

A guide to boating and swimming around whales, dolphins and seals



One of the great pleasures of Victoria's coast line is the opportunity to see whales, dolphins and seals.

From Nelson to Mallacoota, there's a good chance to see a dolphin riding the bow of a boat, a whale leaping out of the water or a seal lazing on a beach.

The *Wildlife (Marine Mammal) Regulations 2009* are a set of laws to protect seals, dolphins and whales in Victoria. This brochure shows the distances to be kept from marine mammals to ensure your safety and minimise our impact on these special animals.

Keep your distance

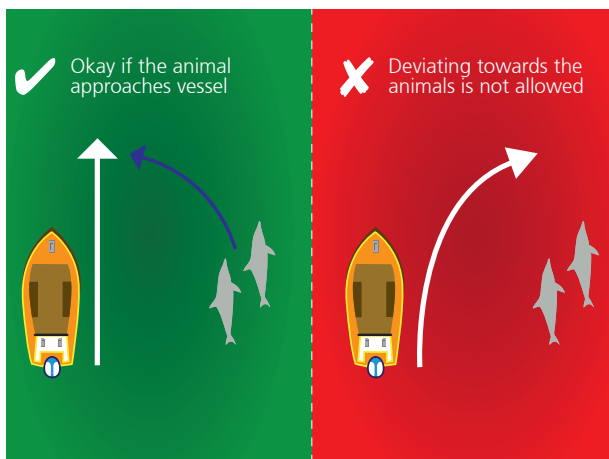
Watch whales, dolphins and seals responsibly and admire them from a distance. Use binoculars or a camera lens to get a closer look.

When boating

Don't get too close. It's OK for whales, dolphins and seals to approach you, but don't approach them closer than the permitted distances. Wherever possible, leave encounters to chance and at the animal's choice (see Figure 1).

If a whale, dolphin or seal takes an interest in you, slow down, don't change course or speed suddenly and take care to avoid collisions. If there is a need to stop, reduce speed gradually.

Figure 1: Boating around marine animals



No go zone

For whales and dolphins:

In the 'no go zone' (shown as a black circle in Figures 2 and 3) recreational boats must not approach within:

- 100 metres of a dolphin or
- 200 metres of a whale

Jet skis are not permitted within 300 metres of any whale or dolphin as they have a bigger impact upon these animals.

For seals:

- For seals in water, there are no distance restrictions, however vessels must abide by the 'caution' and 'no approach' zone (see Figure 4)
- For seals on land, you must keep at least 30 metres away, whether you are in the water or also on land (see Figure 5)
- For seals on a boat ramp or other man-made structures (in water or on land), you must keep at least 5 metres away (see Figure 6)
- Restrictions apply to approaching seal breeding colonies (see Protection Zones overleaf).

These restrictions are for your own safety. The only exceptions to this are where you need to move past a seal for safety reasons, to land and retrieve your boat, or to navigate along recognised channels.

No approach zone

The "no approach zone" (shown in red in Figures 2, 3 and 4) is the area directly in front of and behind whales, dolphins or seals. If you see a whale, dolphin or seal while boating, you must not knowingly approach the animal from these directions. It is also illegal to deliberately position your boat in the path of a whale, dolphin or seal.

Caution zone

The "caution zone" (shown in orange in Figures 2, 3 and 4) is the area within 300 metres either side of a whale, 150 metres either side of a dolphin and 50 metres either side of a seal.

When boating in this zone, you must:

- avoid sudden changes in speed or direction
- maintain a constant speed not exceeding 5 knots (8 kph)
- leave the zone if a whale, dolphin or seal shows any sign of disturbance
- not separate any individual whale, dolphin or seal from its group
- not come between a mother and her young.

Reporting infringements

Under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, people who undertake illegal interactions with whales, dolphins and seals can be fined up to \$6,000 or face 6 months imprisonment. Illegal interactions can be reported to the DSE Customer Service Centre on 136 186. If in doubt, report it! You can remain anonymous if you wish.

