

BEST PRACTICES
FOR
BEAR,
WOLF AND
LYNX
WATCHING IN SPAIN

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BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE



BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN



The Sectoral Plan on Biodiversity and Nature Tourism, passed by Royal Decree 416/2014, of June 6th, seeks to showcase Spain's natural wealth in order to promote nature tourism as a means for development in places with remarkable natural values, integrating the goals of preserving and sustainably using biodiversity.

Nature tourism is the tourism mainly motivated by leisure, interpreting, sports or cultural activities in natural environments. This type of tourism, based on biodiversity and natural heritage, has considerably grown in the last few years.

Besides considering the positive social and economic impacts related to nature tourism, which can positively influence the territory, it is necessary a plan to manage this tourism has to be developed based on a sustainable model and preventing negative effects on the natural environment and its biodiversity.

The Sectoral Plan takes this into account and pledges its commitment to promote nature tourism in Spain by underlining its biodiversity without endangering it, but contributing to its preservation. It particularly stresses the need to develop the different types of nature tourism with the least possible impact. In this regard, best practice guidelines are a vehicle to improve the way on which nature tourism activities are carried out in relation to biodiversity.

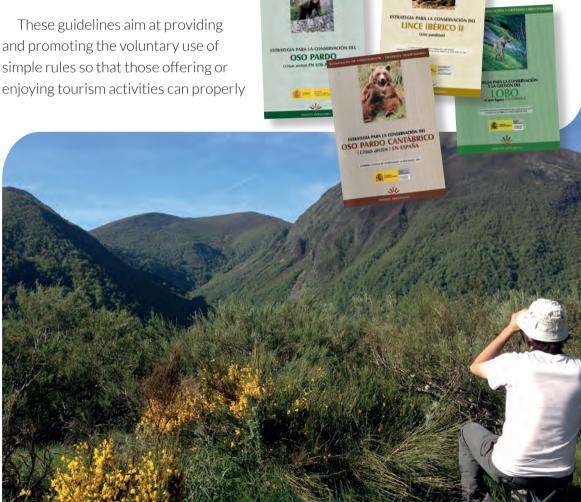
The brown bear, the wolf and the Iberian lynx are three species protected by Article 52.3 of the Biodiversity and Natural Heritage Act 42/2007, of December 13th, modified by Law 33/2015, of September 21st. They are also protected by their inclusion in the Spanish Catalogue of Endangered Species (bear and lynx) and the List of Wild Species under Special Protection (wolves South of Duero river). All these three species are deemed to be of



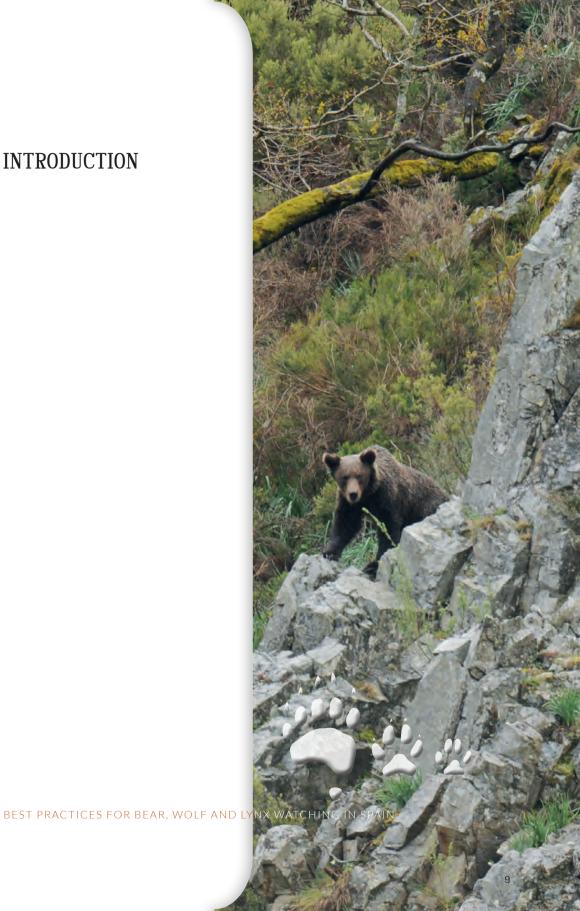
Community interest by the Habitats Directive 92/43/CEE. As such, they need Strategies and Preservation and Recovering Plans, for their management, as established in the abovementioned Act and in Royal Decree 139/2011, of February 4th. All this justifies that any activity that may have a negative impact on them (in this case, through disturbances) need appropriate regulations and the promotion of best practices by the public administrations responsible for their preservation.

approach nature, with sensitivity and environmental awareness.

