that become dependent on humans have been known to abandon their young, leaving calves alone to starve and fight off predators. Young dolphins that have not been taught to forage naturally are at the most risk.

... **associate people with food and lose their fear of people.**

Wild marine mammals that are unafraid of people are more likely to endanger themselves by approaching boats or spending time in areas with high vessel traffic.

... **destroy the environment or cause property destruction.** Wild sea lions that have been fed by people have hauled out on docks and into boats, doing damage as they search for food.

... **become aggressive towards people.** Feeding causes wild animals to change their natural behavior. Wild dolphins and sea lions that have become accustomed to being fed have charged, bitten, and otherwise injured people.

... **become more likely to eat trash and debris.** Eating plastic wrappers or other litter can harm an animal's digestive tract or lead to its death.