

ENJOY AND PROTECT

Wildlife Photography Guide





ABOUT ENJOY AND PROTECT

For over 20 years, the Clean Coasts Programme has been working with communities to help protect and care for Ireland's waterways, coastline, seas, ocean and marine life, by organising hundreds of beach clean-ups each year, mobilising thousands of volunteers, and removing large quantities of marine litter from our coastline.

The Irish coast offers breath-taking views, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs, and more, and its unique beauty and character has been attracting visitors from all over the world - did you know that some of the coastal areas in Ireland have been named top tourists' attractions in Europe, ranking higher than other famous landmarks including Buckingham Palace, the Eiffel Tower and the Leaning Tower of Pisa?

The Irish coast also presents its visitors with numerous opportunities to have fun. In the summer months, we expect that more people will be visiting the beautiful coastal areas around the country, whether it is for sea swimming, water sports, or simply to enjoy the stunning landscape.

With our 'Enjoy and Protect' campaign, we are asking people to enjoy and celebrate our stunning coastline, beautiful beaches, epic cliffs and all outdoors areas, but also to protect these natural treasures. Get out and make the most of Ireland's wonderful coast, but also do your part to preserve our marine environment and keep it safe and beautiful for future generations to enjoy too.

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Citizen Science



The Clean Coasts programme is proudly sponsored by
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An Roinn Tithíochta,
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing,
Planning and Local Government



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

Why Clean Coasts runs Love Your Coasts Photography competition

Working with communities on the ground, Clean Coasts' mission is to help foster pride in our coastline, supporting Clean Coasts communities, groups, and volunteers to tackle environmental issues affecting their local area. Our work is not just about protecting our marine environment and coastline, but it is also about celebrating its stunning beauty.

One initiative we use to showcase this is our Love Your Coasts photography competition. The competition has been running since 2010 and there is a prize fund of €5,000, up for grabs across five categories: Coastal Heritage, Coastal Landscape, People & the Coast, Wildlife & the Coast and finally, Creativity and the Coast.

About this guide

The following guide was drafted in conjunction with BirdWatch Ireland, Seal Rescue Ireland (SRI) and the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) and aims to equip photographers with the correct information on how to capture the beauty of wildlife without causing any harm.

If you make a submission to the Love Your Coast Photography competition the following guidelines have to be followed*.

If the judging panel feels that entries have failed to comply with the following rules guidelines they will automatically be disqualified.





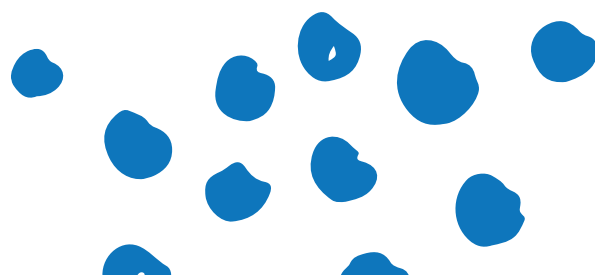
Guidelines for photographing birds and wildlife

- Many people are unaware that it is illegal to disturb and/or photograph nesting birds unless a specific license has been granted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Under Section 22 (9)(f) of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (as amended), a licence is required for a person to take video or pictures of a wild bird “on or near a nest containing eggs or unflown young.”. This licence does not confer on you the right to disturb the birds in the process. For further information on how to acquire a licences go to the National Parks and Wildlife Services [website](#).
- Nests and eggs must not be touched or handled in any way. This can alert a prefator to its presence. If you start being dive bombed by a bird or birds or birds become agitated or very vocal immediately retreat back along the same track you came until the bird settle down again.
- Young birds should not be approached. Parent birds frequently leave their fledgelings while foraging for food and so young birds are highly unlikely to have been abandoned.
- Do not feed birds or leave food where it can be reached.
- It is an offence to walk among nests, e.g. at Gannet or tern colonies .
- Children should be supervised at all times.

‘Code of Conduct’ for visitors to seabird breeding colonies:

Please read it, and follow it, if you’re heading out to an Irish seabird colony this breeding season.

