

Community based sustainable fishing education project

Recreational Fishing and Marine Mammals

Fishing with seals and dolphins

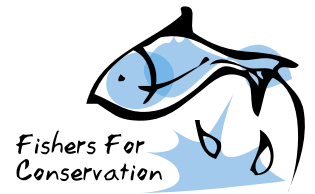
How often is it when we go fishing, by boat, beach or jetty, that we have the pleasure of seeing a dolphin at play or even riding the bow wave of a boat? Generally the sight of a marine mammal is greeted with delight by adults and children alike.

Unfortunately a minority of fishers give the rest of us a bad name by greeting the arrival of marine mammals with curses or worse.

We love our fishing, no matter why....whether it is simply to clear the woes of the day away, to eat, or for sport and family fun. We can co-exist and share with our fellow ocean dwellers, we just need to give them a little space and respect. It is sometimes thought that if a sea lion, seal or dolphin comes into 'our fishing patch' it chases away our fish! For some people the natural reaction is to chase the mammal away - perhaps by throwing rocks or anchors, lashing out with oars, waving arms, cursing...none of this helps.



In South Australia all dolphins, whales, seals and sea lions are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. It is illegal to kill or harm them in any way.



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Seals and dolphins are fascinating, beautiful to watch and form an important part of the ecosystem that fishing relies on. Read over the page for guidelines on what to do when fishing brings you in contact with marine mammals.

Photos:

Top and right © Ron and Valerie Taylor
Left © Ocean Eco Experience



Some points to consider:

- The fish don't go anywhere, they hide for a while. Given time and a bit of burley, they will be back.
- The sea lion, seal or dolphin may be in for an easy feed, if this is the case – it will catch a fish and leave. Alternatively it may be there because it wants to see you. They are as curious of us as we are of them.
- Fishing close by a seal or sea lion colony is not the right thing to do, doing so is asking for trouble.

What to do when fishing brings you in contact with dolphins, sea lions and seals

Let your own common sense prevail:

- Pull your line out of the water if you have a visit from a seal, sea lion or dolphin. Take a short break from fishing sit back, relax and enjoy. The mammal will eventually swim off of its own accord. The more noise you make and the more arm waving you do, the longer the seal -or especially a sea lion- will stay.
- If dolphins or seals approach your boat as you are steaming along - maintain or reduce your speed. There really is no need to speed to keep a dolphins interest - they will only be interested as long as they want to be. Do Not turn suddenly, go around in circles, chase them or stop suddenly. This can potentially and seriously injure them.
- If mammals are feeding, the best thing is to leave them be and give them a wide berth. Watch them from a distance and enjoy the spectacle.
- If a wild ocean mariner enjoys your company longer than anticipated and you are not enjoying the devoted attention in return, pull anchor and move on. Come back to the spot an hour or so later – the fish will still be there.
- Litter kills! Discarded objects can entangle, injure and sometimes kill inquisitive marine mammals such as seals. Try to recover any lost fishing line, or any other litter such as ropes or plastic bags, especially if it is non-biodegradable. Whether it is your litter or not - pick it up and dispose of it wisely onshore. Avoid the use of stainless steel or alloy hooks as these remain dangerous in the aquatic environment for longer than the standard hooks.
- Throwing things at a seal or sea lion is pointless and illegal.
- Trawling (trolling) baits or lures near seal colonies is asking for trouble. Considering the potential damage, lost line, gear and tangle risk to the seal (and angler). Towing shiny, brightly coloured enticing toys for seals to play with at their front door just doesn't make sense.

If seals or dolphins enjoy your company longer than wanted, pull anchor and move. Come back to the spot an hour or so later – the fish will still be there.



- If you happen to be going fishing on a beach, or pull up at an island in your boat and come across some seals or sea lions lazing in the sun, keep your distance. Bypass casually but quietly around behind them, don't get between them and the sea – the sea is their refuge. Seals and sea lions are not naturally aggressive, however our innocent intrusion can make them feel threatened and defensive, especially at breeding time. Respect them as you do yourself and others around you.

What to do if you see a stranded, injured or dead marine mammal in SA waters:

Report to the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) on any of the following numbers: 0417 801 084, 0400 939 443 or 0400 998 656.

Ring the 24 hour FISHWATCH hotline 1800 065 522

Contact the South Australian Museum whale strandings number on 0412 708 012

If you find a dead marine mammal:

Call the local National Parks and Wildlife SA Office, 24 hour FISHWATCH hotline 1800 065 522.

Contact Dr Catherine Kemper or David Stemmer at the South Australian Museum on 08 8203 7458 or 0412 708 012

If you see a marine mammal being harassed: Contact local police. Report to DEH on the numbers above.



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme



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