



CODE OF CONDUCT

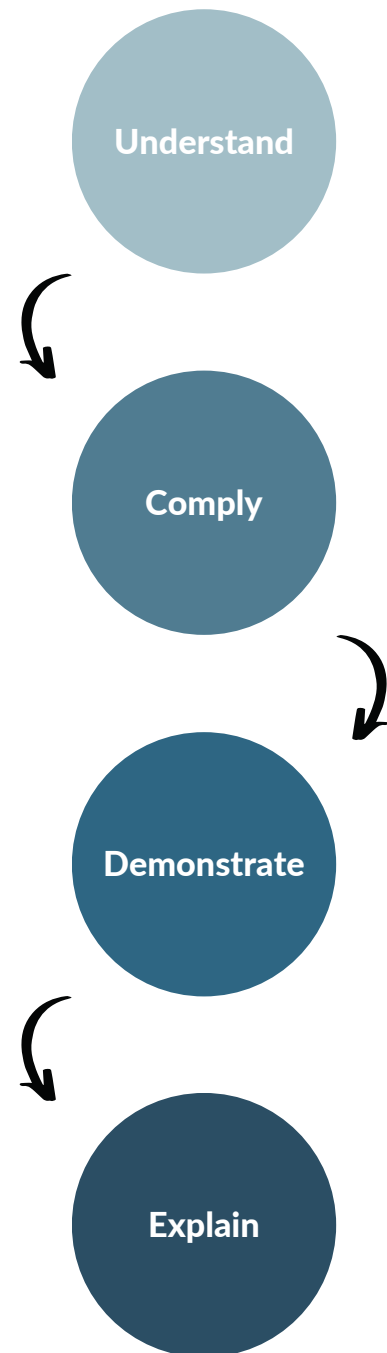
BC Marine Trails - Online Classroom

Unit 5 - Wildlife and Attractants

Wildlife and Attractants

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the regulated distances for wildlife viewing.
 - a. Differentiate between marine mammal species and their respective viewing guidelines.
 - b. Understand the minimum distances for terrestrial animals
2. Comply with “bare” camping practices
3. Demonstrate how to properly store wildlife attractants and manage food waste in the backcountry.
4. Explain the habitat and behaviour of different species of concern. Plan ahead with appropriate safety measures depending on the habitat and season you are visiting.



Introduction

We share the space with many wild creatures when we are out in the backcountry. Learning how to live in harmony with these beings is a key component of low-impact camping. On recreational trips, human-wildlife conflicts are one of the biggest risks to their health and safety. Learning respectful behaviour around wildlife can not only keep you safe but also maintains wildlife safety and health. “It is our responsibility to ensure that our recreational pursuits do not contribute to human-wildlife conflict within the province” (WildsafeBC).

The BC Marine Trails Code of Conduct suggests:

“Maintain regulated distances from marine mammals and avoid disturbing wildlife. If you cause an animal to move, you are likely too close. Keep your site clear of food and other animal attractants. Never feed animals.”

This unit of our online classroom takes a deep dive into the regulated distances for wildlife viewing, management of grey water and other attractants as well as external readings of WildSafeBC materials to help reduce human-wildlife conflict. Viewing wildlife in the backcountry can be one of the most transformative and awe inspiring experiences one can have. However, if we don't respect the animals' space we risk harming their survival. Follow along to learn respectful behaviours.

MARINE MAMMAL

VIEWING REGULATIONS

All marine mammals are subject to the provisions of the Marine Mammal Regulations under the Fisheries Act. The Government recently amended the Marine Mammal Regulations to provide greater protection for marine mammals including Canada's *at-risk whales*.