Best practices included in this document, which were presented to the State Commission on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity in July 2015, are the first being developed since the approval of the aforementioned Sectorial Plan, and they abide by the contents and form established in that Plan.







BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN





Wildlife watching in Spain is an activity that is increasingly gaining more followers and is currently on the rise.

Among terrestrial mammals, the bear, the wolf and the lynx are the most popular species.

In the context of nature tourism, these species can be watched on one's own or through specialised companies. The offer in this regard is growing as the demand rises.

Bears, wolves and lynxes are a valuable example of Spain's biodiversity

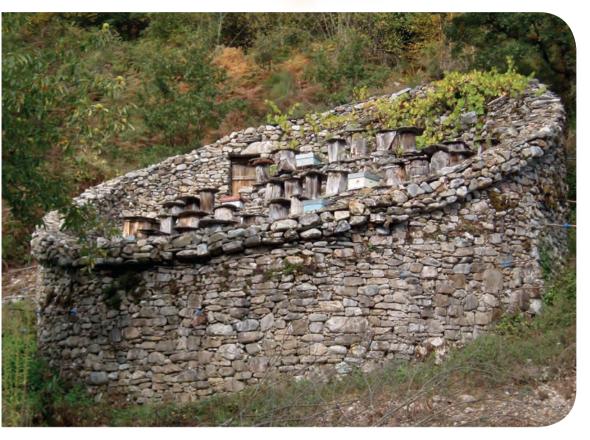
and they live in environments having important cultural and natural values which are frequently a part of protected natural areas or of Natura 2000 sites.

Beyond watching one of these species, which is not always possible, the experience is always memorable and enriching. Getting to know the environment, enjoying the landscapes, flora and fauna, interpreting the animal trails, discovering the traditional agricultural practices, visiting typical constructions, trying the local cuisine and chatting with the locals will surely add up to an unforgettable experience.

Under this philosophy, bear, wolf and lynx watching tourism stands as a socio-economic alternative and a contribution to rural areas that may not be sufficiently diversified from an economic point of view. It is also being compatible with the rest of activities traditionally developed in their surroundings.

In this regard, promoting bear, wolf or lynx watching activities must always go hand in hand with their positive impact over the socio-economic improvement of the local communities and the preservation of these species and their ecosystems. Under no circumstances may these activities





result in a threat to these species or to the livelihood of the local communities.

If carried out inappropriately and without following a few simple behaviour rules, bear, wolf or lynx watching can have a negative impact both on the natural environments and on different groups' interests.

These animals are watched in an environment where other professional and leisure activities are carried out.

There may be times when conflicts arise if other people's or group's

interests are not taken into account. Unauthorized walking through private property or causing damage to agricultural infrastructures are common examples of causes of such conflicts. There may also be situations when people are at risk if periods or areas for hunting are unknown, or if the species are watched from road's edges without taking the required road safety measures.

Further negative effects that may result from this activity include the disturbance or damage caused to the

species being watched and to other animals and plants. The mere presence of the observers, for example, may alter the animals' natural behaviour patterns and interfere in the development of their normal activity. All watchers should have a basic knowledge of species ecology in order to be aware of the situations that may disturb the animals and know how to avoid these harmful effects.

The watchers' proximity, the biological period, the presence of litter, the activity being carried out by the animals, the weather conditions, the watching place, etc. are some of the many factors that have to be taken into

