

Think Kind 2018 Student Competition

By Olivia Doughty, aged 11, Kaikoura Suburban School

Title: Can We Better Protect The Marine Mammals Of Kaikoura?

I moved to Kaikoura in September 2017. Over the summer, as I spent time with my family around the Kaikoura Peninsula, I noticed many people were getting far too close to the wildlife on land and in the sea which causes them distress. I decided to find out what information was available to locals and tourists about what to do and also to see if there was anything else that could be done to help educate them.

I started my project by doing some research:

1. Looked on the internet to see what information was available
2. Looked at the local signs at the boat ramps and car parks
3. Visited the local tourist information centre
4. Talked to the local DOC warden
5. Talked to a Friend of Seals volunteer
6. Interviewing 25 locals and tourists

Looked on the internet

I found some very useful information available on the Department of conservation site. Here is an example:

Sharing our Coasts with marine mammals article -

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/marine-mammals/sharing-our-coasts-with-marine-mammals/>

Looked at the local signs at the boat ramps and car parks

I visited the local boat ramps and beach launch spots to see if there was an signs and what they said.



We found these informative DOC wooden signs at some of the ramps but not at the main boat ramp in South Bay

We then went to Kean Point which is a local seal colony.. We only found one tiny wooden DOC sign to the far left of the area, overgrown with bushes so it was hard to find.

We spent some time watching the tourists and what they did. I was sad for the seals because people were getting way too close to the seals, sticking phones in their faces and trying to touch them. Here are two pictures I took:



Visited the local tourist information centre

I popped into the local Kaikoura isite to see if they had any educational leaflets for tourists. There wasn't any and the assistant didn't seem to know very much.

Talked to the local DOC warden

I went to the local DOC office and met with Simon Litchwark. He showed me some great leaflets and some new stickers that DOC have created. (See scanned copy at the end of this document)

Talked to a Friend of Seals volunteer

I found out that prior to the Kaikoura earthquake there used to be a thriving group of 8-10 volunteers, organised by Josie, who would talk to tourists in the key areas where tourists view the seals. Sadly since the earthquake there are now only one or two people left as volunteers. I met with Peter Hallinan, one of the wonderful volunteers. Here is a picture of me and Peter. The sad thing is Peter lives in Christchurch and only comes to Kaikoura a few days a month.

Interviewed 25 locals and tourists

I created a questionnaire form (see copy below) and interviewed 25 people to find out what people knew about how to behave about marine mammals and compared it with DOC recommendations.



COPY OF MY QUESTIONNAIRE

I'm doing a project about safe viewing of the Marine Mammals in Kaikoura.

Name: _____

Do you live in Kaikoura: Yes / No

Seals

How far away from a seal on land should you stay?

Would you try and touch one: Yes / No

Can you feed them? Yes / No

How many boats are allowed within 300 meters of a seal? 1 2 3 4 5

How far from seals on the shore should you stay in your boat?

Can you swim with seals? Yes / No

Dolphins

How slow should you go in your boat around dolphins?

How many boats are allowed within 300 meters of dolphins? 1 2 3 4 5

If you come across a pod of dolphins do you try and stay: in front behind to the side

Can you swim with dolphins? Yes / No

Whales

How many boats are allowed within 300 meters of a whale? 1 2 3 4 5

How far away from a whale should you try and stay?

How far away from a whale with her calf should you stay?

Can you swim with whales? Yes / No

General

Have you read any leaflets or brochures about viewing marine mammals at sea? Yes / No

Have you seen any DOC signs? Yes / No

Have you seen information on the internet? Yes / No

General Comments: _____

After each person completed the form I gave them an answer sheet which I had put together from the DOC information.

Sharing our coast with mammals

If you see whales, dolphins or seals while boating or visiting the coast, these simple rules will ensure an enjoyable encounter for you and for them.

Rules around marine mammals

General

- Do not disturb, harass or make loud noises near marine mammals.
- Contact should be ceased should marine mammals show any signs of becoming disturbed or alarmed.
- Do not feed or throw any rubbish near marine mammals.
- Avoid sudden or repeated changes in speed or direction of any vessel or aircraft near a marine mammal.
- There should be no more than 3 vessels and/or aircraft within 300 m of any marine mammal.

