At sea

- Ensure that you travel no faster than idle or ‘no wake’ speed within 300 m of any marine mammal.
- Approach whales (which includes orca and pilot whales) and dolphins from behind and to the side.
- Do not circle them, obstruct their path or cut through any group.
- Keep at least 50 m from whales (or 200 m from any large whale mother and calf or calves).
- Swimming with whales is not permitted.
- You may swim with seals and dolphins but not with dolphin pods with very young calves.
- Avoid approaching closer than 20 m to seals and sea lions hauled out on shore.
- Idle slowly away. Speed may be gradually increased to outdistance dolphins and should not exceed 10 kn within 300 m of any dolphin.

Further information

For information on encounters with marine mammals: [www.doc.govt.nz/sharingcoasts](http://www.doc.govt.nz/sharingcoasts)

To apply for a commercial viewing or filming permit: [www.doc.govt.nz/permit-marine-mammal-interaction](http://www.doc.govt.nz/permit-marine-mammal-interaction)

For more information on drone use around marine mammals, contact your local DOC office or visit: [www.doc.govt.nz/drones-near-marine-mammals](http://www.doc.govt.nz/drones-near-marine-mammals)

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)
Introduction

As an island nation, with most Kiwis living within an hour of the coast, many of us will be fortunate enough at some stage to encounter marine mammals - whether seals or sea lions hauled out on shore, or dolphins and whales at sea.

From the tip of the north to the deep south, New Zealand is a hotspot for marine mammals. Dolphins mingle with the boaties in Auckland’s backyard, the Hauraki Gulf. Seals laze on Wellington's southern coast, and even whales can be seen resting between dives above the Kaikoura canyon, the South Island’s marine mammal Mecca.

Hunting in the past reduced many marine mammal populations to a fraction of their former size. Luckily, cameras have replaced harpoons and clubs, and some marine mammal populations are slowly recovering.

However, growing interest in marine mammals and the expansion in sea-based tourism bring a new suite of threats, including boat strike, noise pollution, harassment, displacement and separation of mothers and their young. The Marine Mammals Protection Regulations 1992, summarised here, aim to minimise these threats by prescribing appropriate behaviour around marine mammals. Commercial tourist operators require permits and are subject to further rules. If you see whales, dolphins or seals while boating or visiting the coast, a few simple rules will ensure an enjoyable encounter for you and for them.

All seals, sea lions, dolphins and whales are protected under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978. It is an offence to harass, disturb, injure or kill marine mammals. Anyone charged with harassing, disturbing, injuring or killing a marine mammal faces a maximum penalty of 2 years imprisonment or a fine of up to $250,000.

The Marine Mammals Protection Regulations 1992 list the conditions governing behaviour around marine mammals: www.legislation.govt.nz