



IAATO OPERATIONAL



PROCEDURES FOR VIEWING BIRDS

GENERAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VIEWING BIRDS ON LAND, ICE OR WATER

- Do not use vessels, small boats or other means of transport in ways that disturb wildlife, whether on land, ice, at sea or in the air.
- Do not make sudden movements and keep noise to a minimum.
- If there is an observed change in the bird's behaviour, move away slowly. This may be a sign of disturbance.
- Always give animals the right of way.
- Never feed wildlife.
- Never encourage interactions, touch wildlife or let them touch you.
- Always follow appropriate biosecurity procedures for clothing, footwear and equipment.
- Under no circumstances should 'chumming' (use of fish or fish oil) be done to attract birds.

VIEWING BIRDS ON SHORE



- If there is an observed change in the bird's behaviour, move away slowly.



- Avoid blocking penguin paths and water entry and exit points. Coordinate with others in the area.
- When ashore in snow and ice, avoid making 'postholes' which can trap penguins. Try to maintain the same track through the snow. If holes are made, carefully fill them in or make them wider and/or sloped.



- Stay outside the margins of colonies and observe from a safe distance.
- Take care in tussock grass where birds may be nesting.
- Inquisitive animals, especially penguins, may approach you. Maintain the minimum required distance (at least 5m). Be prepared to back away slowly after checking behind you.



- If a bird starts dive-bombing, they may be protecting young or nests. Retreat in the direction you approached. Be aware of eggs and young which may be hidden.



- Never disturb wildlife or plants to get 'better' pictures. Flash photography must not be used in any circumstances.
- Do not use 'selfie sticks' or other equipment to get closer.

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For more in-depth information, please view the full IAATO Operational Procedures for Viewing Birds document.

¹For the purposes of this document, 'small boats' are defined as Zodiac-style inflatable boats, such as rigid or semi-rigid hull inflatable boats or any similar small landing craft used for shore interaction.

²General Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic, Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting Resolution 4 (2021), Annex 1

RECOMMENDED

APPROACH DISTANCES

Minimum distance from birds on land or ice is at least 5 metres/15 feet²

Prescribed distances of approach/observation must be followed, assuming animals are showing no signs of disturbance from your presence. Be aware that your permit/authorisation may require a greater distance to be kept. Closer interactions should only be dictated by the animals.

Species and/or life stage	Minimum Distance (m/ft)
Nesting seabirds	5m /15ft
Nesting Southern Giant petrels	25m /75ft
Nesting albatrosses	10m /30ft
Displaying albatrosses	25m /75ft
Penguins in moult (individuals and groups)	5m /15ft

CONCENTRATIONS OF BIRDS ON WATER

Sometimes concentrations of seabirds may be found at sea e.g. rafts of birds feeding on the surface, diving, or simply resting and bathing.

- Stay on the fringes of these concentrations and avoid disturbance.
- Ships and yachts should stay at least 100m/300ft away.
- Small boats and human powered watercraft should stay at least 30m / 90ft away.



BIRDS ON FLOATING ICE

Birds often use floating ice to rest on or to avoid predators.

- Ships and yachts should stay at least 100m/300ft from concentrations of birds on floating ice.
- Small boats and human powered watercraft should stay at least 5-15m away from birds on ice.

PENGUINS LANDING IN SMALL BOATS

Occasionally, penguins end up landing in small boats, and can become 'trapped'. Occupants should remain quiet and wait for the penguin to find its own way over the side and return to the water. It is normally not necessary to assist. In a case where assistance is required, your staff will follow procedures.