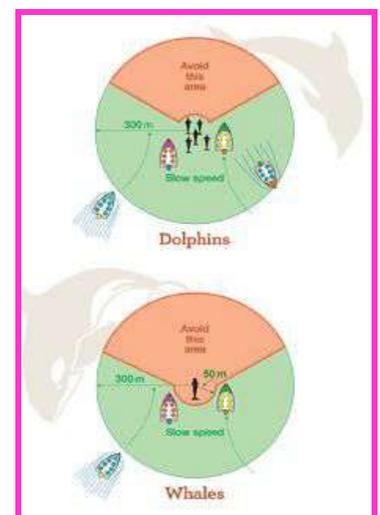
On shore

- Give seals and sea lions space. Where practicable stay at least 10 m away.
- Avoid coming between fur seals and the sea.
- Keep dogs on a leash and well away.
- Where practicable, do not drive vehicles closer than 50 m of a marine mammal.
- Never attempt to touch seals or sea lions – they can be aggressive and often carry diseases.

How boats must approach whales and dolphins

At sea

- Ensure that you travel no faster than idle or 'no wake' speed within 300 m of any marine mammal.
- Approach whales and dolphins from behind and to the side.
- Do not circle them, obstruct their path or cut through any group.

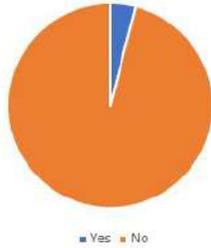


- Keep at least 50 m from whales (or 200 m from any large whale mother and calf or calves).
 - Swimming with whales is not permitted.
 - You may swim with seals and dolphins but not with dolphin pods with very young calves.
 - Avoid approaching closer than 20 m to seals and sea lions hauled out on shore.
 - Idle slowly away. Speed may be gradually increased to out-distance dolphins and should not exceed 10 knots within 300m of any dolphin.
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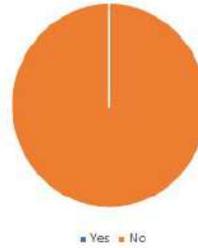
Here is the results of my questionnaire:



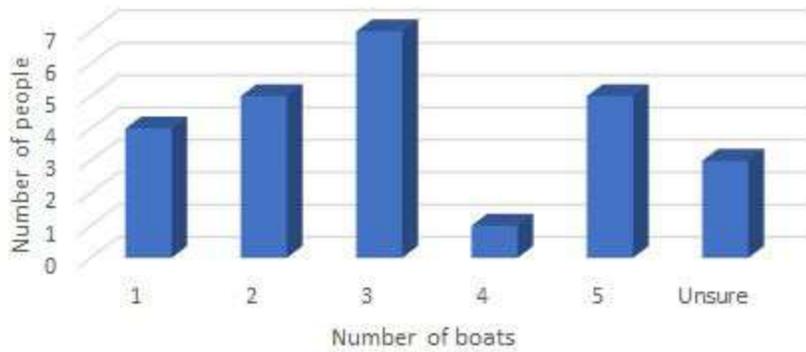
Would you try and touch a seal?
A: No!



