



SBBOT Conservation – Wildlife Disturbance Policy

Policy Statement and Guidelines on Disturbance to Wildlife and their Habitats

Introduction

SBBOT recognises the importance of access to, and enjoyment, of the countryside and we encourage visitors to learn and understand more about our wildlife and their habitats. When observing any wildlife within the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory area, visitors are requested to adhere to the principles outlined in this policy.

Principles

Be aware of the [countryside code](#) and that other visitors may also wish to observe what you have seen. Any unnecessary disturbance to wildlife and their habitats should be avoided.

- Do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking
- Keep to the footpaths.
There are some areas of the Sandwich Bay area that are restricted to preserve habitat, to limit disturbance, because they are private property or for safety reasons. Please respect these areas by following information provided on signs/notices and keeping to marked paths unless wider access is available. Please make sure that gates and property are as you left them.
- Dogs should be under control at all times.
We understand that dog walking is a popular pastime but please be aware that without close control dogs can cause disturbance to wildlife and farm animals. This is particularly the case in the bird breeding season as disturbance cause ground-nesting and other birds to leave the nest, resulting in loss of clutches and broods. In some sensitive areas dogs are not allowed.
Dog faeces left on the ground is unpleasant for other users and we urge dog walkers to pick up faeces and deposit them in an appropriate bin.
- Drones.
While we are not in a position to ban the use of drones in the Sandwich Bay area, these are strongly discouraged and should not be used.

Birds

Be aware that birds respond to people in different ways, depending on the species, location and time of year. If a bird flies away or makes repeated alarm calls, you are too close.

If birds are disturbed they may keep away from their nests, leaving chicks hungry or enabling predators to take their eggs or young. During cold weather, or when migrants have just made a long flight, disturbing birds can mean they use up vital energy.

Playing a recording of bird song or calls to encourage a bird to respond, for example for photographic purposes, can divert a territorial bird from other important duties, such as feeding its young. Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust does not consider sound luring to be an acceptable activity except as part of scientific study under the appropriate licences. If you are using sound in the field to better your knowledge of bird calls, please ensure you are wearing headphones.

Avoid approaching too closely when photographing birds. Be aware that some nest photography requires a permit (a schedule 1 license available on application from the UK government). SBBOT does not condone the disturbance of any nesting bird.

Other Wildlife

All wildlife and their habitats should be respected.

Do not transfer water or plants or animals from one location to another as this may transfer diseases or damage an important ecosystem. Releasing fish or unwanted pets, such as turtles, into the wild is forbidden as it is likely to have serious consequences for the environment and will threaten the viability of endemic species.

If lifting reptile refuge covers, please limit the amount of time these are uncovered and place the covers back in the same position. While we encourage exploration, please recognise that too much disturbance can have a detrimental impact on their welfare.

Inappropriate behaviour.

If you do witness anybody behaving inappropriately then, and only if safe to do so, please approach and explain in a pleasant manner the nature of the issue and what appropriate behaviour should be. If you feel uncomfortable, or unsafe, then please advise the SBBOT Warden, providing details of the event and the location.

There have been instances of illegal activity such as hare coursing in the Sandwich Bay area and if you are witness to such events then the police should be contacted immediately. Please also advise the Warden.

The Warden's contact details are:

Address: Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, Guilford Road, Sandwich Bay, Sandwich CT13 9PF

Tel: 01304 617341

Email: info@sbbot.org.uk

Wildlife and the Law

There are a range of laws to help protect wildlife and visitors should be aware of these. They include:

The [Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981](#). It is a criminal offence to disturb, intentionally or recklessly, a species listed on Schedule 1 (birds), Schedule 5 (animals) and Schedule 8 (plants) of the act. The act also makes it an offence to release into the wild any animal, plant or micro-organisms not ordinarily resident to the UK or which constitutes a known threat.

[The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#). These regulations relate to the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. Schedules refer to a list of European Protected Species of animals which includes bats, butterflies, and amphibians.

[Wild Mammals \(Protection\) Act 1996](#). These regulations are related to inflicting unnecessary suffering to wild animals.

Please note that it is illegal to uproot any wild plant without permission from the landowner or occupier. It is also a criminal offence to destroy or damage, intentionally or recklessly, a special interest feature of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or to disturb the wildlife for which the site was notified.

Penalties for failing to adhere to some aspects of these laws can be significant and demonstrate how seriously transgressions are considered. A fine of up to £20,000 may be imposed by a Magistrates' Court, or an unlimited fine, or prison sentence or both, by a Crown Court.