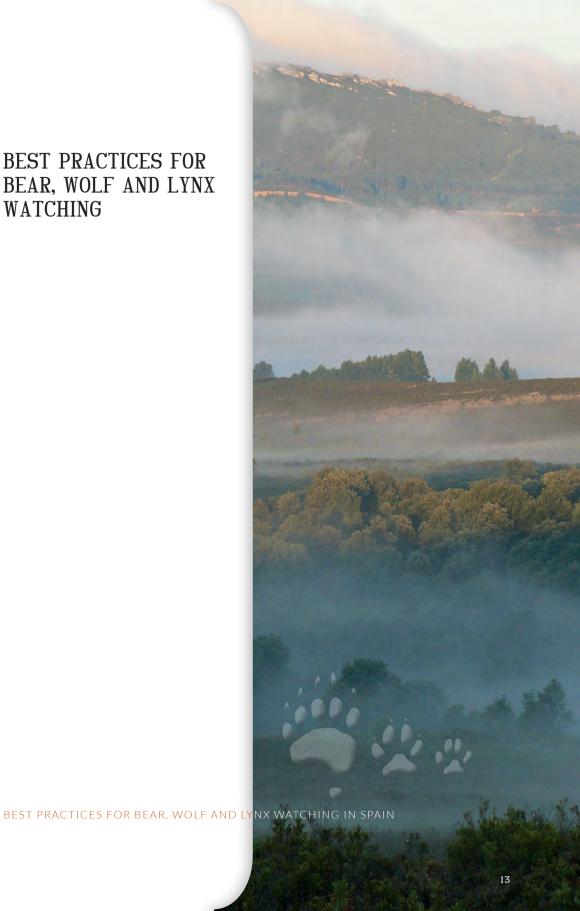
account in order not to disturb the animals and to avoid any risks.

Apart from the direct bother to the species, negative effects can be produced on the natural environment as a result, for example, of the excessive presence of people or overcrowding.

Provided that it is developed appropriately, bear, wolf and lynx watching can be carried out without causing any trouble to these species and their ecosystems, even favouring a sustainable socio-economic development of the local populations. The aim of the best practices contained herein is to provide simple guidelines, directions and recommendations to achieve this.



BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING



These best practices constitute simple guidelines, recommendations and orientations to appropriately watch bears, wolves and lynxes, reducing undesired effects, enriching the watching experience and raising

awareness with regard to the preservation of biodiversity.

It is addressed to any person interested in bear, wolf and lynx watching in the natural environment, both individuals and specialized companies.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- To know and observe the applicable legal regulations on the protection of areas and species and the management of the environment. Special attention must be paid to the uses permitted, prohibited or authorized in each territory and/or areas. Demanded permits must be also obtained.
- Fauna watching must be based on the respect to the species watched and to the rest of the ecosystem, as well as to the people with whom the environment is shared -no matter their activity, sensitivity or attitude-.
- Given the relative complexity of watching these species and the need for a minimum knowledge in order to fully enjoy without disturbing them and without causing any trouble to other users of the natural environment, the use of companies or trained, reliable and responsible professional guides is







recommended. The participation of professionals will permit acceding to a greater knowledge of the environment, of the species watched, of their interaction with the environment and of the local populations' ways of living. Companies must have the relevant authorizations to carry out this activity and, if required, provide them to their clients.

- Collaborating with professionals of the preservation and management of the natural environment, facilitating their work, asking for their advice and paying attention to their directions is essential for the good execution of the activity and will make the experience pleasant for all the people carrying it out.
- There are different attitudes and sensitiveness towards the bear, the wolf and the lynx, so it is recommended not to create controversy with other people who do not share the same point of view. Dialogue and understanding are always recommended.
- To be always aware of the difficulty of watching these species, since this is not always possible. This activity must not only be approached as a punctual watching or as the direct observance of these species, but also as a complete interpretation of the natural environment, the ethnographic heritage and of the ways of living of local populations, etc.
- Knowing the biology of the species and their behavioural patterns, understanding and valuing the natural and cultural environment where they live, as well as the management of the territory or the ways of life of its inhabitants are essential to facilitate the observations and reach a higher enjoyment and enrichment of the experience.
- The companies offering watching activities must be honest regarding the
 possibilities of actually watching these species, avoiding false expectations that
 may lead to frustration or to inappropriate behaviours aimed at forcing the
 sightings.



