



CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

Distribution: General

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.29

Original: English

SUSTAINABLE BOAT-BASED MARINE¹ WILDLIFE WATCHING²

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th Meeting (Quito, 4-9 November 2014)

Aware that tourism is a growing market and that wildlife watching is an important market segment;

Also aware that wildlife watching activities in coastal and marine environments are growing fast, and that the management of boat-based wildlife watching presents additional challenges to those in the terrestrial environment;

Noting that commercial wildlife watching operations using boats in order to view a number of migratory species, including, but not limited to whales, dolphins, porpoises, dugongs, manatees, seals, sharks, rays, birds and turtles, are increasing;

Emphasizing that some marine species can be observed from land and that this may provide a low-impact alternative, or complement, to boat-based wildlife watching where it is feasible;

Recognizing that the revenues generated through wildlife watching can provide direct and indirect benefits to local communities, enhancing their economic and social status;

Recognizing further that when wildlife watching is managed carefully, the revenues generated can benefit the conservation of the target species and their ecosystem;

Noting that wildlife watching activities can lead to positive changes in attitudes towards nature conservation;

Conscious that the sustainability of wildlife watching operations depends upon the careful maintenance of the resources that ultimately generate the income, namely the target species and their habitats;

¹ The definition of 'marine' shall include all marine and transitional waters i.e. those waters between the land and the sea which includes fjords, estuaries, lagoons, deltas and rias. Additionally, these guidelines should be applied to freshwater cetaceans e.g. river dolphins.

² As far as is appropriate to the principles outlined in this Resolution this includes wildlife watching activities occurring from vessels and shore.

Conscious also, as outlined in Resolution.11.23 on Conservation Implications of Cetacean Culture, that disturbance caused by excessive exposure to wildlife watching boats may lead to changes in the target species' behaviour and as a result, to negative consequences, such as emigration, reduced reproduction or reductions of the population;

Appreciating the extensive work that has been undertaken in other international fora with respect to whale watching activities, in particular the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (ACCOBAMS), the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP/CEP) and the International Sanctuary for the Protection of Marine Mammals (Pelagos Sanctuary); and

Acknowledging that a number of governments have already enacted progressive national regulations or guidelines in order to ensure the sustainability of commercial boat-based wildlife watching and some governments prohibit associated interactions including touching, feeding or swimming with wild cetaceans;

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Urges* Parties, in whose areas of jurisdiction commercial operations involving marine boat-based wildlife watching take place, to adopt appropriate measures, such as national guidelines, codes of conduct, and if necessary, national legislation, binding regulations or other regulatory tools, to promote ecologically sustainable wildlife watching;
2. *Recommends* that Parties in developing such measures take into account the following guiding principles based on which the boat-based wildlife watching activities should be conducted:
 - (a) The activities should not have negative effects on the long-term survival of populations and habitats; and
 - (b) The activities should have minimal impact on the behaviour of watched and associated animals;
3. *Further recommends* that Parties consider the measures as appropriate and depending on the target species in particular with respect to the need for provisions concerning:
 - (a) Licensing or permitting of operators, including training, reporting and compliance requirements;
 - (b) Level of activity, including the possible setting of daily, seasonal and/or geographical exclusion areas and limitations on the number of vessels;
 - (c) Method of approach, including provisions on distance to be maintained and direction and speed of vessels, as well as careful and sensitive navigation in the vicinity of animals; and

- (d) Interaction, including prohibition of operators' behaviours that disturb animals or provoke interactions, unless there is good scientific evidence that this will not have negative consequences, or negatively impact the habitat;
4. *Recommends further* that, insofar as they are applicable, measures adopted by the Parties also cover opportunistic wildlife watching during other commercial and private boat-based activities;
5. *Strongly encourages* Parties to provide that the measures take into account the size and status of any wildlife watching programme and the specific needs of all affected species;
6. *Also strongly encourages* Parties to review these measures periodically to enable any impacts detected through research and monitoring of the populations to be taken into account as necessary;
7. *Requests* Parties that have adopted measures as described in paragraph 1 for boat-based wildlife watching activities to provide the Secretariat with copies of the relevant documents;
8. *Encourages* Parties to ACCOBAMS, the IWC, SPREP and UNEP/CEP to implement fully the guidelines and principles already adopted or developed in these fora;
9. *Requests* the Scientific Council, subject to availability of resources, to review existing agreed guidelines (such as those referenced in paragraph 7), existing good practice and underpinning scientific evidence of the issues of concern, and based on this review develop guidelines as appropriate on marine boat-based wildlife watching for different taxonomic groups, differentiated if necessary by geographic areas; and
10. *Further requests* the Scientific Council, subject to availability of resources, to conduct periodic reviews of the state of knowledge of the impacts of boat-based wildlife watching activities on migratory species and to recommend refined and adjusted measures or guidelines as appropriate.