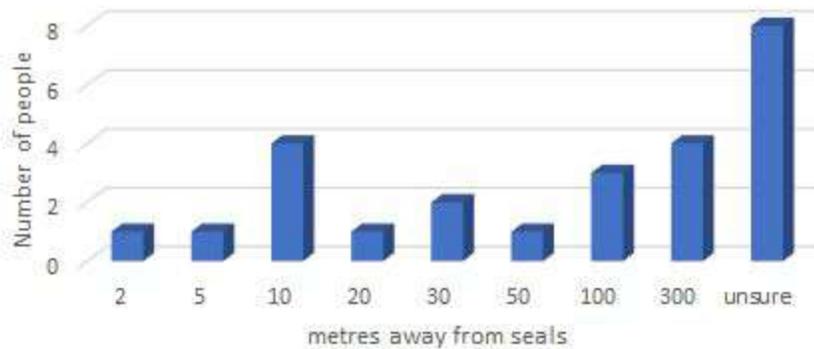
can you feed a seal?
A: You shouldn't



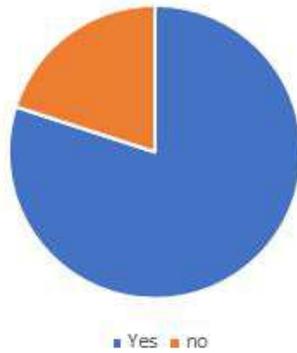
How many boats are allowed within 300 meters
of a seal?
A: 3 boats



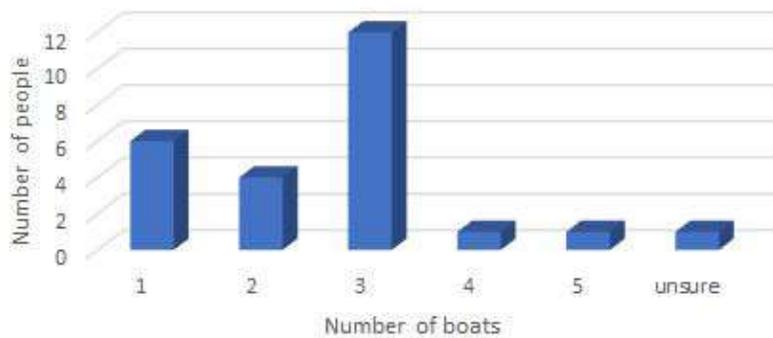
How far from seals on the shore should you stay
in your boat?
A: 20 m



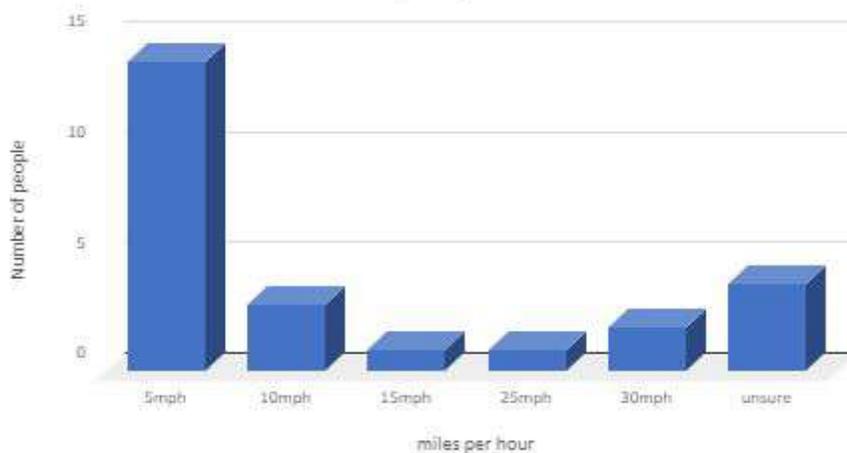
Can you swim with seals?
A: With a commercial operator



How many boats are allowed within 300 meters of dolphins?
A: 3 boats



How slow should you go in your boat around Dolphins?
A: Slow speed, no wake

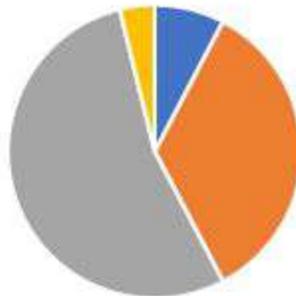


Can you swim with dolphins?
A: Yes, ideally with commerical operator



■ Yes ■ No

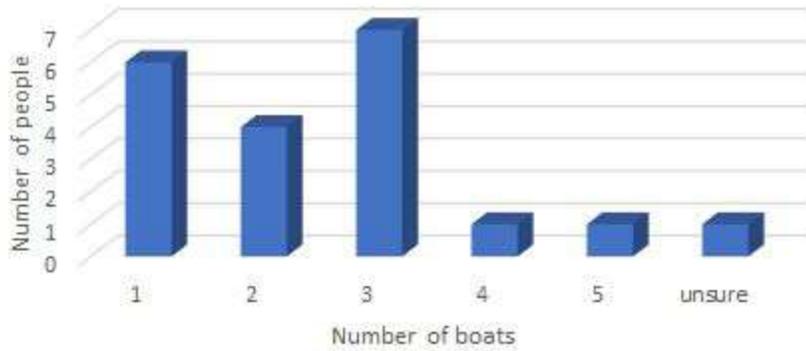
If you come across a pod of dolphins do you try
and stay: in front behind to the side
A: Behind and/or to the side



