

Wildlife interaction guidelines



These guidelines will provide you with the information and tools you need to understand safe and sustainable wildlife interaction experiences. You will then be able to implement the appropriate practices into your business to ensure wildlife interaction experiences offered promote and sustain wildlife conservation.

Wildlife conservation

The National Wildlife Federation defines wildlife conservation as 'the preservation and protection of animals, plants, and their habitats'. With the conservation of wildlife, we are preserving the natural world and the incredible species that exist within it, ensuring enjoyment for future generations. Wildlife interaction is important to the protection of wildlife through education.

To protect wildlife, it is important to understand how species interact within their ecosystems, and how they're affected by environmental and human influences.

[The National Wildlife Federation]

DID YOU KNOW?



We've seen an astonishing 60% decline in the size of populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians in just over 40 years.

[World Wildlife Fund Living Planet Report 2018]



Birds Australia Gluepot Reserve, SA
(Advanced Ecotourism)

Your role

Australia has one of the most unique ranges of wildlife in the world that cannot be found anywhere else. Unfortunately, with the accumulation of residential areas, population growth and other human impacts, we are losing native ecosystems at a rapid rate.

Wildlife is at risk when being used for tourism-based activities. Your role is to minimise that risk while optimising guests experiences. You can contribute to helping save at risk Australian wildlife from becoming extinct through education. Tourism is one of the best ways to utilise tools like storytelling, demonstration and wildlife interaction to educate tourists and locals on the importance of animals and their ecosystems.

Conservation of rare or endangered species has been maximised through an understanding of their presence, needs and management practices. Well crafted and properly implemented wildlife interaction policies and procedures can be the difference between a species thriving or disappearing.

DID YOU KNOW?

Australia has lost 16 species of mammals to extinction since European settlement – one of the highest rates in the world.

[Wildlife Tourism Australia]

Read our [Contributing to conservation fact sheet](#)



Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, QLD
(Advanced Ecotourism & ROC)



Live Ningaloo, WA
(Advanced Ecotourism)



O'Reileys Rainforest Retreat, QLD
(Advanced Ecotourism & ROC)

Minimal disturbance guidelines

Whether your activity is designed for wildlife viewing or involves incidental wildlife viewing, it is crucial to ensure it has no enduring impact on the natural behaviour of wildlife.

Ensure your customers know that they should:

- keep noise to a minimum
- keep to designated trails
- remain a safe distance from wildlife
- not concern, chase or provoke animals into performing particular behaviours
- respect both the animal and the habitat they came to see but also others that may share the habitat (which are not always visible)

Your activity should:

- not cause disruption to behaviour (e.g. breeding patterns)
- happen at an appropriate approach distance to breeding sites (e.g. seal colonies, birds' nests)
- use existing trails
- use limited light
- leave an area immediately if an animal shows any signs of distress
- comply with any existing legislative requirements applicable to the location



There are many ways to educate your guests on how to behave. The guide can speak to guests prior to or during guided activities, or guests can also learn from instructional videos, signage, print material, in-room guest information, etc.

Guides and staff should:

- monitor guest behaviour as well as the wildlife's wellbeing to ensure no distress is caused to the wildlife and no long-term impacts are experienced
- modify or abandon any activities deemed to be causing negative impacts
- monitor wildlife behaviour over time to avoid impacting on natural behaviours and feeding patterns

ECO Certification requires that businesses document, implement and regularly review an interpretation plan, guide training manual or equivalent document that outlines interpretation planning, opportunities, content and training.

Marketing guidelines



Ecotourism businesses employ responsible marketing practices and use their reach to communicate about positive behaviours and making a difference.

Marketing content **should not**:

- promise sightings that cannot be guaranteed
- promise interactions that cannot be guaranteed
- display wildlife interactions that are not aligned with the companies products
- display content where an animal is in distress or in an unnatural situation

Responsible marketing **should**:

- educate guests about minimal impact behaviour
- inspire guests to be part of the solution
- spread conservation messages
- provide accurate information
- highlight contributions to conservation



Wildlife handling & feeding guidelines

For all your wildlife handling experiences, you should ensure that:

- your business obtained approval from the relevant government nature conservation agency
- staff carrying out the activity are appropriately trained or experienced
- the animal is not stressed (e.g. it is not removed from its natural habitat, it is returned to the position where it was found, etc.)

