

# Alaska Seas & Coasts

Marine Issues for Alaska's People

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Terry Johnson, Author/Editor

Deborah Mercy, Designer/Editor

Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program  
School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences  
University of Alaska Fairbanks



## Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing in Alaska

Two 40-foot-long gray whales round the tip of Cape Newenham and set a course for the Bering Strait. A dozen Steller sea lions dive from the cliffs at the point and swim swiftly, porpoising, to intercept them. When the two species converge it is like old friends meeting after a long separation. The whales loll, the sea lions squirm and writhe over and around the whales like half-ton puppies at play. The whales slowly roll in the water, their massive flukes sweeping past the excited sea lions, who appear to enjoy the contact with each other and their gigantic playmates. The two kinds of animals, each the master of its own domain in the marine environment, continue the briny ballet as the tide sweeps them up the broad expanse of Kuskokwim Bay and out of sight.

Every person who spends much time watching marine wildlife has witnessed similarly extraordinary sights on the water.

Marine wildlife viewing is an exciting pastime and supports a growing industry in Alaska. Whale and seabird watching is the main attraction for fleets of tour boats and an important added attraction for glacier tours and sportfishing charters. Great wildlife viewing enhances the value of the growing sea kayaking industry. And wildlife viewing is an important component of recreational boating.

Marine wildlife viewing is good for the state's economy, and good for the participants' souls. But is it good for the animals?

# WHAT MARINE ANIMALS NEED

All marine mammals and seabirds need access to food, space to congregate and rest, and freedom from intrusions that cause stress. Seals and sea lions, seabirds, and shorebirds need secure places on land to mate, give birth or lay eggs, and to nurture their young during critical early months of development.

Since most marine mammals give birth in the spring and the young of all Alaska birds hatch in summer, the visitor season coincides with that critical period when their need for food and protection is greatest.

It may seem that marine mammals and birds have the whole ocean in which to roam, but the best locations are limited, and each animal needs unrestricted opportunity to pursue its needs.



Deborah Meyer, MAP

*Harbor seals at Kenai Fjords, Alaska*

## Preventing Disturbance

As marine wildlife watching increases around the world, scientists are expressing growing concern about its effects on wildlife. Governments, conservation groups, and industry associations have developed regulations and voluntary codes of conduct for marine wildlife viewing. These statutory and voluntary standards were developed because trained observers discovered that:

- Whales exhibit signs of stress, take evasive action, and sometimes shield their young, when approached too closely or too quickly by vessels
- When nesting seabirds are disturbed they flee their nests, sometimes accidentally kicking their own eggs over the edge, and exposing chicks to fatal hypothermia or predation by ravens, gulls, and eagles
- Seals and sea lions will scuttle or dive off resting or nursery rocks and beaches, which may injure their young and cause adults to abandon secure resting and productive feeding areas.
- Nests, eggs, and young of shorebirds and certain seabirds can be crushed by people walking on beaches and in vegetated areas near beaches.
- Eagles and other raptors will abandon nests if repeatedly disturbed.
- Beach invertebrates, including clams, crabs, anemones, barnacles, worms, and jellyfish, can be crushed, dried out, or exposed to predators by people innocently walking, turning over stones, and picking up creatures to examine them.

Does this mean we shouldn't view marine wildlife? No, it means we have to learn about how these creatures live, think about the consequences of our actions, make a conscious effort to minimize harm, and adhere to all pertinent regulations and best practice codes of conduct for marine wildlife viewing.

By learning, behaving responsibly, and encouraging others to do so, viewers can help to conserve the marine wildlife resources that support recreation and tourism in Alaska and enrich the lives of all.

# WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

Most kinds of marine wildlife are protected by a combination of federal and state laws and regulations.

Under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the National Marine Fisheries Service manages most marine mammal species in Alaska, while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for walrus, sea otters, and polar bears. The MMPA contains few specific provisions governing human behavior around wildlife; instead, it has a general prohibition against “taking” marine mammals, which includes harassing, hunting, capturing or killing, and any activity that has the potential to disturb. Feeding or attempting to feed is also prohibited as a “take.” Harassment includes pursuit, torment, or annoyance. It defines “to disturb” as any action that causes a change in an animal’s behavior, including feeding, sheltering, and breathing.