- The Wildlife Act of 1976, as amended in 2000, (section 22 and others) prohibits the disturbance of wild birds, their nests, and their eggs. Visitors must therefore maintain an appropriate distance from any bird, even if it seems tame.
- Please don’t litter and be sure to follow the ‘Leave no trace’ campaign guidance. If we feel that entries have failed to comply with the above they will automatically be disqualified.
- Take the chance to enjoy the birds around you, visit a seabird colony this summer, and take lots of photos, but your first priority must be the welfare of the birds, be sure to keep your distance from the birds and their nests!
- With regard to photography at or near birds’ nests, it’s important to remember that this is illegal without an NPWS licence, regardless of whether disturbance is caused or not. Birds that are sitting on nests should not be approached. Don’t seek out nests or photograph them. Just because no harm is intended, doesn’t mean harm isn’t caused.





Guidelines for Watching and Photographing Marine Mammals

- Government regulations prohibit the disturbance of all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) in Irish waters.
- Cetacean behaviour may be unpredictable and cause potential damage to small craft, especially when large whales are feeding and/or when young calves are present.

The basic Code of Conduct outlined below should be followed when encountering cetaceans.

Watching/photographing cetaceans on the water:

- When whales or dolphins are first encountered, the craft should maintain a steady course.
- Boat speed should be maintained below 7 knots.
- Maintain > 100m distance from any cetacean.
- Maintain a 200m distance from any other craft in the area.
- Attempt to steer a course parallel to the direction whales or dolphins are taking.
- Do not corral whales or dolphins between boats.
- Successive boats must follow the same course.
- Special care must be taken when young calves are seen. Never come between a mother and her calf.

- You should not spend more than 30 minutes with whales or dolphins.
- Do not attempt to swim with them.
- Do not attempt to pursue whales or dolphins encountered.
- Dolphins often approach boats to 'bow ride'. If this happens, maintain your speed and course. Do not make any sudden course or speed changes.

Watching/photographing cetaceans from land:

- You don't necessarily have to go out on the water to have great sightings of whales, dolphins and porpoises in Ireland. A headland in good weather (with light winds and calm seas) can work just as well, especially when you

have a pair of good binoculars or a spotting scope to hand. You should scan the sea using your binoculars or spotting scope, to reveal signs that may indicate the presence of animals, such as, feeding seabirds, splashes or a whale's blow shooting up from the sea. Land-based whale watching is really about patience, the more time you put in, the more likely you will be rewarded with a special sighting of common or rare species which contributes to our understanding of these animals. Remember you can report your sightings to the IWDG.





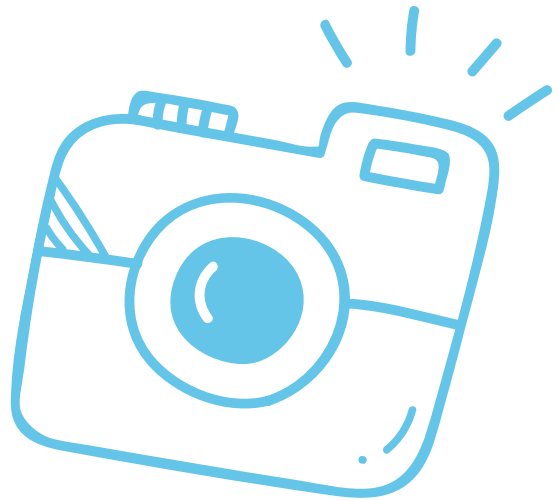
Guidelines for Watching and Photographing Seals (Pinnipeds)

Seals need to come ashore to rest, however, they are more vulnerable on land. Therefore, when watching seals from land guidelines should be followed as seals can be easily disturbed resulting indirect (injury) and indirect (displacement) disturbance.

There are two seal species native to Ireland, the Common Seal (born June-August) and the Grey Seal (born August-February). While it is an exciting experience to spot a seal, it's important to respect them from a safe distance, particularly during their pupping seasons. Seals must come up on land to rest and rear their pups, and this is when they are extremely sensitive to disturbances by humans or dogs, which can result in their being abandoned by their mother, thereby jeopardising their survival.