■ Front ■ Behind ■ Side ■ Unsure

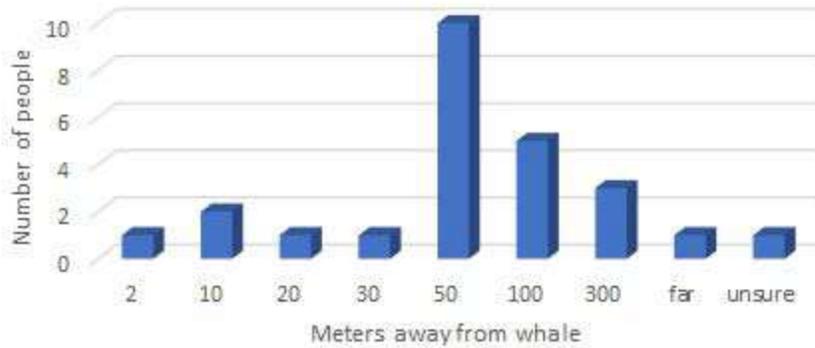
How many boats are allowed within 300 meters of a whale?

A: 3 boats



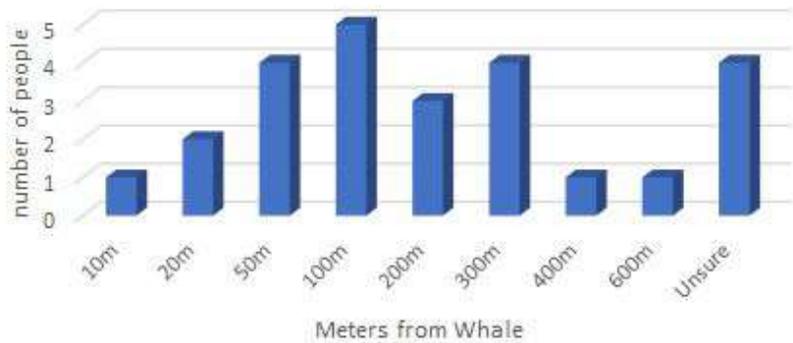
How far away from a whale should you try and stay?