In short, while the MMPA doesn’t, with a few exceptions, dictate your behavior while you are viewing marine mammals, it does state specific reactions from the animals you must not cause.

Some limited exceptions to the MMPA apply to Alaska Natives, who may kill marine mammals for subsistence purposes, as well as to scientists and commercial fishermen.

The Endangered Species Act provides more stringent protections to marine mammals listed as “threatened” or “endangered.” Most of the baleen whales in Alaska waters, other than the gray and minke, are on the endangered list, as are the sperm whale and western stock Steller sea lion. The eastern stock is listed as “threatened,” as is the Southwest Alaska stock of sea otters (from the west side of Cook Inlet to the western end of the Aleutians). Under the ESA it is forbidden even to chase sea lions off your boat or a public dock.

Neither NMFS nor USFWS has published regulations governing marine mammal viewing in Alaska, with one exception. NMFS has issued a rule pertaining to humpback whales that:

- Prohibits approach closer than 100 yards and placing a vessel into the path of oncoming whales in such a way as to cause them to surface within less than 100 yards.

- Requires boats to move at a “slow, safe” speed when near a humpback.
- Prohibits “leapfrogging” or running the vessel ahead of humpbacks to put it in their path of travel.

Protections similar to the MMPA are afforded eagles by the Bald Eagle Protection Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects almost all kinds of birds in Alaska from the same range of activities, except that harassment and disturbance are not specifically prohibited. However, disturbance that causes eggs or chicks to be knocked out of the nest is illegal. Both the Bald Eagle and Migratory Bird Acts also prohibit collecting any part of a bird. Exempt species in Alaska are pigeons, starlings, and ptarmigan.

Alaska state law prohibits the “take” of all birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles, except through legal fishing and hunting, and defines “take” very broadly to include pursuit and harassment.

A separate set of regulations pertains to collecting bones, baleen, skulls, skins, and feathers. See page 7 in this issue, “Collecting.”



*Dall's porpoise bow riding*

# CETACEANS



Joey Thomson, NMFS permit 782-1532

*Humpback whales*

Cetaceans (whales, porpoises, and dolphins) are Alaska's signature "charismatic megafauna"—large animals that are attractive to viewers.

## Whales

Most large whales (not including orcas, belukhas, and minke) are on the endangered species list. Disturbance can result from close or rapid approach by a single vessel, crowding or repeated approach by multiple vessels, and noise in or above the water. Disturbance can cause disruption of feeding and resting, which may cause whales to relocate away from the most desirable sites. Vessel sounds can mask important whale vocalization and echo location. Whales can be injured by vessel hulls or propellers, and frightened or confused whales can damage boats and hurt people.

Following are some widely accepted principles for preventing disturbance to whales:

### Approach

- Ensure that your actions don't cause a change in their behavior.
- Approach from the sides, never from directly behind or head on.
- Travel parallel to the path of the whales.
- Maneuver from the sides or behind.

### Distance

- Approach no closer than 100 yards

### Speed

- At a quarter mile (400 yards), slow to and maintain a steady speed of no more than five knots. At closest distance, take engine out of gear.
- On departure, stay below five knots until more than 400 yards from whales, then power up gradually. Make only gradual changes of speed or direction when within 400 yards of whales.

### Positioning

- Allow the whales to control the interaction and decide whether or not to approach.
- Give a cow with calf plenty of space. Don't get between a cow and a calf.
- Do not maneuver so as to push whales into shallows or other obstacles, including other boats.

- Never encircle whales; always leave them a clear exit path.
- Use the VHF radio to coordinate viewing with other vessels.
- Do not "leapfrog" ahead to position your boat directly in the line of the whale's path.

### Time

- Limit close (100-200 yards) viewing to 30 minutes. Once the time limit is reached, leave them for the day.

