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# IAATO Wildlife Watching Guidelines for Emperor Penguins and Leopard Seals

Attachments:

Atcm39\_att057\_e.pdf: IAATO Emperor Penguin Colony Visitor Guidelines  
Atcm39\_att058\_e.doc: IAATO Leopard Seal Watching Guidelines



# IAATO Wildlife Watching Guidelines for Emperor Penguins and Leopard Seals

Information Paper Submitted by the  
International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)

## **Summary**

IAATO Members have adopted two new sets of wildlife watching guidelines; one for emperor penguins and one for leopard seals. Although both visitation to emperor penguin colonies and sightings of leopard seals compared with other seal species is relatively low, IAATO members felt these guidelines would augment existing wildlife watching guidelines.

## **Introduction**

IAATO is committed to advocating and promoting the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. Industry peer reviewed guidelines have been an integral part of IAATO Members' operations in Antarctica.

The IAATO Field Operations Committee prepared two new sets of guidelines, which were adopted at IAATO's 2016 Annual Meeting:

- IAATO Emperor Penguin Colony Visitor Guidelines; and
- IAATO Leopard Seal Watching Guidelines.

These guidelines augment IAATO's current wildlife watching guidelines and do not replace them.

The guidelines do not replace any domestic governmental laws, but provide an additional code of conduct to minimize potential disturbance to the marine environment.

## **Emperor Penguin Colony Visitor Guidelines**

Emperor penguin guidelines were adopted at the IAATO 2013 Annual Meeting and have undergone three seasons of testing. These guidelines are intended to ensure that the normal patterns of daily and seasonal activity at colonies is maintained throughout the visit. The level of visitation by commercial tourism to emperor penguin colonies remains extremely low, however, IAATO Members decided that specific guidelines were important due to the unique breeding cycle of the emperor penguin and the often unusual logistics required to access colonies.

## **Leopard Seal Watching Guidelines**

These guidelines augment IAATO's Seal Watching Guidelines. Feedback from the field indicated that some leopard seals in specific locations were becoming more curious in their interactions. IAATO Members concluded that there would be value in specific guidelines to manage interactions with leopard seals. The guidelines set additional parameters to the Seal Watching Guidelines and give guidance on interpretation of leopard seal behavior.

**Attachments:**

**Appendix A – IAATO Emperor Penguin Colony Visitor Guidelines**

**Appendix B – IAATO Leopard Seal Watching Guidelines**