



## Information for ocean kayaks or SUPs around our coast : please be seal friendly!

Check the Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code Group website  
<https://cornwallmarinelifecode.org.uk/> for the map of sensitive  
wildlife areas around the coast.

Plan to avoid (100m+) sensitive seal haul out areas all year round as well as known bird nesting habitat.

Make sure you (and anyone you are with) knows what to do if seals are seen, so you get the best views! If not alone, agree a silent signal to alert others to the presence of seals.

Keep your eyes peeled and ears alert for seals and other marine life.

Regular tour boats may be ignored by seals, who then take to the sea when kayaks/SUPs are in the same area.

Be aware that you are not the only person/people watching and enjoying the seals that day.

Report any seal numbers and locations to [sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](mailto:sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk)

### Seals in the sea – to get the best views of seals

Anticipate seal terrain and if seals are seen in the sea, signal silently to anyone you are with.

Maintain a steady, straight, predictable and course parallel to the shore.

Let the seals approach you. Look behind you and paddle backwards to get the best view of seals!

NEVER feed wild seals. Practice tough love. Feeding changes behaviour for life.

If seals approach you, remain calm and quiet, even if they put their flippers on your craft. Gently but firmly use your paddle to block their access and tell them 'noooooo', moving your kayak/SUP slowly away from them.

(Keep your hands in towards your craft and be aware of the 'seal bite' letter)

### Seals on land – to see the seals at their very best

Anticipate possible seal ledges and be vigilant for seals.

Seals may be hauled out all year round. If seals are seen hauled out:

- Assess the wind direction (from you to the seals will increase the likelihood of disturbance)
- Assess ambient noise levels (quieter, still conditions mean that voices and paddle splashes carry further and increase the distance over which disturbance occurs)
- Avoid beaches with pups (between August and Dec) and never land on beach where seals are present.
- Assess the seals' reactions, whilst avoiding direct eye contact.

If the seals repeatedly look at you, you are **too close already**

If the seals move towards the sea, you are **definitely need to back off slowly and calmly**



Paddle slowly and steadily, parallel to the shore past the seals maintaining silence and a constant speed and direction. Never use your ability to approach quietly as a way to get close to seals. If you approach silently, seals may be startled by your sudden appearance.

Feel pleased that the seals that were hauled on your arrival were still there when you left! If they weren't, then you must take responsibility for having disturbed them. If you think the seals were just curious and entered the sea to get a better look at you, ask yourself this question....if you hadn't been there, would the seals have gone in the water?...If not, then they have been disturbed by you. They have wasted energy and risked injury. They will unlikely rehaul here and must swim to the next safe seal haul out site where they may be disturbed again.

Seals invest a huge amount of energy in hauling out to rest and digest their food. Flushing seals into the sea prematurely stresses them and is a double blow to their energy budget and wastes their hard won energy. You will not be the only person/people the seals have seen that day. Disturbance is cumulative, so if you see other people watching seals, take extra care.

**Generic top tips about marine life best practice.** These include:

Be alert: Our coast is home to sensitive marine life. Please respect their space

Spotted marine life? Keep yourself and wildlife safe:

- Keep your distance (100m+ and for more than one person, bunch together within 300m)
- Keep moving slowly, side on and limit your time
- If you have been spotted, move away quietly and calmly
- Never follow, touch or feed wildlife and gently block seals access to your craft
- If you have a waterproof camera, be satisfied with distant photos

Witnessed disturbance? Ring CMCCG hotline 0345 201 2626 or 101

A few key phrases sum up the issue of impacts.

- In the wild every calorie counts and can make the difference between life and death.
- Disturbance is always a waste of energy, often leads to injury and can be fatal
- Pregnant females disturbed in the summer likely don't get fat enough to feed their pups in the autumn which then die in the winter.
- Energy loss is invisible as are life threatening injuries from tombstoning and stampedes, whilst pup deaths are delayed for several months.



We have worked with one of our local Marine Groups to develop a free paddlesports sticker.

The designer is happy to add your logo to the sticker if you prefer, although we will need to negotiate printing if our funds for these have run out.

If you would like some, please email [seals@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](mailto:seals@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk)

Thank you for being a seal friendly paddler and for operating in way that will give you the best and privileged views of natural wild behaviour for the UK's globally rare, speciality and native seal species.

We always want to update our advice, so if you have any other tips, please contact us [seals@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](mailto:seals@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk)