

IAATO Birdwatching Guidelines

Viewing birds on shore

On approach to shore - birds such as penguins may be subject to disturbance by small boat operations close to landing sites or colonies.

- Approach or depart a landing site or colony slowly to minimize any disturbance.
- Staff/crew should assess the best landing point – ideally as far from groups of birds as possible. This is particularly important if birds are moulting near the shore.
- Avoid boat operations in waters where birds enter and exit, are bathing, or are feeding close to colonies. Be aware of birds in the water; slow down and/or alter course to avoid collision.



Once on shore

- Walk slowly and encourage visitors to simply sit and watch the animals. Avoid blocking 'walkways' in colonies and water entry and exit points.
- If parent birds are blocked from returning to their nests, increased predation of eggs and chicks by skuas and gulls may occur. In addition, parent birds will waste precious energy by avoiding human obstacles on their way to their nests or being displaced from the shortest access route.
- Take care in tussock grass where birds may be nesting, including in burrows under bare earth.
- If skuas (jaegers) or terns start dive-bombing, they may be protecting young or nests. Retreat in the direction you approached from. Be aware that eggs and young are well camouflaged and might be hidden from your view.
- Under no circumstances should 'chumming' (depositing fish guts or oil) occur to attract birds. Never feed wild birds.
- Later in the season inquisitive chicks may approach closer than the recommended distance, it is important that the bird is in control of any interaction at all times.



Recommended approach distances to birds

- At least 5-10 meters/15-30 feet from nesting seabirds.
- Keep at least 10 meters/30 feet from nesting, and 25 meters/75 feet from displaying albatrosses.
- Southern giant petrels seem particularly prone to disturbance whilst nesting; stay at least 25-50 meters/75-150 feet away, if possible.
- If there is an observed change in the bird behavior then move away.

Viewing birds on water

Sometimes spectacular concentrations of seabirds may be found out at sea e.g., rafts of birds either feeding on the surface, diving from it, or simply resting and bathing. Many of these birds may have flown hundreds or thousands of miles, often to find food for their young.

- Stay on the fringes of these concentrations.
- Ships and small boats should stay at least 100 meters/300 feet.
- Zodiacs at least 30 meters/90 feet away.

Very rarely, swimming penguins can find themselves in a small boat when they 'porpoise', landing on the deck.

Occupants should remain quiet and wait for the penguin to find its own way over the side and return to the water. It is normally not necessary to assist.

