

Be Whale Wise

Marine Wildlife Laws & Guidelines for Boaters, Paddlers and Viewers

(Revised 2021)

www.bewhalewise.org

Seeing killer whales and other marine wildlife in their natural environment is a thrilling experience.

In our excitement, we sometimes forget that our presence has an effect on wildlife and their habitat. Just like us, marine mammals need space to find food, choose mates, raise young, socialize, and rest.

When we get too close, approach too fast, or make too much noise, we may disrupt these activities and cause the animals unnecessary stress. In some cases, we may be threatening their lives.

Be Whale Wise! Follow the laws and guidelines, set an example for others, and help protect our spectacular marine wildlife.

Why do we need guidelines?

The diversity and complexity of marine life in the inland and coastal waters of British Columbia and Washington is truly extraordinary.

It is a fragile world. Pollution, global climate change and other impacts are taking their toll at all levels of the coastal food web. Many species of marine wildlife, such as the endangered Southern Resident killer whales or orcas, are impacted by human activities.

Meanwhile, vessel traffic in our waters is steadily increasing, placing added pressures on marine animals and their habitats.

We need to minimize our impact.

Guidelines and laws are designed to help you employ best practices, while reducing risks of disturbing marine wildlife.

BE WHALE WISE!

**DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT
MARINE WILDLIFE FROM
HARASSMENT AND DISTURBANCE.**

FOLLOW GUIDELINES AND ALL LAWS.

What are the laws:

Regulations in Canada and the U.S. prohibit the harassment and disturbance of marine mammals. Many species are threatened or endangered and subject to additional protections under the Endangered Species Act (U.S.) and the *Species at Risk Act* (Canada).

Southern Resident killer whales are listed as endangered in both Canada and the United States. Vessel impacts have been identified as one of the threats. Regulations are in place to protect killer whales by reducing noise, disturbance and other impacts from vessels.

CANADA

To report marine mammal disturbance, or injured, distressed, dead, stranded or entangled marine mammals or sea turtles:

Fisheries & Oceans Canada/B.C. Marine Mammal Incident Reporting 24/7 Hot-line:

1-800-465-4336 or DFO.0RR-MPO.ONS@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

REPORT SIGHTINGS (MARINE MAMMAL & SEA TURTLE):

B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network www.wildwhales.org

1-866-472-9663

WhaleReport app available on iTunes and Google Play

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Fisheries & Oceans Canada:

www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans.html

Transport Canada TC.SRKW-ERS.TC@tc.gc.ca

Robson Bight (Michael Bigg) Ecological Reserve:

www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/robsonb_er.html

Straitwatch: www.straitwatch.org or 1-250-590-7723

North Island Marine Mammal Stewardship Association

www.nimmsa.org

MERS www.seeablowgoslow.org

UNITED STATES

To report a marine mammal harassment, entanglement or stranding:

NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement:

1-800-853-1964

Entanglements: 1-877-707-9425

Strandings: 1-866-767-6114

Download the Dolphin and Whale 911 app

REPORT MARINE MAMMAL SIGHTINGS:

The Whale Museum Hotline (U.S. and Canada):

hotline@whalemuseum.org or 1-800-562-8832

Orca Network (WA State):

info@orcانetwork.org or 1-866-672-2638

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Soundwatch Boater Education Program

www.whalemuseum.org or 1-360-378-4710 ext. 33

NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region:


<http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>



U.S. STRANDING NETWORK
1-866-767-6114

U.S. ENTANGLEMENT NETWORK
1-877-767-9425

CANADIAN MARINE MAMMAL
RESPONSE
1-800-465-4336



THE WHALE
WARNING FLAG
INDICATES THAT
WHALES ARE IN THE AREA.
VESSELS SHOULD SLOW DOWN
AND INCREASE VIGILANCE.