### Other

- Stay clear of bubble patches emitted by feeding humpbacks.
- If you stop engines, thump on the hull periodically to alert submerged whales of your position.

## Other Cetaceans

Most of these animals are fast and maneuverable so they can escape viewing vessels. Dall's porpoises and Pacific white-sided dolphins often approach vessels, apparently to "play." However, they can be disturbed while feeding or when with their young.

### Approach

- Approach from the sides, not head-on or from directly behind.
- Approach feeding animals at a speed of five knots or less.

### Distance

- Minimum distance is 50 yards, except when they willingly run with the boat.

### Positioning

- Allow animals space to escape shallows, and to remain next to their calves, etc.
- Never chase, herd, or surround animals.

### Time

- Limit contact to 30 minutes.

### Other

- Harbor porpoises are unlikely to bow ride, so leave them alone.
- Let Dall's porpoises decide whether to bow ride.
- Do not attempt to feed or to swim with small cetaceans or any marine wildlife.



# PINNIPED VIEWING GUIDELINES FOR SEA KAYAKERS

By Caroline Jezierski, University of Alaska Fairbanks Graduate Student,  
Alaska SeaLife Center

Pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) haul out to rest, give birth to their young, and molt on terrestrial and glacial ice sites. Because they are hauled out during energetically costly portions of their life cycle, it is important to minimize human disturbance. An increasingly popular way to view wildlife is via sea kayak. Surprising to some people, recent research has shown that even silent sea kayakers can disturb pinnipeds at a haul-out, as well as sea otters in the water. Following are a few guidelines for viewing seals and sea lions:

- Plan your trip. Ask your kayak outfitter and/or land management agency where pinnipeds are most likely to be hauled out and whether the animals are pupping or molting.
- When approaching a haul-out, use binoculars to assess the situation from afar.
- Set up your approach so your kayak stays as parallel as possible to the haul-out. Avoid approaching animals with kayak pointed directly at the haul-out.
- When approaching a terrestrial haul-out (not glacial ice), attempt to set-up "upstream" so the current or wind carries you past the haul-out.
- When approaching harbor seals on ice, scan the bergs ahead with binoculars for hauled-out seals. Choose the path that avoids ice with seals hauled-out and allows you to maintain a parallel orientation.
- Approach haul-outs in a slow manner, paddling at a steady pace and maintaining a straight course. Do not make any abrupt adjustments.
- Minimize talking or any boisterous behavior such as splashing.

- While approaching hauled-out pinnipeds, observe their behavior. If you notice animals with their heads lifted or necks extended, halt your approach and if possible slowly back-paddle; they are alert to your presence.
- If you are approaching a haul-out and you see animals swimming toward you, most likely you have already caused some to abandon their haul-out and the remaining animals will be alerted to your presence. You should observe them from where you are with binoculars to avoid further disturbance.

For your safety, the welfare of the animals, and the viewing opportunities of other paddlers, please be observant of your surroundings and follow these simple guidelines.

To help you identify marine mammals, Alaska Sea Grant has available ***Guide to Marine Mammals of Alaska***, a best-selling, 80-page color illustrated field guide, [www.uaf.edu/seagrant/bookstore/pubs/MAB-44.html](http://www.uaf.edu/seagrant/bookstore/pubs/MAB-44.html).

Other field guides published by Alaska Sea Grant include ***Marine Mammals of the Eastern North Pacific***, ***Field Guide to Bird Nests and Eggs of Alaska's Coastal Tundra***, ***Common Edible Seaweeds in the Gulf of Alaska***, and more.

# SHARING THE COAST WITH SEA OTTERS

By Angela Doroff, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Sea otters are thriving along most of the Alaska coast east of Cook Inlet, and provide wonderful viewing opportunities. But even these abundant and seemingly relaxed sea otters can be disturbed, distressed, even injured or killed by boaters. In fact, boat strikes are the second most common cause of sea otter deaths in popular locations like Kachemak Bay.