- Seals should be viewed from a distance. Stay at least 100 m away and limit your viewing time to 15 minutes.
- Never approach, touch or disturb a seal, as it can cause harm or injury to them. Seals are protected under both Irish and EU law. Remember to observe quietly from a safe distance (at least 100m), keep a low profile, keep children away, and keep dogs on a lead at all times.
- Use your zoom lens; you can still get some great shots while not taking away from a seal's crucial resting periods.
- Be quiet and remain out of sight.
- If the seal is looking at you, this is considered a disturbance and you are probably too close.
- Dogs should be kept on leads to prevent disturbance, especially during pupping or moulting season.
- When taking photographs use a zoom lens camera and stay out of sight and use binoculars to gain a good view.
- Be aware of behavioural and stress responses.
- Be aware of your position. Do not impede a seal's access to the sea.
- Allow seals to access a beach or haul-out site.
- Never put a seal in the water; injured, sick or newborn pups are on land for a reason. Also, a seal pup alone on the beach is not necessarily abandoned; mothers can sometimes leave them for hours at a time but will return to care for them.
- **DO NOT** touch a seal or try taking selfies near one. Seals have sharp teeth and a nasty infection known as seal finger, which requires immediate medical assistance.
- Be aware that noise levels disturb seals.
- Do not feed any seals.
- If you see an ID tag on the rear flipper of a seal (either dead or alive) please take photos and send them to SRI, as this data is invaluable.

- If you think a seal may need help or are concerned about a pup with no mum in sight, please contact Seal Rescue Ireland's 24/7 Rescue Hotline at 087 1955 393. Take photos using the zoom function on your camera and send them through to help SRI quickly determine the seal's condition, and if necessary, a rescue can be organised promptly.
- It is best practice to not post or share photos of seals looking directly at the camera, as this is a sign that the seal's natural behaviours have been interrupted.





Citizen Science

Irish Whale
and Dolphin Group



Reporting your sighting to the IWDG:

You can help the IWDG gain valuable information on the whales, dolphins and porpoises in Irish waters by reporting any sightings and sending in your photos.

Photo identification:

Most species of cetaceans have natural and/or anthropogenic marks, such as scars, as well as pigmentation patterns that allow individual recognition. Capturing photographs of these markings allows IWDG to monitor various species and track individual movements of certain animals.

In the case of dolphins, pilot whales and beaked whales etc, images which are as perpendicular (90°) to the axis of the body are the most valuable. The silhouette, the marks and the different notches that can be observed in the dorsal fins of the individuals of these species will help us to identify the different animals. Photos of the flank (side of the body) also allows us to look at body condition, skin lesions or abnormalities as well as any scarring which could have occurred from entanglement.

For those species that take the tail fin or tail out of the water before submerging, such as the humpback whale, in addition to the photographs of the sides, tail photos are really valuable. When the whale raises its tail (flukes) it provides an opportunity to photograph its underside



Three well marked bottlenose dolphins from the Irish coastal catalogue © Nick Massett/IWDG, Unknown photographer

(ventral surface). The pattern on the underside is unique to that individual whale and by capturing a good image we should be able to identify the individual whale. These images can be used to track the local short-range movements of these whales. By sharing our images with overseas colleagues, in time such images could reveal their international movements along migration routes and ultimately their breeding ground.

If you are fortunate to observe or photograph a whale, dolphin or porpoise off your local headland, bay or out at sea the IWDG would love to hear about it. You can report your sightings to the IWDG so that they can be validated and added to the all-Ireland sighting database that is maintained by them under their sighting scheme and has been active for 30 years. Your observations will directly contribute to the building IWDG knowledge base on how and when these animals use our waters. You can do this by downloading IWDG's Reporting App. Alternatively, you can email your sightings and photographs to **sightings@iwdg.ie** or log onto **www.iwdg.ie**



Reporting your sighting to Seal Rescue Ireland:

