IDENTIFYING MARINE MAMMALS

Marine mammals have adapted their behaviour through evolution to survive in the aquatic environment. They breathe with lungs and consequently rise to the surface to take in air through the blow hole at the top of their heads. This gives us the opportunity to observe and identify them.

Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) - Average length: 2 meters
Grey in colour, with a straight snout (as a horse’s head) and parallel nostrils. Not common in Jersey waters and are harmless. They seem at the surface (dorsal fin and tip of tail visible) with their mouths wide open to collect plankton.

Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) - Average length: 1.5 meters
This species is very rarely seen in Jersey waters. It is the biggest of the sea turtles and feeds on jellyfish.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Reporting your sightings of marine wildlife plays a valuable role in marine research. The information collected will contribute to Jersey’s sightings database, increasing our knowledge and future protection of these species.

Please inform us of your sightings, your report will be acknowledged and the Environment Department will issue an annual report summarising all of your sightings.

Information needed to record species includes: Date, time, observation platform, distance from observation, latitude and longitude, species, numbers of animals, direction of travel and distinguishing features.

KEMP TOWER

HOW YOU CAN HELP

When exploring the marine environment, it is advisable that you go with a locally accredited and experienced guide from a reputable company or organisation. This should increase the value of your experience and ensure that no offences are committed. The WiSe (Wildlife Safe) scheme offers nationally recognised training and accreditation to charter operators.

A full list of Jersey accredited operators can be found at: www.eco-active.je and www.wisescheme.org

Copy and diagrams © GECC.
We share Jersey’s marine and coastal waters with a large diversity of marine wildlife. Species include bottlenose dolphins, grey seals, shag, brent geese, puffins and many more. All wild animals and their habitats are sensitive to disturbance and need to be treated with respect and understanding. A number of these animals are protected by law and it is an offence to intentionally kill or injure protected marine wildlife (unless you hold a permit).

This leaflet is a summary of the Marine and Coastal Wildlife Watching Code which applies to both commercial and recreational users. By acting sensitively and following the advice within this Code we can ensure that we enjoy our interactions with wildlife safely and that our impact is kept to a minimum. The full code can be found on www.eco-active.je

Knowledge

When venturing out into the marine environment ensure that you have researched the local area and the species that you might encounter. Information about marine wildlife can be found at www.marineconservation.org.uk and at Jersey’s information centres. Obtain a good understanding of how your actions will affect the marine environment and what the wildlife will perceive as threatening behaviour. In the presence of wildlife, be alert, patient and observant to ensure that the wildlife’s best interests come first.

Respect

Be responsible for your actions when interacting with marine wildlife. Ensure your actions do not detract from the experience of others, disturb the animals. For example, do not:

- Chase dolphins when they’re in a boat.
- Try to get too close to seals resting on the shore.
- Disturb areas where wildlife breed, rest, feed, move or rest.  
- Allow a dog to chase birds on the beach.

These disturbances may result in the abandonment of nesting sites, or prevent the animals from using particular areas where these marine animals are found or chase offshore for food, mating and feeding.

Safety

Safety of yourself and your companions is paramount. Marine environments have the potential to be dangerous. Jersey’s can be particularly challenging due to the large 12 metre tidal range, fast currents and rocky coastline. Human safety must always take precedence when following the advice given within the Code, but it is equally important not to put yourself or others in danger. The Code of Conduct includes:

- The Code of Conduct for sea birds.
- The Code of Conduct for cetaceans (dolphins and porpoises).
- The Code of Conduct for seals.

All animals

- Never attempt to swim with, touch or feed the animals. This is for your safety and the health of marine wildlife.
- Avoid overwounding - a maximum of three vessels should observe marine wildlife at any one time.
- Limit observation time - allow a safe distance from marine mammals, observe them for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- Leave marine mammals an escape route – be aware of your surroundings and your position in relationship to the wildlife.
- If you approach marine wildlife, follow these guidelines:
  - Approach slowly and cautiously.
  - Make sure that your movements are steady and predictable.
  - Let animals decide how close they want to be.
- If you sign of disturbance, stop and gently move away.
- Avoid conflict with other marine and coastal users by adhering to the relevant laws, regulations and codes. Please report any disturbance or harassment of wildlife (see Contacts list).
- Do not attempt to rescue wildlife that appear abandoned or injured (see Contacts list).
- It is an offence to spill fuel, oil and other hazardous substances at sea. If it is a case of Water Pollution (General) Law, 2000 to report any spill or report any action (see Contacts list).
- It is an offence to dump any waste - liquid or solid into the sea. All waste should be stored and disposed of in the appropriate facilities onshore.

In the presence of wild animals:

- Respect
- Be aware of the size, weight, strength and habits of the animals you may encounter.
- Never attempt to swim with, touch or feed the animals. This is for your safety and the health of marine wildlife.
- Keep a safe distance from wildlife, if in any doubt stay away from it. Always leave the marine environment as you found it.

Cetaceans

- Be aware of the size, weight, strength and habits of the animals you may encounter.
- Never attempt to swim with, touch or feed the animals. This is for your safety and the health of marine wildlife.
- Leave marine mammals an escape route – be aware of your surroundings and your position in relationship to the wildlife.
- If you approach marine wildlife, follow these guidelines:
  - Approach slowly and cautiously.
  - Make sure that your movements are steady and predictable.
  - Let animals decide how close they want to be.
- If you sign of disturbance, stop and gently move away.
- Avoid conflict with other marine and coastal users by adhering to the relevant laws, regulations and codes. Please report any disturbance or harassment of wildlife (see Contacts list).
- Do not attempt to rescue wildlife that appear abandoned or injured (see Contacts list).
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Seals

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Birds

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Be sensitive to the amount of time you spend interacting with marine wildlife, ensure your actions do not interfere with or upset the animals. For example, do not:

- Obsess over birds flying within 100 meters - a maximum of three vessels should observe marine birds at any one time.
- Try to get too close to seals resting on the beach.

Other signs of disturbance include:

- Sweeping and dive bombing observers.
- Making loud calling noises.
- Appear agitated and agitated.

Be aware that birds may feel threatened by human presence, this may result in disturbed behaviour resulting in personal injury.

Avoid disturbing the birds by only using recognized and agreed sites.

If you observe any of the above move away and allow the birds the time they require to recover.

- Warning signs of disturbance include:
  - Erratic changes in speed and direction.
  - Erratic or erratic movements.
  - Changes in breathing patterns.
  - Never walk through a nesting site - a maximum of three vessels should observe marine birds at any one time.
  - Never place yourself close to young animals
  - Never approach marine wildlife, observe them for a maximum of 15 minutes.

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