Figure 2: Whale approach distances

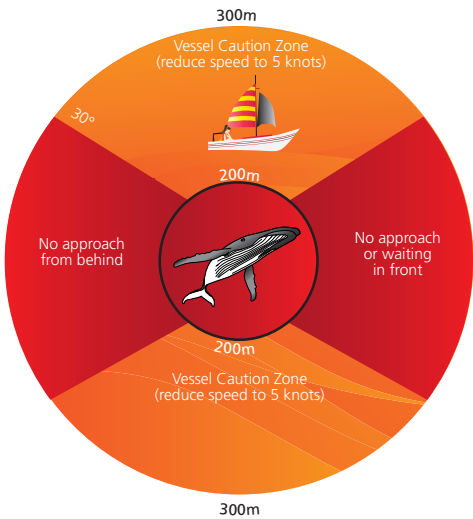


Figure 3: Dolphin approach distances

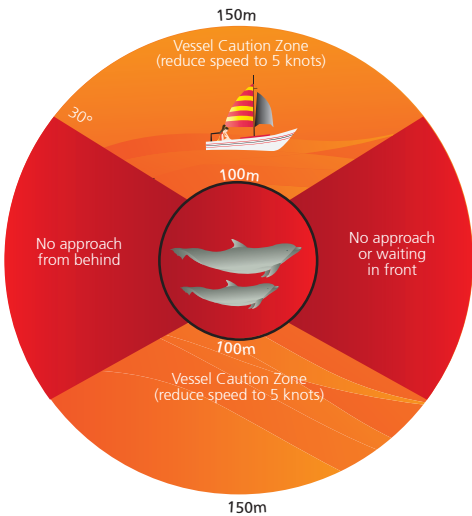


Figure 4: Seal approach distances on water

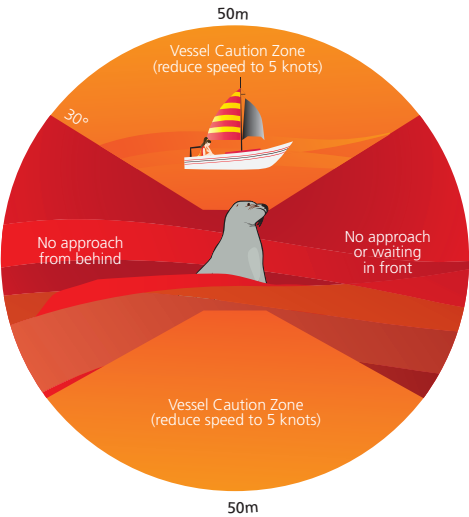


Figure 5: Seal on land approach distances

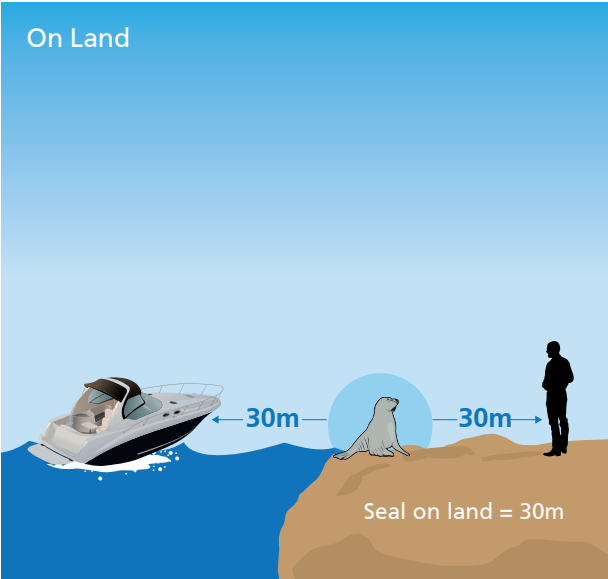
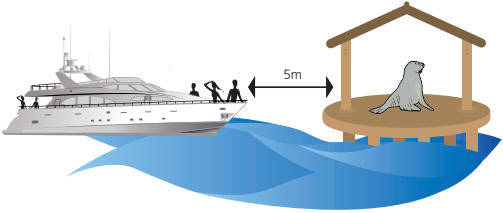
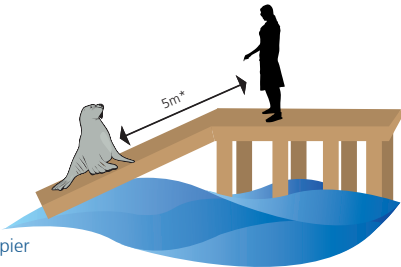