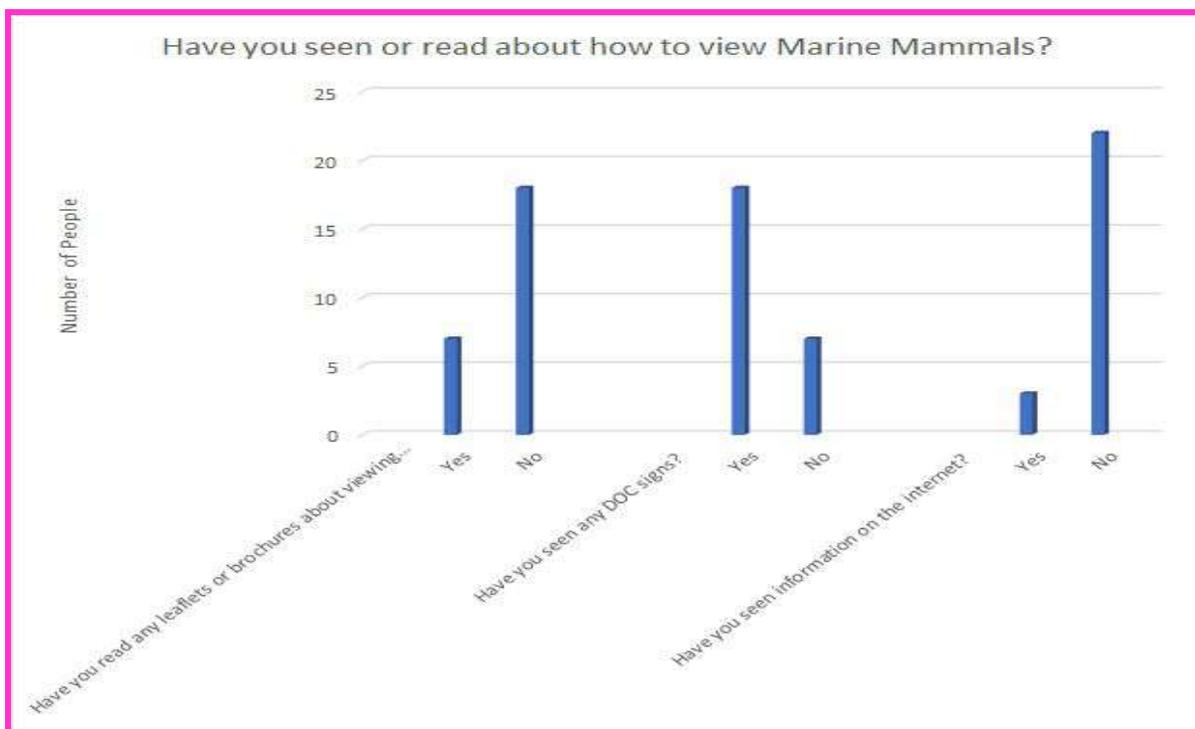
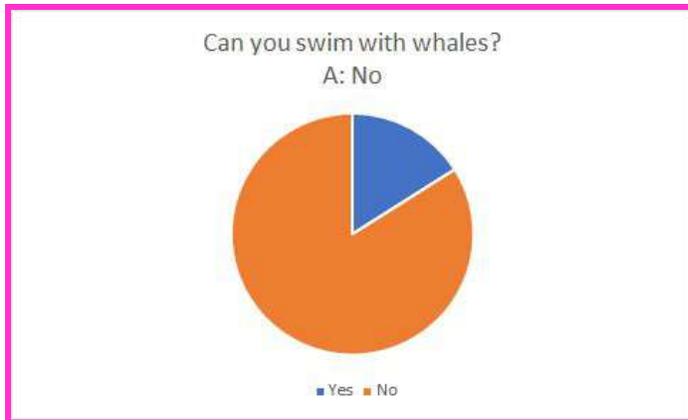
A: 100 m



How far away from a whale with her calf should you stay?

A: 300 m





Results:

Overall I feel that many local people knew quite a lot about Kaikoura marine mammals which is great. Non locals had much less knowledge.

I did notice that even locals were not very sure how far away to stay in a boat to a seal, whale or a whale with her calf.

Less than half the people interviewed knew to stay 10 meters or more from a seal on land.

A large percentage of people interviewed had not seen any leaflets or information on the internet.

Going forward:

1. I'd like to talk with Peter from Friends of the Seals volunteer group to see if I could train as a seal volunteer. I'd also like to help encourage other people to join the group so more people are talking to tourists at places such as Kean Point.
2. I'd like to go to the main boat ramp on busy summer weekends and hand out the DOC leaflets and stickers and talk to the boat drivers.
3. I've written to DOC with some suggestions of how to get their information out to more people. (See copy of my letter and poster idea below).

Thank you for taking the time to read my project.

Olivia Doughty

Think Kind Project
Olivia Doughty, 242 Esplanade, Kalkoura 7300

Simon Litchwark
Department of Conservation
Ludstone Road
Kaikoura 7300

29th July 2018

Dear Simon,

It was good to meet you a few weeks ago. I have now finished my Think Kind project. As promised please find enclosed a copy of my project.

Thank you for introducing me to Peter and showing me the great DOC leaflets and stickers you have.

I have a few ideas of how we could very easily improve the education of people about the local Marine Mammals.