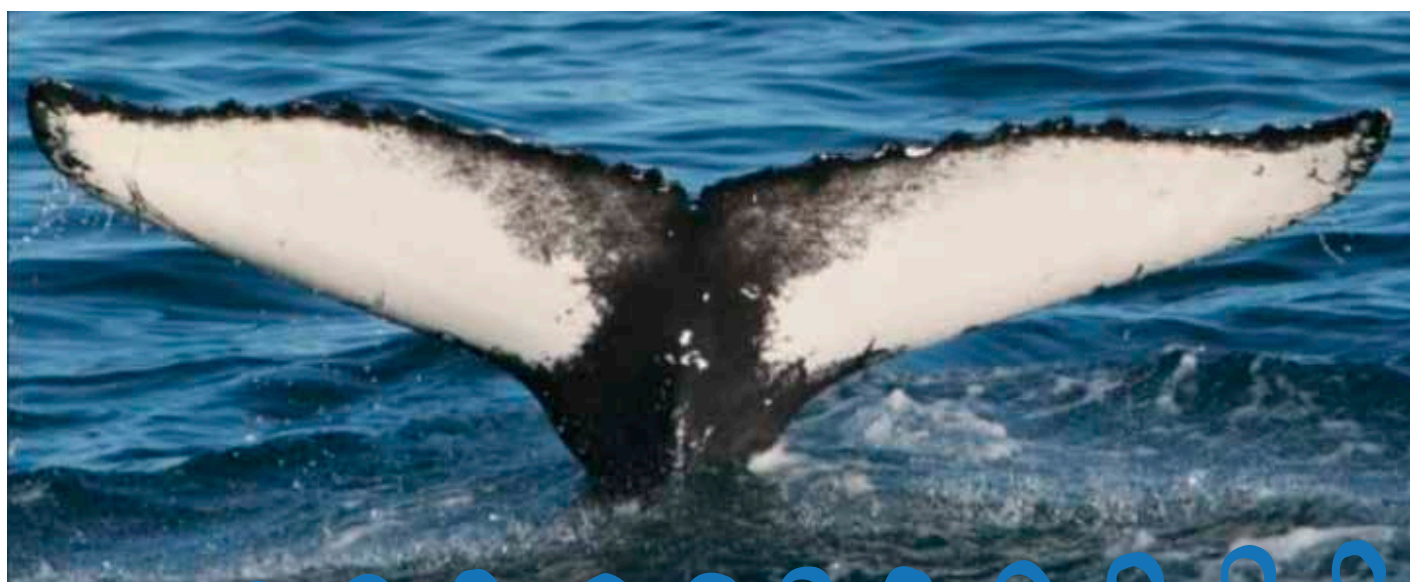
If you find a dead seal, please take photos and report this to SRI's Rescue Hotline or through the Online Reporting Form found on the website:

www.sealrescueireland.org

If you see an ID tag on the rear flipper of a seal (either dead or alive) please take photos and send them to SRI, as this data is invaluable.

CONCLUSION

On closing, we hope that this guide will help you take the right procedures when you are out capturing the beauty of Ireland's wildlife. When we photograph wildlife in the correct way we are ensuring that it is protected into the future. What we love we capture in photography and it is critical that we conserve it.



Do a #2MinuteBeachClean

Are you enjoying the time you are spending outdoors snapping pictures of our wildlife? Then take two minutes to make a difference!

No action is too small to protect our wildlife: A quick and easy way to do this is by doing a #2MinuteBeachClean.



How to take part in the #2minutebeachclean?

- Follow Clean Coasts – @CleanCoasts on Instagram/ Twitter/Facebook/TikTok
- Do a #2minutebeachclean
- Take a snap of the marine litter you collect
- Post your snap on social media using the hashtag #2MinuteBeachClean and tagging @CleanCoasts so we can reshare them
- Dispose of the waste you collected properly, recycle it/bin it!
- Be safe when you do your #2minutebeachclean

Why should you do a #2minutebeachclean

People may think 2 minutes is a very short time to make a difference, but small actions add up to make a big difference. Every piece of plastic removed from the marine environment is no longer a danger to our marine life and environment.

Each #2MinuteBeachClean is estimated to weigh in at 1-2KG. If everybody in Ireland does a #2MinuteBeachClean per month for a year, that's over 100,000 tonnes of litter removed from our ocean.

- It will have an immediate positive impact on our environment
- You will be an example and inspire other people to take action too
- You will contribute to creating a more sustainable community
- It's an easy way to be active and exercise
- A cleaner environment means better health
- Spending time by the sea and outdoors is good for the body and for the mind
- You will help protect the ocean and marine life
- You will also help protect all life on land





www.cleancoasts.org