



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Look, But Don't Get Too Close! Be 'SMART' When Viewing Wild Dolphins

Sightings of dolphins in the wild, either from the shore or from a boat, can be the highlight of a relaxing day on the water or even your entire winter getaway to sun and sand.

Dolphins are captivating, even awe-inspiring, but they are also wild animals that deserve our respect and our admiration — from a distance.

When viewing wild dolphins,

[NOAA's Fisheries Service](#) asks you to be "SMART." The SMART acronym is an easy way to remember the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:



Wild dolphin at play.

[Download here.](#) (Credit: Dolphin Ecology Program)



[Look, But Don't Get Too Close!](#)



[New Online, a NOAA Civil War Collection](#)



[NOAA-Smithsonian Partnership Debuts New Web Portal](#)



[NOAA Joins Forces with Partners to Protect Sea Turtles](#)



[NOAA Teacher at Sea Aids Gulf Oil Spill Research Efforts](#)

[Archive](#)



Giving the animals space reduces the likelihood of disturbing or interrupting behaviors important to their health and wellbeing such as resting, feeding, mating or playing. A little extra distance also increases your chances of observing these natural behaviors.

SMARTer Tour Operators to Choose From

To help maintain the health of wild dolphin populations, NOAA and its conservation partners developed [Dolphin SMART](#), a stewardship program that annually recognizes tour businesses who operate responsibly in and around wild dolphin habitats and educate their patrons on dolphin conservation. The program recognizes tour operators in the Florida Keys, along the southwest coast of Florida, and in Orange Beach, Ala.

“Dolphin SMART tour operators are committed to conserving the health of local dolphin populations,” said Jessica Powell, NOAA Fisheries Dolphin SMART regional coordinator. “Visitors who book with a Dolphin SMART operator can feel confident that they are participating in responsible tourism.”

NOAA encourages visitors to the Florida Keys, southwest Florida and Alabama to book with a recognized Dolphin SMART operator. Dolphin SMART operators provide an enhanced educational tour experience for their patrons and are trained on dolphin ecology. These operators are equipped to recognize common dolphin behaviors and potential signs of disturbance.

How do you find a Dolphin SMART tour operator? A [list](#) is available online at www.dolphinSMART.org. Vessels of participating businesses fly a Dolphin SMART flag and post an official program decal dated the current calendar year.

More About Dolphin SMART

Dolphin SMART originated in NOAA's [Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#) in 2007. It has since expanded Orange Beach, Ala., and to southwest Florida where five tour operators joined the ranks of recognized Dolphin SMART businesses this year. The program is expected to launch in Hawaii in 2011.

The Dolphin SMART program is coordinated by [NOAA's Fisheries Service](#) and [Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#), [Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society](#) and [Dolphin Ecology Project](#). Visit www.dolphinSMART.org to learn more.

Posted Nov. 16, 2010 

