

## **Code of conduct for the travelling mammal watcher.**

### **General.**

- **Avoid deliberately disturbing mammals and/or their habitats. The welfare of the animal should always come first.**
- Stay on roads, trails and paths to keep habitat disturbance to a minimum and never enter private land without the landowner's explicit permission.
- Stay a sensible distance away from the animal. This will depend on the species involved and whether you are on foot, in a vehicle or in a boat. Formal regulations exist for cetacean watching in many areas.
- Never follow a clearly stressed animal for better views, approach nests or dens too closely or get between a mother and young.
- Using recordings, e.g. to call in primates, or lures to call in predators should be discouraged.

### **Bat roosts**

- Avoid disturbing bat roosts particularly at hibernation sites or when bats have young.
- Never handle bats without the required licences. You should also ensure that you are vaccinated against the risk of contracting rabies.
- Do not use bright lights in bat roosts and avoid using flash photography wherever possible.

### **Spotlighting**

- Where possible use lower light to search for eye-shine and only use brighter light once you have found a mammal.
- Where possible switch to green or red filters when watching an animal and ensure that the light is shone to the right or left of the mammal not directly at the eyes.
- Do not keep the light on an animal for more than a few minutes particularly at sites where spotlighting occurs regularly and mammals are frequently disturbed. The welfare of the animal should always come before a photo for social media.

### **Small mammal trapping**

- Think carefully before carrying out any small mammal trapping abroad as even the most careful small mammal trapping creates a genuine risk of mammals being injured or even killed.
- Trapping should only be carried out in countries where it is legal to do so and with the appropriate licences.
- Small mammal trapping should only be undertaken with great care and should not be undertaken in extreme heat or cold where the risks increase dramatically. If you do intend trapping it is important to attend small mammal trapping training offered by local naturalist groups and conservation organisations first to limit the risks to the animals.
- Traps should have suitable food for any species likely to be trapped, including insectivores, and should have adequate bedding to enable trapped animals to stay warm particularly in cold conditions.
- Traps should be checked at gaps of no more than every 4-5 hours and should not be left overnight.

### **Baiting**

- Baiting should only ever be used sparingly. Repeated baiting at a site increases the risk of disease and creates a dependency.
- Live baiting to attract predators should be discouraged.

### **Reporting**

- Please write a meaningful report at the end of the trip and post it on [mammalwatching.com](http://mammalwatching.com). Don't just use other people's reports and rely on others to do the hard work.
- Try to include details of the logistics on how to get to sites not purely lists of species seen as the latter are of limited value to future visitors. If using guides include their contact details in reports.
- Be realistic about what you report seeing. Some reports on [mammalwatching.com](http://mammalwatching.com) seem to be overly ambitious with regard to the small mammals being reported and include species that are not reliably identifiable in the field.
- If possible please submit data to the relevant local organisation or where threatened species are involved to the relevant IUCN Specialist Group.

### **Organised tours**

- Guides wanting to please clients will often push the boundaries to unacceptable levels. Please encourage them (and anyone else you see behaving inappropriately) to adopt these guidelines for the benefit of the animals. If you feel guides are getting too close don't be afraid to say so.
- Tip guides for good practice not just for finding you the species.

### **And finally**

- **Last, but not least, please help locals appreciate the value of their wildlife and help protect the wildlife and their habitats. Try to be generous with your thanks and tips when you can see animals being protected by people with much less than we have. Respect local people, their land and their customs. Avoid upsetting locals or being disrespectful. The negative effects of such behaviour can cause considerable problems in the long term.**