REGULATIONS FOR KILLER WHALES
IN US AND CANADIAN WATERS

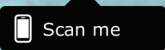
- In the US,** it is unlawful to:
- Cause a vessel to approach, in any manner, within 300 yards (274.3 meters) of Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) and 200 yards from transients.
 - Position a vessel to be in the path of or behind any killer whale at any point located within 400 yards (365.8 metres) of the whale.
 - Travel faster than 7 knots within 1/2 mile of any killer whale or fail to disengage engine within 300 yards.

- In Canada (British Columbia):**
- Vessels are required to maintain a minimum approach distance of 400 metres from all killer whales in all southern BC coastal waters between Campbell River and just north of Ucluelet; 200 metres (218.7 yards) from all killer whales in B.C. waters year-round.
 - Avoid boating or fishing in Interim Sanctuary Zones.

Who do the regulations apply to? All motorized and non-motorized vessels (including kayaks and paddleboards), with exceptions to maintain safe navigation and for certain types of vessels.

Additional information, specific details on exceptions and more can be found on the website:

<http://bewhalewise.org>



TRANS-BOUNDARY LAWS AND GUIDELINES FOR
THE U.S. AND CANADA APPLY TO
ALL MARINE MAMMALS AND BIRDS

- LAWS:**
- **DO NOT** disturb, swim with, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife. If you are concerned about a potentially sick, stranded or entangled animal, contact your local stranding or response network.
 - In Canada, **keep 100 metres away** from all whales, dolphins and porpoises or **200 metres away** if they are resting or with a calf and abide by specific approach distances for killer whales.

- GUIDELINES:**
- 1. DO NOT APPROACH** or get closer than 100 metres/ yards to any other marine mammals or birds.
 - 2. BE CAUTIOUS, COURTEOUS and QUIET** around areas of known or suspected marine wildlife activity, in the water or at haul-outs and bird colonies. When safe to do so, turn off fish finders and echo sounders.
 - 3. LOOK** in all directions before planning your approach or departure from viewing wildlife. Be vigilant for signs of marine mammal presence. Whales may change direction or surface unpredictably.
 - 4. SLOW DOWN.** Reduce speed to less than 7 knots when within a half mile or 1,000 metres of the nearest marine mammal to reduce your engine’s noise and vessel’s wake.
 - 5. ALWAYS** approach and depart from the side, moving parallel to the animal’s direction of travel. If the animal(s) are approaching you, cautiously move out of the way and avoid abrupt course changes. DO NOT approach from the front or from behind.
 - 6. PLACE ENGINE IN NEUTRAL OR SHUTDOWN** and allow animals to pass if your vessel is not in compliance with regulations.

