

## **Appendix 8**

### **Wildlife Viewing Guidelines**

#### **Prepared for BC Parks**

**Extracted from:**

BC Parks 2000. *Responsible Wildlife Viewing, Natural Agents of Change in B.C. Parks: Insects, Fire, Wind and Floods.*

## **Wildlife Viewing Guidelines for Interpretative Material and Warden**

The following is a best practices code researched for BC Parks over the last year by Penn & Gunn and Biomedica for BC Parks (BC Parks 2000):

### **Signs that an animal is being disturbed**

Always be patient and be ready to back off so that your disturbance is minimized. Watch for the following indications animals may be experiencing stress as a result of your behaviour.

- raised head, looking at observers (mammals will point ears in the direction of the observer)
- interruptions of feeding or migratory activities
- displays of nervous behaviour: skittishness, the animal jumps at sounds or movements. Looking directly at an animal may trigger the fright/flight response it naturally has to predators
- birds repeatedly flush, preen, or peck at dirt or foot, bill-wiping; mammals might attempt to shield a calf or pup from a human observer; Harbour seals will abandon their pups and flee the disturbance.
- animal makes alarm calls; birds will repeatedly chirp and chip; mammals vocalize; marine cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) may disperse and move away, switch from resting to travelling or give aerial displays such as a tail-lob, or breaching.
- displays of aggressive behaviour; animal moves away or lowers head (mammals will bring ears back in preparation for a charge); erect hairs on neck and shoulder; charges directed at intruders

### **Small Mammals and Bats Guidelines**

- Small mammals are sensitive in spring - they need their energy stores for food gathering and territorial activity. Disturbance can lead to breeding failure.
- Feeding any animal harms its ability to survive in nature and resist disease. Fed animals, large or small, are more dangerous to people. Feeding animals in protected areas is illegal.
- Sleeping bats in caves or trees use critical fat reserves to “wake up” and flee from a disturbance. Quickly and quietly leave any place with roosting or hibernating bats.
- Bats will waste precious feeding time when attracted to 'false-bait' tossed up by people seeking to view them.

### **Forest Birds and Raptors Guidelines**

- too many people calling birds in with recorded bird calls can stress or endanger populations  
*TIP - make yourself undetectable through the use of hides and drab clothing.*
- avoid going near nests. Your presence may tip off predators that will eat the eggs or young
- bird survival in North American winters is a delicate balance of energy, and millions die each year. Viewing should minimize disturbance to their lives at this time.

### **Reptiles and Amphibians Guidelines**

- Frogs and salamanders cross roads and trails, and reptiles may warm their bodies on the hot tarmac. Drive slowly to avoid hitting them. Watch trails on wet nights in spring and autumn during the breeding migrations of amphibians.
- Basking reptiles are recharging and conserving important energy for growing young or digesting; they need to sit after a meal; especially watch for reptiles on tarmac on hot days while driving.

## **Wildlife Viewing Guidelines for Interpretative Material and Warden**

- Reptiles and amphibians live in decaying logs and under slabs of bark or stones; walk carefully over their homes.
- amphibians are highly sensitive to handling, especially by hands with suntan oil or insect repellent; they are also highly susceptible to fungal infections passed by dip-nets between one wetland and another.

### **Coastal Birds Guidelines**

- An entire seabird colony may abandon its rookery from a single disturbance
- Access to all seabird island Ecological Reserves is prohibited during breeding season
- Migratory shorebirds need food energy to recharge for long flights. Avoid disturbing their low-tide feeding sessions.
- Shorebirds are particularly sensitive to dogs. Keep them away.
- If nesting oystercatchers and other shorebirds are frightened from the nest, predators often move in to take the eggs and chicks.

### **Marine Mammals Guidelines**

- Approach whales no closer than 100 metres. Steer a steady, slow course that allows the animals to choose their path without being stressed.
- Stay clear of sensitive marine mammal areas, such as killer whale rubbing rock beaches, sea lion haulouts or breeding colonies, and seal haulouts.
- marine mammals when stressed will make a rapid change in direction or speed, evasive swimming patterns, or dive into the water from haulout or rookery

### **Intertidal Life Guidelines**

- To retain moisture at low tide, many animals need to remain hidden under sea weeds, rocks or in cracks.
- If moved, rocks should be replaced exactly as they are found. Animals and sea weeds living on both sides of a rock will die if the rock is left upside down. On popular rocky shores, avoid turning rocks at all, as repeated turning will kill wildlife.
- Pulling any animal from its rock attachment will mean that it probably will not survive when tide and waves move back up the shore.
- Avoid stepping on snails, limpets and other sea life as you walk over intertidal rocks and shelves.

*TIP - a viewing instrument like an aquascope can provide you with a rich experience viewing intertidal life with minimum impact.*