Figure 6: Seal on man-made structures



e.g. Chinaman's Hat



e.g. Boat ramp or pier

* unless for safe passage

In narrow waterways

In waterways less than 300 metres wide, keep at least 30 metres away from dolphins and whales. The only exception to this is where you need to pass closer for safety reasons (see Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7: Approaching a whale in a narrow waterway

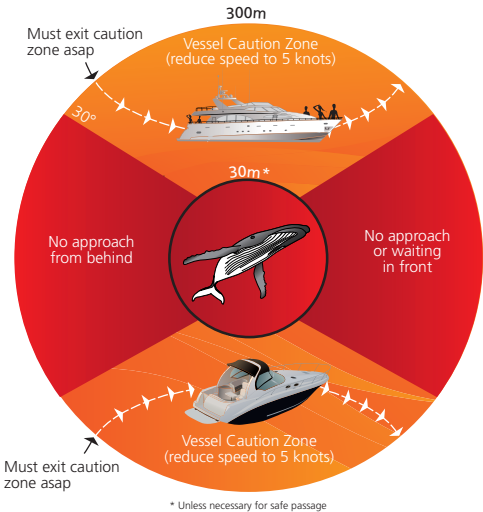
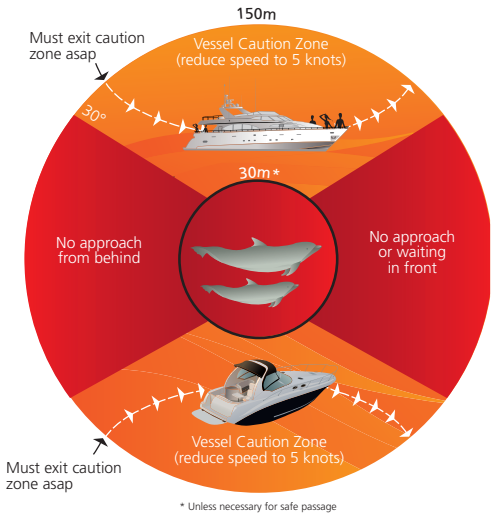


Figure 8: Approaching a dolphin in a narrow waterway



When swimming or surfing

It's important to remember whales, dolphins and seals are large animals and may see you as a threat. There have been numerous cases where humans have been bitten by seals, knocked over by dolphins, or hurt or killed trying to swim with large whales.

To protect you and the animals, you must not swim or surf any closer than 30 metres of a dolphin (see Figure 9) or 50 metres of a whale (see Figure 10).

There are no restrictions on how close you can swim or surf near a seal in the water, but you should be careful as seals can bite or knock you over.

Figure 9: Dolphin approach distances

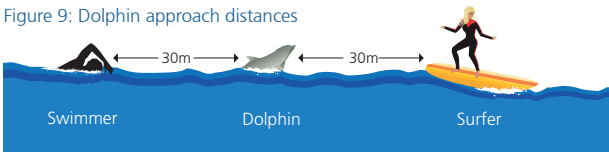
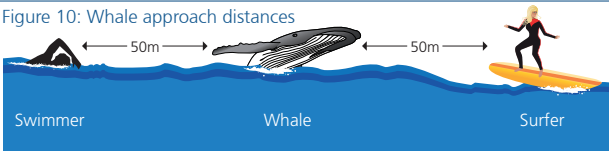
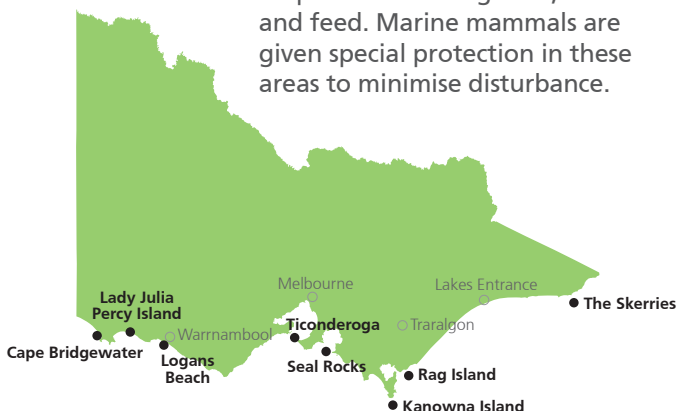


Figure 10: Whale approach distances



Protection zones

There are a number of important areas in Victoria where whales, dolphins and seals gather, breed and feed. Marine mammals are given special protection in these areas to minimise disturbance.