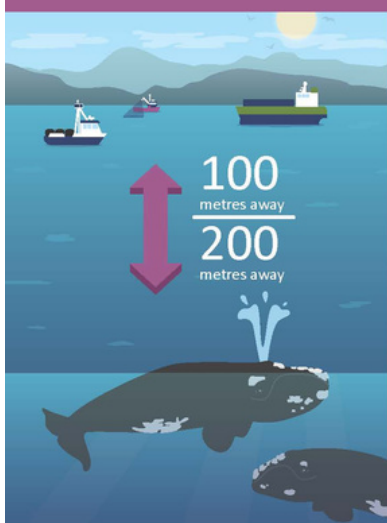
Disturbing marine mammals, including approaching or attempting to approach them, includes:

- Feeding, swimming or interacting with a marine mammal
- Moving a marine mammal (or enticing/causing it to move)
- Separating a marine mammal from its group or going between it and a calf
- Trapping a marine mammal or a group either between a vessel and the shore, or between a vessel and other vessels
- Tagging or marking a marine mammal

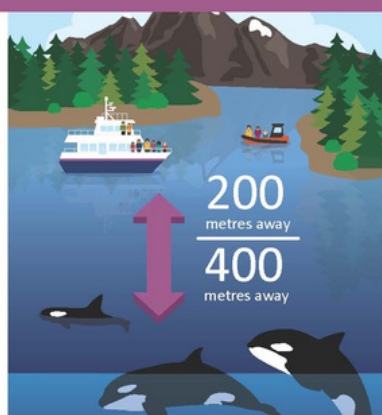
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If you see tail, fin or spray – Stay far enough away

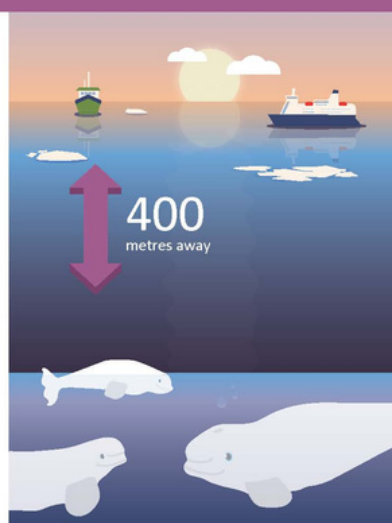


Keeping a minimum of **100 metres** away from most whales, porpoises and dolphins, and keeping **200 metres** away if they are in resting position or with their calf.



Keeping 200 metres away from killer whales in BC and the Pacific Ocean and keeping 400 metres away from all killer whales in southern BC coastal waters between Campbell River and just north of Ucluelet* (June 1 – May 31)

*Under the Canada Shipping Act. Some exceptions may apply.



Belugas in the St. Lawrence Estuary

Certain whales, like killer whales in B.C. and the St. Lawrence Estuary Beluga in Quebec, need **more distance** because of threats they already face. There are also other approach distances which are tailored to particular circumstances. For more information visit:

<https://dfo-mpo.gc.ca/campaign-campagne/protectingwhales-protegerbaleines/index-eng.html>



