

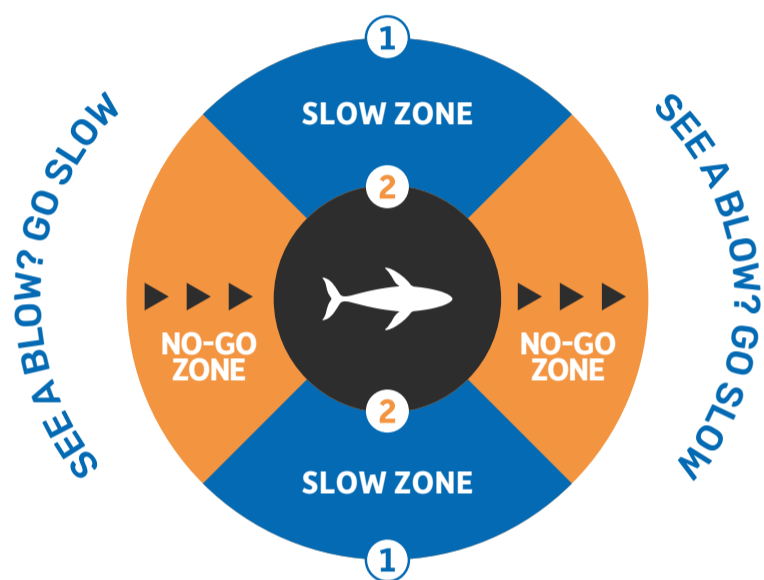
# IAATO OPERATIONAL

# PROCEDURES FOR WATCHING WHALES

THESE PROCEDURES APPLY TO ALL VESSELS INCLUDING SHIPS, SMALL BOATS<sup>1</sup>, KAYAKS, ETC.

## APPROACHING WHALES

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. Never approach cetaceans from the front or directly behind. Approach from the side, at an angle.



| ZONE 1<br>400m/ 1300ft   | ZONE 2<br>100m/ 300ft   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not go more than 5 knots AND go no faster than wake speed</li> <li>Engines must be in idle if safe to do so</li> <li>Do not approach feeding baleen whales closer than 200m/600ft</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All vessels, including small boats and human-powered watercraft should remain this distance</li> </ul> |

## WATCHING WHALES AND UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR

Animals may alter their behaviour if they are disturbed. Be aware.

Every whale encounter is different; individuals and different species may respond completely differently to the presence of vessels. The following behaviours may indicate stress or disturbance:

- Sudden/erratic movements; changes in travelling directions
- Regular changes in direction or speed
- Moving away from the area
- Apparent general agitation
- Hasty dives
- Trumpet blows (loud, sharp exhalations)
- Breaching, tail lobbing/slapping and pectoral flipper slapping can mean whales are socialising or feeding and may not be aware of boats. These behaviours can also signal stress.

- If you notice a behaviour change, let the animal depart or move away from the animal slowly and cautiously when safe to do so. (No wake speed/ less than 5 knots).
- Take particular care with killer whales which may be more susceptible to disturbance.
- If killer whales approach kayaks and begin 'spy-hopping behaviour' ensure that safety boats are close to the kayaks. Consider transferring paddlers from kayaks to small boats if necessary.
- Marine mammals may approach and stay with your vessels. If so, drift vessel passively. Vessels should not drift into the whale's path.

## GENERAL CODE OF CONDUCT

### AROUND MARINE MAMMALS



- Stay with the animal a maximum time of 30 minutes. If signs of disturbance occur at any time during the interaction, retreat slowly and quietly.
- Multiple vessels are more likely to disturb marine mammals. It is suggested that a maximum of two ships or four small boats are watching at any one time.
- Coordinate with others to ensure the animals have a large open avenue to depart through and that the animal is never boxed in.
- Stay to the onshore/ land side of the whales when travelling close to the shore.
- Never herd, surround, separate or scatter a group of marine mammals, particularly mothers and their young.
- Allow whales to pass, and never chase or pursue.
- Never attempt to touch or feed animals.
- Avoid abrupt changes in noise that may startle or disturb the animal. Move slowly.
- Keep voices and radio volumes low.
- Playback of underwater sound of any kind is forbidden. If hydrophones are used from small boats to listen to the underwater sounds it is preferable to have the engines of the small boats shut down if safe to do so.

## DEPARTURE OF VESSELS FROM WHALE WATCHING

- Move off at a slow, no-wake speed to 400m/1300ft distance.
- Do not speed up until you are more than 400m away from the animal(s).
- When moving away, avoid moving in front of the animal. Always move towards the rear.

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

Vessel operators should adhere to any additional national, international or IAATO speed limit requirements. Some areas have special protection measures in place during the year to help reduce disturbance and physical injury to whales. Be aware that IAATO wildlife watching and other Operational Procedures do not replace any domestic governmental laws. Some nations have guidelines or regulations stricter than IAATO's which may override IAATO procedures. Violation of national regulations may be punishable by fines, imprisonment and, in extreme cases, seizure of vessel.

<sup>1</sup>For 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.

