IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching

Viewing Birds on Shore

- 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.
- Avoid boat operations in waters where birds enter and exit, are bathing, or are feeding close to colonies. This is particularly important if birds are moulting near the shore.

Once on Shore

- Walk slowly and encourage passengers to simply pause and watch the animals. Avoid blocking 'highways' in colonies and water entry and exit points. Do not delay the return of parent birds to their nests by blocking access routes. Blocking access can increase predation of eggs and chicks. **Remain vigilant.**
- Take care in tussock grass where birds may be nesting, including in burrows under bare earth.
- If skuas (jaegers) or terns start dive-bombing, retreat in the direction you approached from without walking backwards. They may be protecting nests or young that you cannot see.
- Never feed wild birds. Never use fish guts or oil (chumming) to attract birds.

Viewing Birds on Water

- **When in the vicinity of seabird concentrations at sea:** Stay on the fringes of these concentrations; ships and small vessels should keep a distance of at least 100 meters (300 feet), small boats and human powered watercraft at least 30 meters (90 feet).
- Very rarely, swimming penguins will jump accidently into a small boat. 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.

Recommended Minimal Approach Distances to Birds

- **Albatrosses:** stay at least 10 meters (15 feet) from nesting, and 25 meters (75 feet) from displaying birds.
- **Southern Giant Petrels:** stay at least 25 meters (75 feet) away. Giant Petrels are particularly prone to disturbance when nesting.
- **Other nesting seabirds:** stay at least 5 meters (15 feet) away.

Be aware of birds in the water:
SLOW DOWN AND/OR ALTER COURSE TO AVOID COLLISION.