1. **Boat Ramp Signs** - you have a great sign at Jimmy Armers Boat Launch and the smaller boat ramp in South Bay but there is no sign at the main boat ramp. Would you consider putting one up? Perhaps also a waterproof leaflet stand.

2. **Kean Point Seal Colony** - I noticed there was only one, very small /doc sign, which was to the far right and slightly hidden by some bushes.

Would you consider putting in a bigger / more signage over by the walkway down onto the rocks? Many of the tourists can't read English so perhaps a very simple picture might be useful such as a seal with a circle around it and showing how far 10 meters is. I.e roughly as long as a big bus. I've created a simple drawing below.



3. isite - when I went to the local isite they didn't have any literature to hand out. Could leaflets be provided to be handed out to tourists?

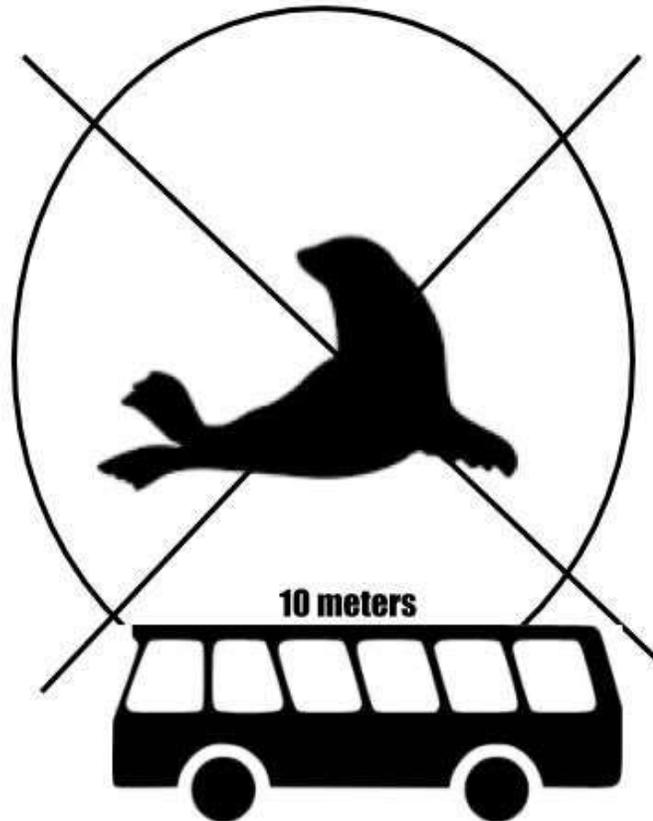
4. Stickers - you have some amazing new stickers. Will these be handed out to locals to put in cars and on their boat trailers? I'd be happy to help.
5. Social media - the internet is a powerful tool to help raise awareness. Could a campaign be launched to help education people? The Kaikoura Tourist Board could perhaps help with tourists. Could they also help notify the major tour companies who bring tourists to Kaikoura by providing them with a poster or leaflet in advance?

Let me know if you would like to catch up some time as I'd be really keen to help. You can call me on my mum's mobile - 021 1132884.

Kindest regards

Olivia Doughty

Be Seal Safe



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Simon Litchwark** <slitchwark@doc.govt.nz>

Date: Thu, 2 Aug 2018, 12:03 PM

Subject: RE: Simon - Think Kind Project

To: Olivia Doughty <oliviadoughtynz@gmail.com>

Hi Olivia,

Great to read your project, and you'll be pleased to know that DOC appreciates your findings and is taking action on several of them!

The main information board at Point Kean was super old and faded and is getting reprinted as we speak, so that'll hopefully give people a lot more information about seals in general, although the section on behaving around them is still rather small.

I also plan to head out with the shovel this afternoon and move that sign hidden behind the bushes to a prominent location right by the boardwalk. When it was put in, the current location was actually the perfect spot for it, and a few years ago tended to be a bit more people wary, and generally hung out at the top of the beach around the corner. The sea used to come right up to the edge of the trees, so for people to get around to the seals they had to almost step over the sign. Unfortunately now the seals have got more confident and moved right into the carpark, the sea has disappeared out for miles, and the trees have all grown so it really doesn't do anything anymore. Definitely needs to be moved.