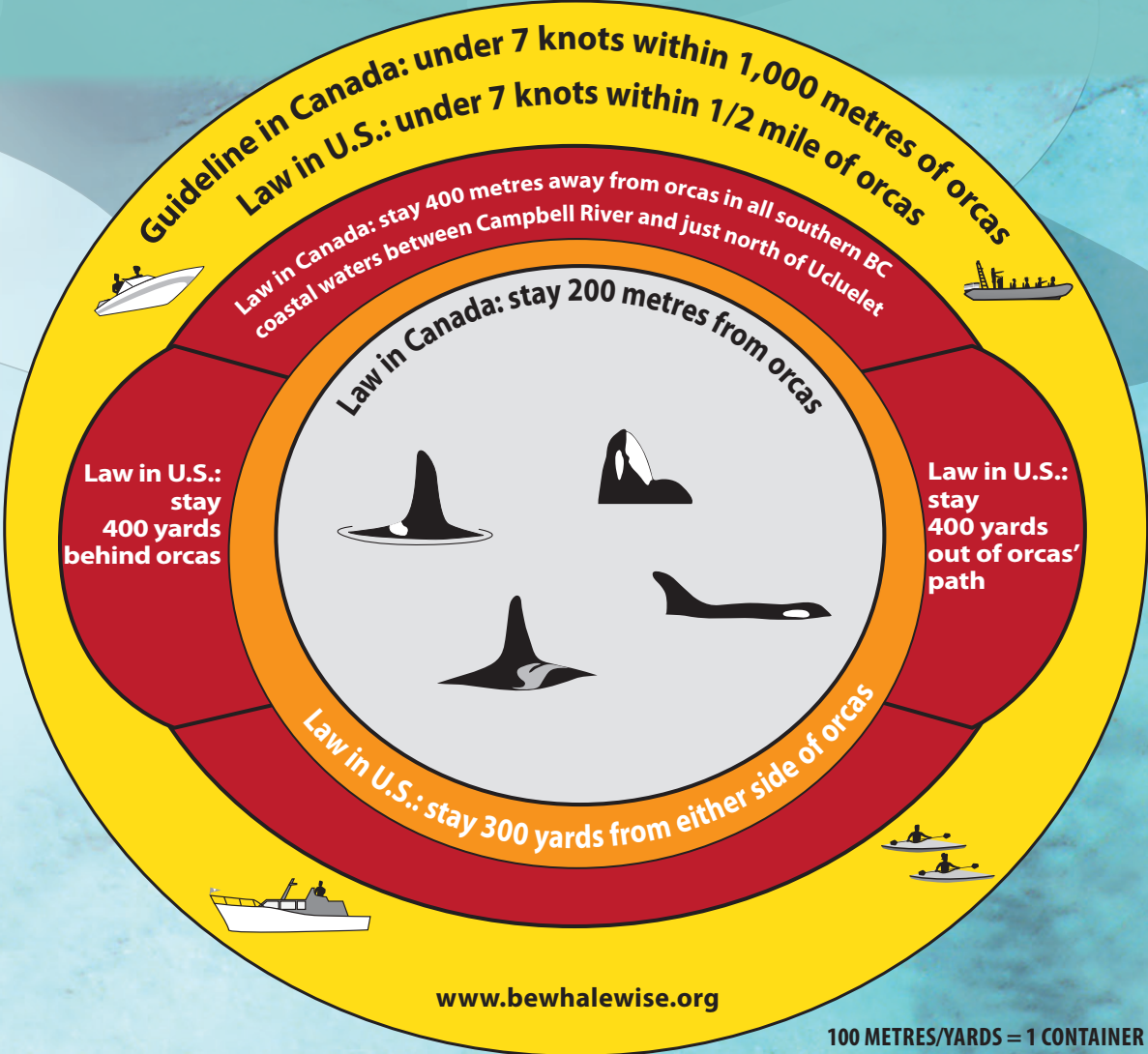
- 7. PAY ATTENTION** and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
- 8. STAY** on the **OFFSHORE** side of whales when they are traveling close to shore.
- 9. ALWAYS** avoid going through groups of porpoises or dolphins. Hold course and reduce speed gradually to discourage bow or stern-riding.
- 10. LIMIT** your viewing time to 30 minutes or less. Consider number of vessels present to reduce the cumulative impact of all vessels and give consideration to other viewers.

Drones/Unmanned Aircraft Vehicle or System (UAV/UAS) Guidance

The noise and close proximity of drones can disturb wildlife. When viewing marine mammals from the air using a drone: (1) maintain a 1,000-foot minimum altitude within a 0.5 nautical mile (approx. 3,000 ft radius) of a marine mammal; and (2) avoid flight maneuvers around marine mammals (on land or in the water), as these actions may cause stress or alter animal behavior. Know and follow all local regulations – **in Canada it’s the law.**

Marine Protected Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Reserves, Parks, and Sanctuaries:

- 1. CHECK** your nautical charts for the location of various protected areas.
- 2. ABIDE** by posted restrictions or contact a local authority for further information. Avoid voluntary No-Go Zone on the west-side of San Juan Island. Be aware of critical habitat areas and Canadian Interim Sanctuary Zones (www.tc.gc.ca).



Keep 200 metres away from whales, dolphins or porpoises if they are resting or with their calf; and 100 metres/yards no approach zone for all other marine mammals in US & Canada.