## Some important facts about sea otters

- Their resting metabolism is 2-3 times higher than a terrestrial animal of equivalent body size.
- They rely on the insulating value of their fur and the consumption of a lot of calories (they eat up to 25% of their body weight per day). That means they may need to spend 50-60% of their day feeding. Grooming and maintaining the insulating properties of their fur also is an important activity for sea otters. So it is important not to disturb sea otters when they are resting.
- They produce a single pup annually, and the young pups are so buoyant that they cannot dive.
- Because sea otters lie low in the water, they can't accurately judge boat approach speed and distance. They may at times be unable to get out of the way of motor boats.

## Human activities that can harm sea otters

- Sea otters are vulnerable to pollutants floating on the water surface, such as oil, which may soil their fur, lowering its insulating value and causing hypothermia and potentially death.
- Sea otters may become entangled in unattended or abandoned fishing nets in the environment, and drown.
- Any activity that prevents sea otters from foraging can deplete their energy reserves. Spending time avoiding boats and kayaks can be particularly harmful to females with pups.
- Sea otters sometimes forage on fish offal, which can result in increased parasite loads and lethal intestinal impactions. Concentrated dumping of



Sea otters in Kachemak Bay, Alaska

offal may attract sea otters to an area. Untreated sewage dumped in the nearshore marine environment can transmit terrestrial disease. An example is *Toxoplasma gondii*, from cat feces, which affects the central nervous system.

## What can people do to help keep sea otters healthy?

1. Do not directly approach sea otters (especially those with pups) by boat or kayak.
2. When boating, give otters in the water a wide berth, and slow to no-wake speed if approaching to view them.
3. Do not disturb or change the behavior of foraging sea otters. Maintain a 50 yard distance from individuals or groups, and move away if they show signs of agitation or take evasive action.
3. Do not touch pups, even if they appear to be abandoned. If you see an injured or stranded sea otter, call the Alaska Sealife Center's stranding hotline, 1-888-774-7325.
5. Discard fish waste in the appropriate disposal areas in your community, particularly if you have a lot of it.
6. Discard chemicals, and soapy and oily materials, in the appropriate waste facility in your community.
7. Discard remnant pieces of net in the appropriate place in your community.
8. Get involved with your community to ensure high quality sewage and waste material management.

Note: the Southwest Alaska stock of sea otters is now listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. This includes all sea otters in U.S. waters from the west side of Cook Inlet through the Aleutians and Bering Sea.

It may surprise you to learn that it is illegal to collect feathers, bones, or any other parts of a seabird, or virtually any other bird that occurs naturally in Alaska, other than birds taken legally by a hunter, or with a scientific collecting permit.

Likewise, federal law prohibits collecting any part of any animal on the endangered species list, which includes Steller sea lions and most whales.



Walrus skull on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska

You may take hard parts (baleen, bones, or teeth that are bleached by the sun and free of soft tissue) of non-endangered marine mammals, including porpoises, dolphins, belukha whales, gray whales, minke whales,

sea otters, walruses, and polar bears, that are “beach cast” or washed up on the beach. It is prohibited to take such parts from animals still floating. Bones, teeth, and baleen of non-endangered cetaceans and most pinnipeds must be registered with an enforcement officer of the National Marine Fisheries Service, while bones and teeth (including skulls and tusks) of walruses, sea otters, and polar bears must be registered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Walrus tusks must be “sealed” with a metal tag and may not be sold. It is illegal to possess flesh, meat, or skins of marine mammals, other than items that constitute handicrafts made by Alaska Natives.

Complex laws govern production and sale of Alaska Native handicrafts. Native people may only sell marine mammal parts that have been made into traditional items. Sale of raw ivory or sea mammal furs is prohibited.

In general, unless you can prove that a beach-cast marine mammal part you find is from a non-endangered species, don’t take it.

## Watch for branded Steller sea lions

By Kate Wynne, Marine Mammal Specialist, Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program

To study Steller sea lions, which have subtle natural markings, researchers have found that branding a young animal’s pelt facilitates the rapid recognition and monitoring of individuals for the duration of their life. Since 1999, researchers have branded more than 3,000 Steller sea lion pups on rookeries in Alaska and Oregon.

