



Kodiak Treks



Kodiak, Alaska

Harry and Brigid Dodge/Owner-Operators

www.kodiaktreks.com

Kodiak Treks Guidelines for Responsibly Viewing Wildlife Updated November, 2008

It is important to realize that human presence impacts wildlife. The label “non-consumptive,” which is often attached to wildlife viewing, does not adequately describe the effects humans impart when venturing into the wilderness. Human scent borne on the wind can alert animals to our presence before we are in viewing range. The tracks we leave are detectable to some animals for days after we leave. Thus, it is virtually impossible to have no impact on wildlife. Our mission, instead, is to minimize that impact. In so doing, our aim is to avoid imparting any lasting effects that will significantly alter the habits of the animals that occupy the country through which we pass.

Wildlife viewing should not entail interacting with animals. Keeping a low profile, not displacing wildlife, and not altering the habits or activities of wildlife are our general goals. To this end, we access the viewing area on foot, leaving motorized craft at a respectful distance. The group should stay together at all times, walk single-file, and maintain a low level of noise. Be aware of noises created by rustle of clothing, zippers, snaps, camera shutter, etc. Brigid or Harry should always be in the lead and should be between clients and any bear, regardless of distance. If anyone wants to stop for a picture or to go to the bathroom, the guide should be informed so that the group remains together.

Upon sighting a bear, the first reaction should be to find adequate cover. We may want to move to a more suitable location from which to observe the bear before taking any pictures. We maintain a respectful distance between wildlife viewing parties and wildlife. We do not pursue wildlife for photography and advocate the use of telephoto lenses and binoculars for viewing at a distance. Clients should be prepared and receptive to any directions from Brigid or Harry as to what actions are necessary. There may be instances when the bear is too close to allow pictures, especially if it is quiet.

Successful wildlife viewing is best achieved by selecting a suitable location, and sit quietly. Such a location should have adequate cover close at hand and have a wide field of view. In the case of locations on the river, the location should be on the bears' commonly used route (i.e. a bit back from the riverbank, or on the deep side of the river). Clients should keep their gear organized so that if we are compelled to move quickly they don't have to waste time gathering up their equipment.

All trash, to include toilet paper, should be packed out. To this end, clients will be provided with baggies in which they can put any trash. Bears will investigate locations where we have been, and we don't want to condition them to human waste.

Exiting the viewing area carefully is just as important as it was when entering. It is easy to fall into the mentality that the bear viewing is done for the day and fail to practice proper precautions when hiking out. The most successful trip is one in which bears are left undisturbed and freely going about their business.

June is breeding season for bears. Caution should be observed around boars with sows. There is often contention with other bears, and one never knows what activities have been occurring prior to your entry onto the scene. Mature boars should be viewed with extra caution- they are less in the habit of retreating when encountering intruders (unless they know you are humans- at times this will not be evident to them, however). Sows with cubs, especially cubs of the year, should also be afforded extra caution. In September bears are intensely feeding on salmon and are concentrated on major salmon streams. They are getting fat and are intent on getting sufficient food for the coming hibernation season. One should be diligent so as not to displace bears from main feeding sources at this important time of year.

In the case of observing marine mammals, we do not pursue, disturb, or make an intentional approach within 100 yards. We avoid making unnecessary noises and watch for signs of stress such as rapid change in direction or speed, fleeing into the water from a rookery, evasive swimming patterns, vocalizations, etc. If animals exhibit signs of stress that is a sign we are too close and we back off immediately.