Should you choose to feed wildlife, ensure the following measures are in place:

- your business provides customers with information on the potential negative impacts of feeding wildlife (e.g. habituation, disease, alteration to territorial and feeding patterns etc.). Your local council may have information that you can share (see the 'Feeding native wildlife' page on the Brisbane City Council website for example)
- your business has obtained approval from relevant legislative bodies
- feeding only happens under supervision/permission of appropriately trained or experienced staff
- feed contains only foods that are part of the animal's natural diet
- feeding does not occur in areas of unaltered habitat

DID YOU KNOW?

Providing food to wild animals can have harmful side effects. Wildlife feeding activities are discouraged by Ecotourism Australia.



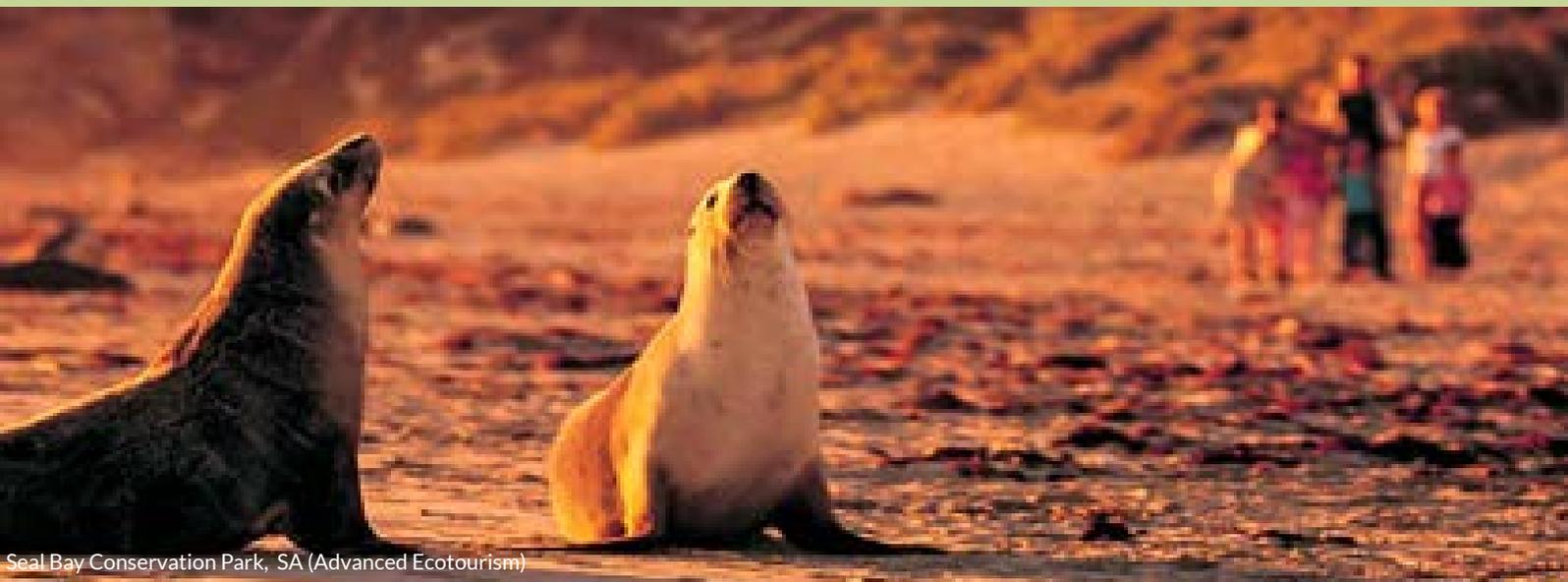
Quicksilver Cruises, QLD (Advanced Ecotourism, Climate Action Innovator)

Additional resources

Wildlife Tourism Australia

Exhibiting Animal Legislation

Australian Conservation Foundation



Seal Bay Conservation Park, SA (Advanced Ecotourism)