

The purpose of this policy is to give clear direction for staff and customers and ensure our interactions with wildlife are sustainable and promote best practice. Our core objective is to leave a visited area with minimum impact so others enjoy the same experience, whether that is in half an hour, a week or a generation later.

Our focus is on providing exceptional wildlife encounters in the wild. To offer these experiences on an on-going basis there are core guidelines which we ask that you to respect.

Wildlife should not be fed

For millions of years they have fed themselves and so long as their habitat is maintained, nature will take care of its own. Feeding wildlife can result in them: becoming dependent on people; contracting disease; or developing digestive problems from inappropriate foods. Most kangaroos and wallabies are lactose intolerant so processed food like white bread causes problems. It also leads to them becoming habituated, losing their fear and becoming aggressive towards us.

Observe without disturbance

Please maintain a sufficient distance from wildlife to ensure safety and that animals remain undisturbed. Careful observation of their behaviour enables us to ensure that no disturbance occurs. We need to behave in a quiet and respectful manner. This can require guides to politely but firmly insist that guests modify their behaviour if likely to cause disturbance. Amending the behaviour of other people encountered in the bush is also expected of our guides. This leadership will ensure the sustainability of our industry.

We aim to experience natural behaviour not fear and distrust. If kangaroos or wallabies at rest exhibit signs of getting up, back off a few metres and they will often relax and go back to resting. We must read the situation and amend our behaviour accordingly. Put the needs of animals first. Known sensitive sites and times such as courtship or breeding season needs localised action - avoiding known nest hollows of Glossy Black Cockatoos or beach nesting sites of Hooded Plovers for example. Breeding time for Australian sea-lions brings increased stresses in the colony and increased risk to observers, so guides must respond to this in an active and dynamic manner.

Handling

Wild animals should not be handled as species such as echidnas can suffer from "capture myopathy", which is death or shock due to handling stress. If encountered in the open, echidnas often head for cover. They should not be encircled to prevent their escape, even if it means losing a photo opportunity. Wildlife should not be frightened to make them run, fly, hop, sit up or whatever else guests might demand to observe.

Encountering others in the field

Whilst we aim to share as much solitude as possible, we do sometimes encounter others in the bush. Try to minimise our impact on the experience of others and trust that they give us the same respect. If we passing another group we should always go behind them and move as quietly as possible. In short, "do unto others...", basic manners and consideration go a long way in the bush.

Habitat disturbance

When walking through the bush, any rocks and logs (which provide habitats for small animals) should be left alone or replaced if dislodged. Plants are also wildlife and provide important habitat, so please respect the needs of plants also. Keep to paths to avoid trampling fragile plants or in certain circumstances, spread out to avoid creating a path. If, for education or interpretive reasons, you want to gather a few leaves or flowers to pass around, choose common species in areas where they are abundant.

Roadkill

Unfortunately you will see many animals which have been killed on the road. Much of this occurs at night when animals are on the move. A positive is that this indicates how abundant some species are. If an animal is hit whilst on tour we have a moral and legal responsibility to check the condition of the animal. If this occurs guides should stop in a safe place and explain that the animal needs to be checked. If the animal is killed, please remove the carcass from the road to prevent secondary roadkill of scavengers such as goannas and birds of prey.

Female marsupials may carry young that can be saved, in which case keep the young warm in a makeshift "pouch" and seek advice from Parks and Wildlife if appropriate or deal with it at the end of the day. Hairless pouch young should be humanely destroyed, as should critically injured individuals of other species. However guides must avoid risk of personal injury in attempting to assist or humanely destroy an animal. If necessary, report the incident to Parks and Wildlife who can then take responsibility.

External Certification

These guidelines form part of our commitment to sustainability which has been certified through National Ecotourism Accreditation. This certification provides industry, protected area managers and consumers with an assurance that a nature tourism or ecotourism product is delivered with a commitment to environmental, economic and social sustainability. Outcomes are: sound business management practices and operational procedures, best practice environmental management and quality guest experiences.

Our commitment should result in guests learning about the environment, minimising their impact through appropriate behaviour, wise resource use, contribute to the conservation of the environment and maximise returns to our local community.

For further information please visit ecotourism.org.au or exceptionalkangarooisland.com.

Our policies are the reflection of our values and should direct all of our activities

commitment t pride t teamwork t honesty t safety t respect t satisfaction t sustainability t discipline t reliability