Hands off

Remember that whales, dolphins and seals are wild animals and not pets. They generally don't like being touched and can bite, scratch or slap you with their fins. Numerous bites have been reported by people trying to pat or grab onto these animals. It's not good for the animal and nearly any wild animal, no matter how timid or small, is capable of inflicting injury.

Don't feed wild animals

Never attempt to feed wildlife. Wild animals rarely (if ever) need to be fed by humans. Some animals can become dependant on handouts or aggressive when they don't get what they expect. They can also get sick from eating inappropriate food or injure themselves if they swim too close to boats.

Feeding fish scraps to seals and dolphins can result in people getting bitten. In some cases, habituated animals may have to be euthanised if they continually approach people for food.

Wild animals are hunters and don't need people to survive.

Responsible pet ownership

Wildlife and pets don't mix. Keep pets on a leash or leave them at home. Both pets and wild animals can be injured in unexpected encounters.

When walking your dog, stay at least 50 metres away from seals. This will reduce stress for the seal and the chance of your dog getting bitten. Dogs can transfer diseases to seals and vice versa.

... continued



If you are in a boat, you must not let your dog enter the water within 150 metres of a dolphin, 300 metres of a whale or 50 metres of a seal.

Let wildlife be wild

Limit the time you spend watching whales, dolphins and seals. Encounters with people can be stressful for animals and alter their behaviour. Fifteen minutes is usually reasonable. Chances are you are not the only person to approach the animal that day.

Remember the sea and surrounds are their home; you are visiting, so keep your distance and avoid disturbing them.

Choosing a tour operator

Licensed tour operators are permitted to approach whales, dolphins and seals closer than the distances detailed above, subject to a range of strict operating conditions.

For more information on the rules relevant to tour operators, please visit the DSE website at: www.dse.vic.gov.au

Reporting injured or distressed marine mammals

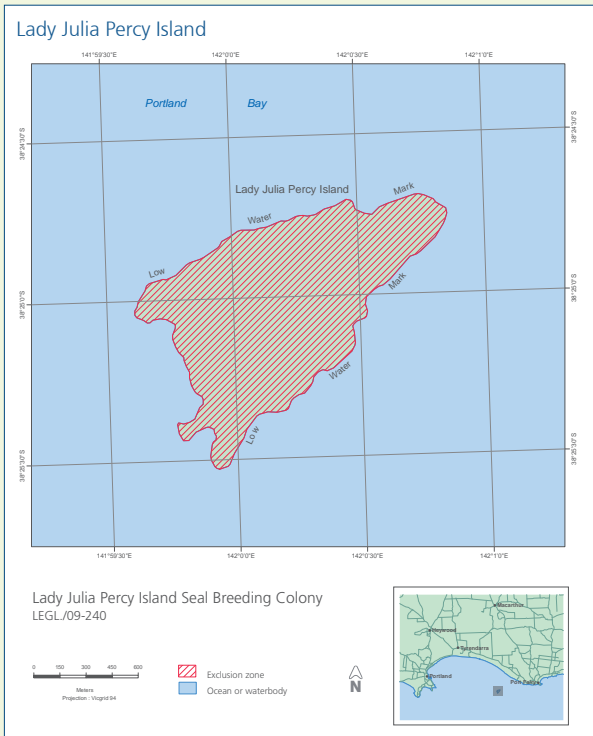
Stranded, entangled, sick or injured whales or dolphins should be reported to the Whale and Dolphin Emergency Hotline on 1300 136 017. Do not report seal or penguin issues to this number.

Stranded, entangled, sick or injured seals or penguins should be reported to the DSE Customer Service Centre on 136 186.



Cape Bridgewater, near Portland

- Boats not permitted within 100 metres of a seal during breeding season (1 November to end of February).
- Outside breeding season, boats not permitted closer than 50 metres of a seal.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres.