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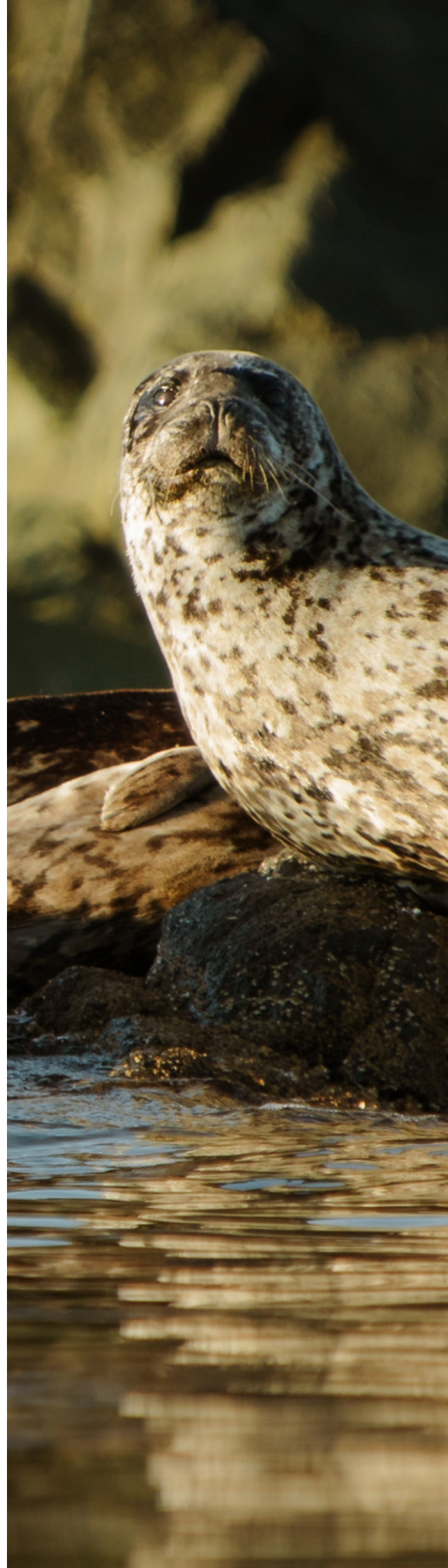
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These general guidelines apply to all marine mammals, however, there are a few special considerations for individual species. Want to dive deeper? Check out [Be Whale Wise](#)

SEALS

- **100m minimum distance**
- Harbor seals are most sensitive during their pupping season, which is approximately March 1 through June 30 (peak paddling season).
- Parents will leave pups alone while they forage nearby. Do not disturb pups as human contact could lead a mother to abandon her pup.
- Be cautious and quiet near haulouts, especially during breeding and pupping seasons.
- Move away slowly at the first sign of disturbance or agitation. If the animal starts to stare, fidget or dive into the water, you are too close.





SEA LIONS

- **100m minimum distance**
- Move away slowly at the first sign of disturbance or agitation. If the animal starts to stare, fidget or dive into the water, you are too close.
- Avoid large haulouts of sea lions. Usually agitation will occur at a distance much greater than 100m.





HUMPBACK WHALES

- 100m minimum distance at all times
- 200m when with calf or in resting position

KILLER WHALES

In effect year-round, maintain a minimum approach distance of:

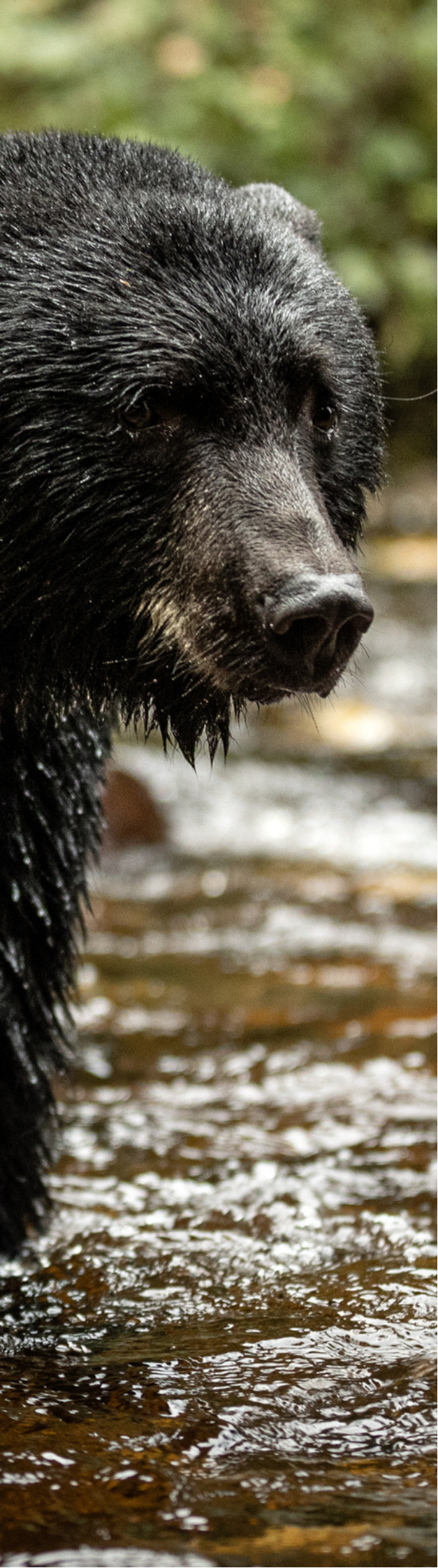
- **400 metres from all killer whales in all southern BC coastal waters** (see map for more details).
- **200 metres away from all killer whales in all other Canadian Pacific waters, outside of 400 metre approach areas.**

