



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA reminds beachgoers to be dolphin smart during spring break
Please help us keep dolphins wild

Dolphins are charismatic animals beloved by so many visiting Florida during March and April, but biologists ask, *please don't love them to death.*

In an effort to better protect dolphins along Florida's coasts, NOAA is reminding beachgoers of some simple ways to safely enjoy them from a distance.

Through targeted messaging, aerial banners and social media posts, biologists are hopeful that people will listen and respect wild dolphins during their visit.

Two Facebook pages, ["Don't Feed Wild Dolphins"](#) and ["Dolphin SMART"](#) are now dedicated to educating people on why it is so dangerous for dolphins to be fed by humans and how to select a conservation focused dolphin sightseeing tour.

Beachgoers will see aerial banners along the beaches off Panama City three weeks in March 7, 14 and 21. The message will be "Don't feed wild dolphins! It's illegal." #dontfeedwilddolphins

NOAA is focusing education efforts in areas where unsafe and inappropriate human interactions with dolphins are high. Feeding with, swimming with and interacting with wild dolphins in any way is dangerous to the animals, potentially to people and against the law as dolphins are protected by the [Marine Mammal Protection Act.](#)

Viewing dolphins in their natural habitat is an educational and enriching experience if done safely and responsibly. Below are some important *do's and don'ts* to remember when viewing dolphins.

- **DON'T:** Feed or attempt to feed wild dolphins: it is harmful and illegal. Visit, www.dontfeedwilddolphins.org
- **DO:** Stay at least 50 yards away from dolphins when viewing from a vessel or jet ski. Use binoculars for best viewing.
- **DO:** Limit time spent observing marine mammals to 30 minutes or less.
- **DO:** Avoid making loud or sudden noises near dolphins.
- **DO:** Move away slowly if a dolphin's behavior indicates the animal is **stressed or disturbed**.
- **DO:** Look Before You Book! Book wild dolphin viewing tours with businesses that responsibly view dolphins in the wild and help dolphin conservation.
- **DON'T:** Pursue, swim with, pet or touch wild dolphins, even if they approach you.
- **DON'T:** Encircle or entrap dolphins with vessel(s).
- **DON'T:** Operate or maneuver vessel in a manner that may cause dolphins to change their current behaviors. Specifically, do not direct vessel or accelerate toward dolphin(s) with the intent of creating a pressure wake to bow or wake-ride.
- **DON'T:** Separate mother/calf pairs.

Prevent watercraft related injuries!

- **DO:** Put your vessel's engine in neutral if in close vicinity of dolphins.
- **DON'T:** Drive watercraft through or over groups of dolphins.

To obtain photos, speak to a NOAA biologist or for more information please contact Allison Garrett at 727-330-0309 or at Allison.Garrett@noaa.gov

For more information on dolphins please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/bottlenose_dolphins/index.html

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