

Sea Wise Code

Marine animals, birds and plants share the coastal waters of Wales with you. We are very fortunate to have such a wide diversity of beautiful and special creatures living in these areas. However because of the rarity of some of these birds, animals and plants, legislation is in place that protects them and ensures their conservation within the marine environment.

Certain activities, including the use of vessels, can affect this wildlife. The Sea Wise Code has been produced to help you understand how the wildlife of the seas and coasts of Wales is protected and what actions you can take to stay within the law. All dolphins, porpoises and whales (cetaceans), basking sharks, marine turtles and wild birds are protected by law against intentional killing, injuring and taking. Some fish and other animals, including seals, also receive legal protection. All plants are protected from being uprooted, some plants are also protected from being picked or destroyed.

Deliberate disturbance of cetaceans, turtles and sturgeon; and reckless disturbance of basking sharks and some wild birds is an offence, as is causing the intentional damage of any wild birds nest whilst being built or in use. It is also an offence to take or destroy the eggs of any wild bird.

By following this code, you will be helping to protect the marine environment and to ensure that it is safeguarded for your enjoyment and others.

Enjoy and respect the marine environment

- Being aware of your surroundings and of marine wildlife can greatly increase your appreciation and enjoyment of this special environment.
- Avoid disturbing marine wildlife. Do not attempt to touch, feed or swim with them.
- Some very rare marine plants and animals are specially protected and it may be an offence to remove them from the sea.
- Keep away from cliffs when birds are breeding (1st March – 31st July).
- Do not approach seals resting on the shore, and do not approach sea caves whilst pupping (1st August – 31st October).

Boat users (including motor boats, yachts, kayaks etc):

- Allow marine animals or birds to approach you at sea and, if they choose to do so, keep your vessel at a steady course and speed. All vessels should be kept at a speed of no more than 6 knots when close to marine mammals.
- Do not approach within 100m of seals, cetaceans, basking sharks or nesting birds, and stay in that area for no longer than 15 minutes.
- If other vessels join you, move away if necessary to ensure that no more than 3 vessels are in the area at any one time.
- Do not steer directly towards marine wildlife and avoid sudden changes in speed or direction.

- Keep vessel engines and propellers well maintained. Fitting propeller guards can minimise the risk of injury to marine animals.
- Do not dispose of fuel, oil or litter, especially plastics and angling equipment, at sea. Take your litter home.

Many coastal areas around Wales are subject to local bylaws and Codes of Conduct. Please be aware of these and adhere to them.

Offences committed against wildlife can lead to a fine or even imprisonment. If you see anyone acting irresponsibly in the marine environment, please report it to the local Police and if possible speak to a Police Wildlife Liaison Officer who deals specifically with wildlife related crime.

For more information, contact your local NRW office or the NRW enquiries team on enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk 0300 065 3000 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm)

To report sightings of dolphins, porpoises and whales contact the Sea Watch Foundation, PO Box 3688, Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross, SL9 9WE. Tel: 0845 202 3892.

To report any live strandings, oiled sea birds or any marine animal or bird which seems to be in distress, contact the RSPCA. Tel: 0300 1234 999.