By recording observations of these animals over time, researchers can monitor the pups’ weaning, movements, survival to adulthood, and reproductive history.

The brand is applied to a sedated pup’s left side. Each unique brand begins with a letter that indicates their rookery of birth, followed by a number indicating the sequential brands at that site.

### Put your observations to work

You can contribute to the study of sea lion migration and survival by carefully recording and reporting any brands you spot to federal researchers.

Note the letter and number of the brand, location where the branded sea lion was seen, and the date and time of observation. Take photographs if possible.

Send information to Lowell Fritz, Lowell.fritz@noaa.gov, AFSC/NMML, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115.



Steller sea lions, branded on Marmot Island, Alaska

# SEABIRD VIEWING ETIQUETTE

By Leslie Slater, Wildlife Biologist, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge

Seabirds offer few and typically subtle clues that indicate disturbance by human intrusions. They will often flush en masse from their colony before a person realizes that they encroached. This can have obvious negative consequences such as direct egg and chick losses as tending adults flee, or as opportunistic predators easily locate undefended nest sites. Other negative outcomes are less well-known or measurable, such as loss of energy reserves due to repeated disturbances.

Responses can vary among species for many reasons; some birds become habituated to a consistent approach by humans whereas others will abandon a previously used area. One thing you can count on is that seabirds can be inconsistent in their responses. Because many nest colonially, one disruption may affect large numbers of seabirds. Also, the breeding season is so short that a single disruption could quash the entire season's efforts to raise young.

Colonies are generally approached by boat, which may cause adults to temporarily flush from their nest site where they are protecting eggs or chicks. This exposes their offspring to predators—you may see ravens, gulls, and crows nearby awaiting an opportunity to nab a



Horned Puffin

seabird “morsel.” For murrelets, being startled suddenly from a nesting ledge may cause their single egg to be dislodged or broken because the egg is not even protected by a nest—it is incubated on the tops of the adults' webbed feet.

Motorized vessels give an audible “notice” as they approach colonies, but non-motorized boaters may cause relatively greater disruptions because they can inadvertently “sneak up” on seabirds. To minimize disturbing birds, it's best to maintain a comfortable distance; usually 100 yards is reasonable. You can recognize signs of nervousness in birds: sudden and brief bursts of wing flapping while perched, head bobbing, or sudden quietness on the colony. These are all indications that birds are ready to flush from the colony, so you should back off quickly and smoothly.

## Marine wildlife viewing tips

- Go with a commercial operator who has a good local reputation for not only finding wildlife, but conducting trips responsibly.
- If you take your own boat, or view from the shore, read up ahead of time and then ask locally about locations, timing, and how to have a good experience.
- Dress warmly, take extra clothing including hat and rain gear, and bring snacks and plenty of water or healthy fluids. Boating tends to produce dehydration which causes a number of unpleasant symptoms that can spoil a day on the water.
- If you've ever experienced motion sickness, buy some seasickness preventative medicine and take it well before boarding the boat. Usually by the time malaise sets in, it is too late to take the medicines.
- Take good binoculars and a camera with a long telephoto lens. Use a case or bag to protect them from rain and spray. Avoid using camera flash units, and any noisemakers like stereos.



# VIEWING SHOREBIRDS AND RAPTORS

Most shorebirds and raptors (birds of prey) are migratory, and some fly thousands of miles to spend a few weeks in Alaska intensively feeding, nesting, and raising their young. Most have tight “energy budgets” and cannot afford to be chased off prime feeding grounds. Most lay only a single egg or clutch of eggs per year, so a single misplaced step can destroy a year’s production.

Shorebirds are usually viewed from land; raptors may be seen either from a boat or on foot. That means even a casual beach stroller who isn’t careful can cause harmful disturbance.



*Bar-tailed godwit*

Tim Bowman, USFWS



*Bald eagle*

Dave Menke, USFWS

## Shorebirds

Shorebirds and waterfowl are ground nesters whose main reproductive defense strategy is to rely on camouflage or concealment of their nests. It is easy to kill eggs and chicks by walking on them. Some shorebirds put on decoy displays and others hover over and harass people on foot who approach nests. If you observe these behaviors, or find evidence of intense shorebird or waterfowl use, you should assume nests are nearby and take the clearest path out of the area to minimize disturbance.