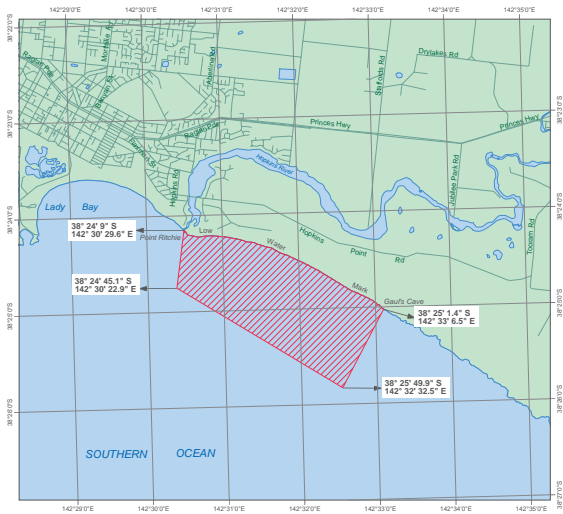


Lady Julia Percy Island, near Port Fairy

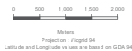
- Boats not permitted within 100 metres of a seal during breeding season (1 November to end of February).
- Outside breeding season, boats not permitted closer than 50 metres of a seal.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres.



Logan's Beach



Logans Beach Exclusion Zone
LEGL/09-035



Exclusion zone
 Ocean or waterbody

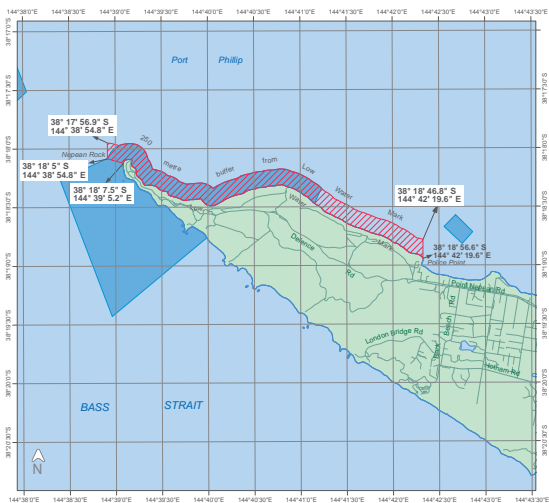


Logan's Beach Exclusion Zone, near Warrnambool

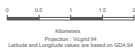
- All boating activity (including jet skis) prohibited in Logan's Beach Exclusion Zone from 1 June to 31 October each year.



Ticonderoga Bay



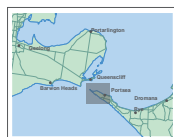
Ticonderoga Bay Sanctuary Zone
LEGL/09-236



Projection: Vicgrid 04

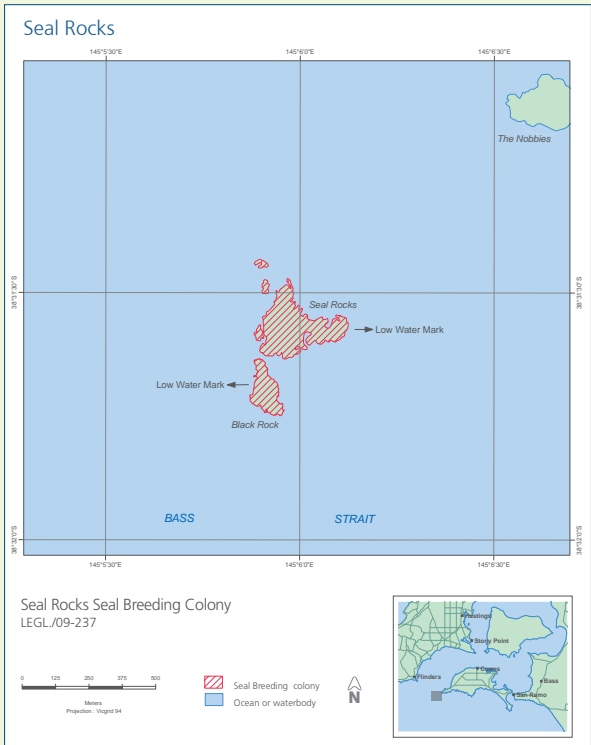
Latitude and Longitude values are based on GDA 04

- Sanctuary Zone
- Ocean or waterbody
- Port Phillip National Park



Ticonderoga Bay Sanctuary Zone, Port Phillip Bay

- Boats must not approach within 200 metres of a whale or dolphin.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres of a whale or dolphin.
- Boats can enter the area, but if a whale or dolphin is present, keep your distance.
- Boats must not exceed 5 knots within 200 metres of shore.