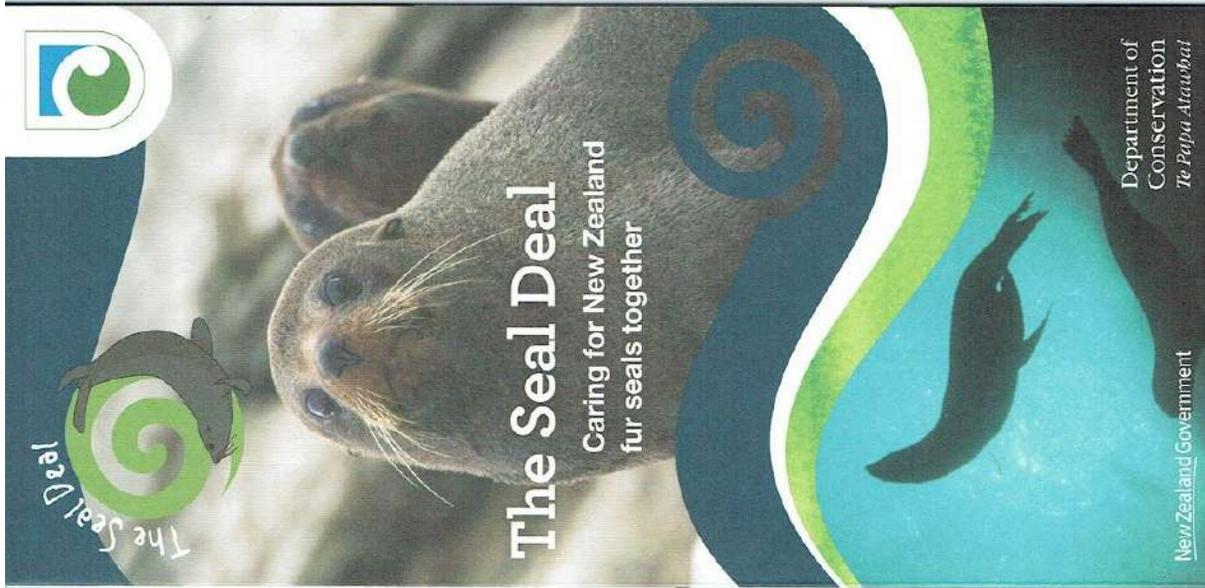
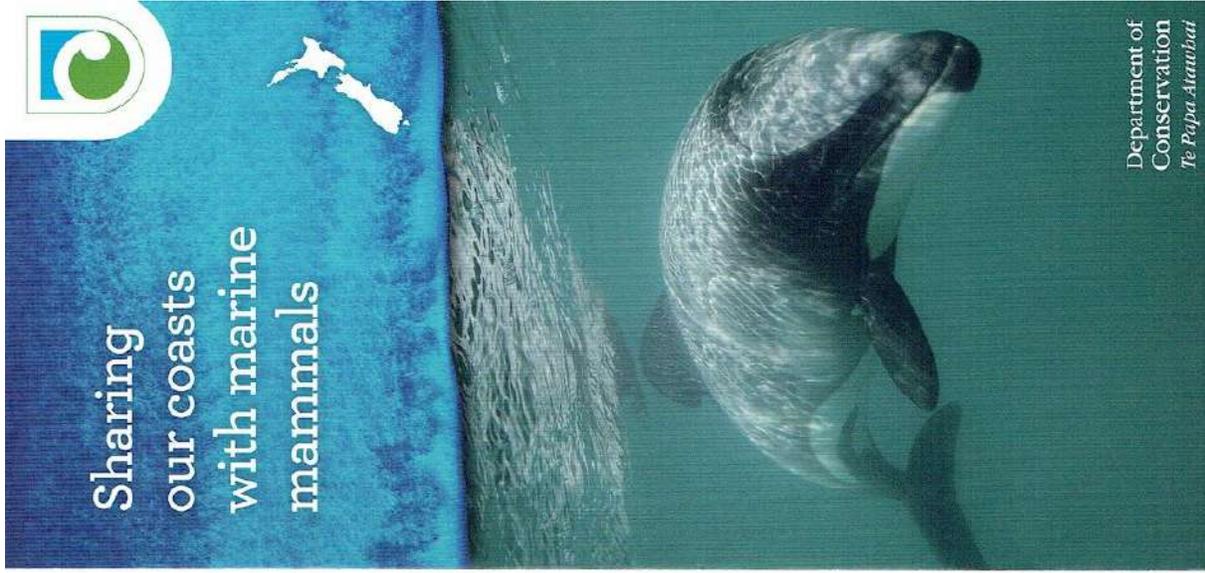
We also clearly need a new sign next to the steps at the other end of the carpark, and I've put a request in for this, but as it means designing and installing a totally new sign it's going to take a little longer to get action. Hopefully it'll appear one day soon. I'll also try get something sent around all the bus operators who drop tourists there. Tourists busses tend to be about the worst offenders, since as soon as one person gets close they all assume it's ok and the poor seals get mobbed. Hopefully I can get the drivers to say a sentence or two to everyone before they open the doors!