- Detour around areas where shorebird nests are present.
- Allow feeding shorebirds to get their nutrition undisturbed.
- If birds attack, buzz, or show distress at approach of people on foot, leave the area.
- Avoid reedy surroundings of lakes and ponds where waterfowl nests may be located.

## Raptors

Eagles, hawks, falcons, and other raptors may be sensitive to approach to their nests. They may abandon nests in favored locations if they are repeatedly disturbed, and relocate to other, presumably less favorable, sites. If birds screech or fly off when approached, they are disturbed.

- Approach no closer to raptor nests than 100 yards, or more if birds show signs of agitation.
- Remain at least 50 yards from raptors feeding on the ground.
- Do not attempt to feed any raptors, including eagles.

# TIDE POOLING

by Marilyn Sigman, Director, Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Whether you are a clam digger in search of luscious butter clams or a teacher leading your class on an annual pilgrimage to the beach, please follow the laws that govern what you can take away.

You should also consider some “rules of etiquette” that make it possible for many people to enjoy learning about the beach without harming its permanent residents or their habitat.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) sets seasons and size limits on food harvests of seaweeds and marine invertebrates (classified as “shellfish”) such as clams, crabs, snails, chitons, and octopus.

In addition, anyone who has a scientific or educational need to collect seaweed or marine invertebrates or fish can develop a study plan and apply to ADFG for a Fish Resource Permit. Whether you are a teacher who wants animals for classroom study, a scientist conducting research, or a collector for an educational aquarium (which requires additional permits) you need this permit.

Before you apply, think about whether you really need to collect beach animals and, if so, how many you need. To prevent the spread of disease, they cannot be returned to the beach. Live souvenirs from Alaska beaches are not legal. And please remember that even an empty shell can be a hermit crab’s home.

The purpose of beach etiquette is to prevent or minimize your impacts while maximizing your enjoyment during your visit to the beach. Rocky beaches are often extremely slippery places to walk and covered with such a high density of barnacles, mussels, urchins, sea cucumbers, or sea stars that it is difficult to avoid injuring and crushing them. When the tide is out, many animals retreat under the rocks to stay moist and hidden from predators. Lifting up rocks is the way to find these animals, but it can also expose them to the very conditions they were avoiding. Be sure to replace the rock very gently.

Some beach areas in Alaska are highly sensitive, unique, or so popular for beach field trips that the impacts of your visit can contribute to changing the natural dyna-

mics of the site. Explore other opportunities to view, touch, and learn about intertidal ecology on pilings and docks or at live tanks and aquaria at nature centers and museums.

Visiting sand and mudflats also requires some etiquette, particularly if you dig holes. Fill in your holes because the piles you leave can smother the burrowing animals directly below.

*A Tidepooling Etiquette: For Fun and Classroom*, a brochure available at [www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/pdfpubs/tidepool.pdf](http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/pdfpubs/tidepool.pdf), provides additional etiquette details. Alaska Sea Grant’s *Life on the Beach: Among Friends and Anemones* is an informative movie for kids, available on VHS or DVD, with an accompanying Teacher’s Guide. See [www.uaf.edu/seagrant/bookstore/pubs/M-29.html](http://www.uaf.edu/seagrant/bookstore/pubs/M-29.html).