No recreational or commercial salmon fishing in designated closed areas located in key Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) foraging areas (see map for more details):

- The Strait of Juan de Fuca (August 1 or following the expiry of Chinook non-retention measures to October 31, 2022)
- The southern Gulf Islands (May 27 to October 31, 2022)
- The mouth of the Fraser River (August 1 to October 31, 2022)

Drones can disturb marine mammals, so are discouraged for viewing marine mammals unless appropriate permits are obtained.





Terrestrial Animals

BC Marine Trails Code of Conduct follows the best practices laid out by Wildsafe BC. They have extensive resources available on individual species. Take a quick look at each species brochure - be sure to check out the section “safety tips”. This section has great tips related to backcountry recreation and human-wildlife interactions.



**click on each brochure to learn more!*

Recreational Consideration - Managing Wildlife Attractants

BC Marine Trails fully endorses Wildsafe "Bare" Camping procedures. Have a deep read of their brochure (linked above) for best practices. Below we highlight some specifics as they relate to paddle crafts and the coastal environment.

Food Storage

Control of human-generated food and garbage is essential to reduce the attractiveness of human-use areas to wildlife. The intent of using wildlife-proof food or garbage containers is to prevent wildlife from obtaining unnatural food. Without the reward of unnatural food, wildlife will revert to or continue their normal behaviour of feeding on natural food sources. This will discourage wildlife from learning to associate developed areas, campsites or the presence of people with a free meal.

BCMT suggests the following:

- Practise "Bare" Camping (refer to the additional readings)
- Store all scented items either in a bear hang, bear-proof box (whenever possible) and/or in well-sealed kayak hatches.
 - Non-food scented items are also attractants
 - Toothpaste
 - Soaps
 - Toiletries
 - Trash and Food Wrapping
- Leave your campsite tidy and stow all attractants even if only stepping out of camp for brief periods.
- Don't store any attractants in your tent or clothes overnight
- In dense bear, wolf or cougar territory consider portable electric bear fencing around food storage

Grey Water

Grey water is water contaminated with food particles from cooking and cleaning. While the food scraps from food may not seem appetizing to you or me, they can be quite the wildlife attractant. Additionally, improper disposal in the upland soil of grey water can lead to bacterial contamination of the site and harm to environmental factors. In order to best reduce the environmental impact and minimize wildlife attraction, follow these directives:

- Pack out larger pieces of discarded food.
- Only dispose of grey water in the lowest intertidal zone far away from your camping area, where it can be broken down by the ocean.
- Use only biodegradable soaps to reduce environmental impacts
 - Note that soap may not biodegrade when in water. Minimize your use.



References / Additional readings:

Be Whale Wise Guidelines. Retrieved from: <https://www.bewhalewise.org/>

Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Watching Marine Wildlife. Retrieved from <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/mammals-mammiferes/watching-observation/index-eng.html>

Wildsafe BC. Safety Brochures. Retrieved from <https://wildsafebc.com/resources/brochures/>

Wildsafe BC. Bare Camping. Retrieved from <https://wildsafebc.com/programs/bare-campsite-program/>

BC Marine Trails. (2020). Code of Conduct.

BC Marine Trails. Internal Individual BC Endangered species catalogue and assessment. Coastal species.

Photo Credits:

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