As for the sign at the boat ramp at South Bay, I told the team we needed one there and they assured me that there already was one! I went out and had a look for it and couldn't find any sign of it, so it's clearly not doing its job. The council recently did a few earthquake repairs out there, and I suspect they removed it when they did the re-concreting or something, and never told us. I'll try get it replaced.

And regarding you being keen to help out at the boat ramps and such, that's fantastic! It'd be great to see those stickers on every boat coming and going from South Bay! Pop into the office sometime when you get a chance and we can come up with a plan!

All the best,
Simon

DOC leaflets and stickers:



Simple rules for boaties when interacting with whales and dolphins

Don't travel faster than idle or 'no wake' speed within 300 metres



No more than 3 vessels within 300 metres



Do not obstruct their path. Approach from a parallel/slightly rear direction



Do not swim with dolphin pods containing juveniles



Stay 50 metres away from any whale or orca



Stay 200 metres away from any baleen/sperm whale with a calf



Do not swim with whales or orca



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New Zealand Government
R194397

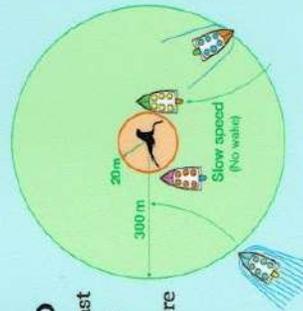


*Ka toitū te marae a Tangaroa - ka toitū te iwi
If the realm of Tangaroa endures, so too will humanity*

VIEWING MARINE MAMMALS AT SEA

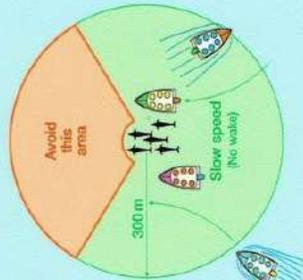
Seals/ kekeno

- Stay at least 20 metres from the shore where seals are present



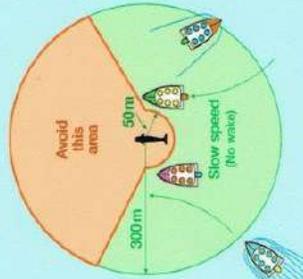
Dolphins/ aihe

- Approach from behind and to the side
- When departing, boats may gradually increase speed to outdistance dolphins



Whales/ tohorā

- (including orca) Approach from behind and to the side
- Stay at least 50 metres from whales (or 200 metres if a large whale with a calf)
- No swimming



DOC HOTline
0800 362 466
Report any wildlife hazards to the DOC HOTline
In New Zealand and New Zealand waters

Approach and depart slowly (no-wake speed within 300 metres of marine mammals)
No more than 3 boats within 300 metres (grouped closely together, 6 kayaks = 1 boat)
Do not disturb, harass, feed or make loud noises
Do not circle, obstruct, or cut through any group



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Ataturahi
New Zealand Government