*Marilyn Sigman is the co-producer of the Life on the Beach video.*



Purple sea star

## Miss Manners’ Guide to Beach Etiquette

- **Walk, don’t run.**
- **Step on bare rock rather than on a living organism wherever possible.**
- **Explore from the exposed beach rather than the water, and from the edge of a tide pool rather than in it.**
- **Turn over only small rocks, and do so gently and carefully.**
- **Wet your hand with seawater from the beach before touching or holding an animal exposed by the tide.**
- **Always replace the rock, carefully so as not to crush the life below. Replace seaweed or other cover for shelter.**

# VESSEL CODE OF CONDUCT

**The operator of this vessel strives to avoid disturbance of wildlife and the marine environment by agreeing to the following:**

- No trash or pollution—including fuel, oil, or discarded fishing tackle—is allowed in the water.
- No feeding, touching, or swimming with any marine wildlife is permitted.
- Camera flash units and noise-making devices are discouraged when we are near wildlife. Use of binoculars and telephoto lenses is encouraged.
- We have learned to recognize signs of disturbance in the local species, and will take necessary steps to minimize negative effects of viewing.

## **When viewing whales we will:**

- Slow to six knots when within a quarter mile of whales, and will approach no closer than 100 yards, or greater distance of necessary to prevent disturbance.
- Not put the vessel in the path of oncoming whales, and will allow the whales to control the contact.
- Avoid abrupt speed or course changes.
- Not pursue, herd, encircle, or separate whales from a group, and will not “leapfrog.”
- Approach whales from the side or from behind and travel parallel to them. If approached by

whales, we will take the engine out of gear and let the whales pass.

- Minimize noise when near whales, and not blast horns or whistles.
- Not crowd other vessels in the vicinity, and will coordinate viewing by VHF radio.
- Limit time in the presence of each whale or group of whales to 30 minutes.

## **When viewing other marine mammals we will:**

- Slow to six knots when approaching sea lions, seals, and sea otters in the water.
- Maintain at least 50 yards and will give extra space to females with young.
- Not chase or cut into groups of porpoises to encourage “bow-riding.”
- Maintain at least 100 yards from hauled-out seals and sea lions, and more if they appear disturbed.
- Wherever practical, remain downwind.

## **When viewing birds we will:**

- Maintain enough distance from nesting seabirds to prevent flushing from their nests, and at least 50 yards from habituated nesting seabirds.
- Divert around groups of seabirds on the water, and give a wider margin to feeding birds.
- Approach no closer than 50 yards to eagles and other raptors, and 100 yards to raptor nests.

**Operator signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Alaska Seas & Coasts**

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University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-5040



**University of Alaska Fairbanks**  
School of Fisheries & Ocean Sciences

## About the Author/Editor



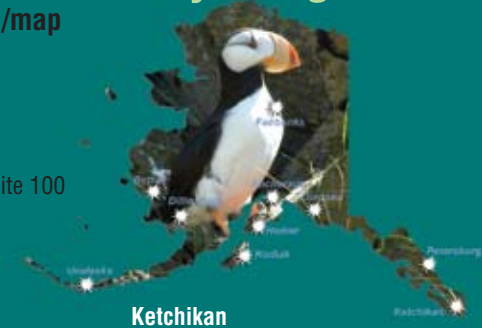
Terry Johnson is an agent with the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program and serves as the MAP marine recreation and tourism specialist, based in Homer. For a decade he has spent his summers running a marine wildlife viewing business in western Alaska focused on walrus.

Hector seal photo by Igor Katsayev, APFB



## Marine Advisory Program

[www.uaf.edu/map](http://www.uaf.edu/map)



### Anchorage

1007 West 3rd Avenue Suite 100  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
907-274-9691

### Bethel

UAF Kuskokwim Campus  
P.O. Box 368  
Bethel, Alaska 99559  
907-543-4560

### Cordova

P.O. Box 830  
Cordova, Alaska 99574  
907-424-7542

### Dillingham

P.O. Box 1549  
Dillingham, Alaska 99576  
907-842-1265

### Homer

3734 Ben Walter Lane #205  
Homer, Alaska 99603  
907-235-5643

### Ketchikan

2030 Sea Level Drive #352  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
907-247-4978

### Kodiak

118 Trident Way  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
907-486-1517

### Petersburg

P.O. Box 1329  
Petersburg, Alaska 99833  
907-772-3381

### Unalaska

P.O. Box 526  
Unalaska, Alaska 99685  
907-581-4589

## Alaska Seas & Coasts

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
P.O. Box 755040  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-5040

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