Seal Rocks, Phillip Island

- Boats not permitted within 30 metres of a seal.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres.



Kanowna Island



Kanowna Island



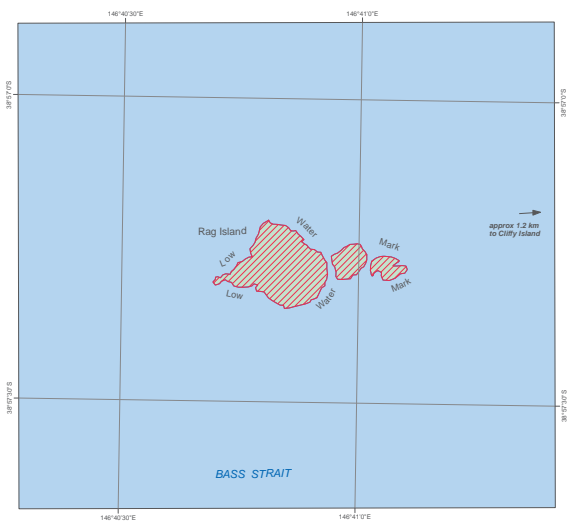
Kanowna Island, Wilson's Promontory

- Boats not permitted within 200 metres of Kanowna Island between November and January or within 50 metres between February and October.

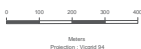
Under the provisions of the *National Parks Act 1975* all classes of vessels, other than those operating under a Licensed Tour Operator Permit, are prohibited to approach within 200 metres of Kanowna Island between November and January or within 50 metres between February and October.





Rag Island



Rag Island Seal Breeding Colony
LEGL/09-241

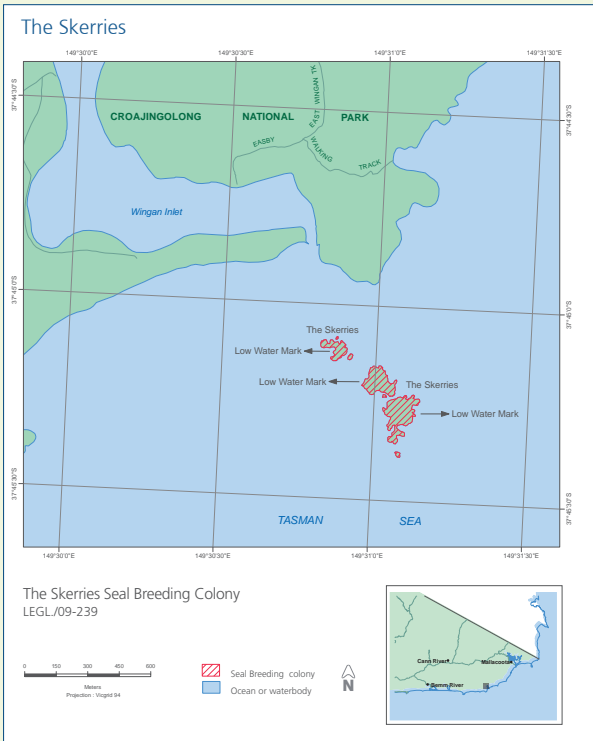


 Seal Breeding colony
 Ocean or waterbody



Rag Island, Cliffy Group east of Wilson's Promontory

- Boats not permitted within 100 metres of a seal during breeding season (1 November to end of February).
- Outside breeding season, boats not permitted closer than 50 metres of a seal.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres.



The Skerries, Croajingalong National Park

- Boats not permitted within 100 metres of a seal during the breeding season (1 November to end of February).
- Outside breeding season, boats not permitted closer than 50 metres of a seal.
- Jet skis not permitted within 300 metres.

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