- The watching group must have an appropriate size to avoid disturbing the animals. The ideal size varies depending on multiple factors. Large groups are to be avoided outside prepared and signalled observation points, and the appropriate distances are to be respected at all times in order not to interfere with the animals.
- Make the most of the opportunities for sustainable socio-economic development offered by bear, wolf or lynx watching activities. These species can be great allies in the development of the areas where they live. Their watching, if carried out appropriately, has positive socio-economic impacts on local communities, contributing to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants and promoting a positive consideration of these species by the society. Besides, these activities have an added value when specialized companies allocate part of their profits to the preservation of these species.
- The companies specializing in fauna watching must respect land tenures and promote the hiring of people from the area. These elements will contribute to strengthen the socio-economic role played by the watching activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING OBSERVATION POINTS

- Choose places providing an optimal sighting from an appropriate distance in order not to interfere with the relevant species, respecting the applicable legislation in force.
- Preferably use observation points that have been prepared and signalled for this type of activity. Observation points located within human activity areas (rural settlements, lookouts, etc.) are particularly recommended. In areas



where there are not such infrastructures, it is advisable to seek advice from environmental agents or other qualified agents.

- An appropriate watching distance means that the watcher goes unnoticed by the animal, enabling it to act according to its natural behaviour. The distance must be chosen sensibly. The use of telescopes is recommended to enjoy a best watching experience from a wise distance.
- Observation points should be ideally located on opposing slopes or high spots with panoramic views, making detection easier. Locations that are too close to the probable sighting area or places where the natural passage of animals may be disrupted are to be avoided.
- Choose the observation point not only depending on the likelihood of watching the intended species, but also taking other aspects into account: the possible disturbances to other threatened species (nests, leks, rest or feeding areas, etc.) or other animals (drinking areas important during the summer, etc.). Being too close to such locations may even imply a breach of the regulations.









- Choose the watching time and date considering aspects such as the seasons for the different modes of hunting, the stockbreeding practices, etc. so that interference is avoided and the various activities can be compatible.
- Do not establish observation points within private property without due authorization. Knowing the land tenure is important in order to act consequently.
- Avoid night watching only. The best time for watching these species are
 one hour before the sunrise and one hour after the sunset. Be extremely
 careful when accessing the observation point in order to avoid any possible
 disturbances.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE BEHAVIOR DURING THE WATCHING

Access to the observation points

 Drive with caution along the roads near bear, wolf or lynx areas, since there are potential spots for car accidents involving big mammals.





- Do not drive excessively slow, getting distracted or not paying attention to the road. Trying to watch animals from the car entails the risk of an accident.
- If possible, park your vehicle in the designated spots. Avoid parking in places where the passage of other vehicles may be disrupted (including heavy agricultural machinery).
- Be aware of the paths requiring authorization or under prohibition.
 As a rule, private vehicle driving is only allowed on public paths, and breaching the relevant regulations may entail fines.



- Going on foot and keeping the use of motor vehicles down to a minimum is recommended. Use existing paths or roads and do not try to create new paths or passages. Walk quietly and avoid rising your voice, making loud noises, etc.
- If you come across any inhabitants or users of the natural environment, you should let them know about the activity that you are carrying out so that they do not feel observed by people with unknown intentions.
- Gates and enclosures must be left as they were (open or closed). Fences or stone walls must not be broken or destroyed. If accidentally damaged, the fallen stones must be replaced.

BEHAVIOUR AT THE OBSERVATION POINT

• Act quietly and avoid making loud noises. Try to integrate as another element in the ecosystem, without disturbing or altering it. Avoid interfering with the animals so that their natural behaviour can be observed.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN

- Do not prepare the observation point by breaking branches, stepping on plants, changing stones, etc. Do not litter or leave any traces of your presence. Take extreme precautions to avoid fires. Behave correctly and politely towards other persons that may be in the area.
- Set an example of ethical, appropriate behaviour for other watchers, conveying the need that everyone acts accordingly. If you witness continuous misbehaviour, the situation should be notified to the environmental agents or surveillance staff in the area.
- Once the animal is spotted, keep completely quiet, control your emotions and try not to move, so that the animals do not alter their natural, spontaneous behaviour. Do not attempt to follow the animals. Intentionally chasing after, disturbing or frightening these animals implies a breach of the regulations and may entail a fine.
- Under no circumstances may the animals be intentionally altered, e.g. to take better pictures, nor may the natural interactions between the animals be disrupted.
- Leave the observation point without disturbing the animals.





BEHAVIOUR RECOMMENDATIONS IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

UNEXPECTED SHORT-DISTANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH ANIMALS

• It is always necessary to avoid short-distance encounters with bears. Bears would usually run away in human presence, but in some particular cases the bear may feel threatened or surprised. The most delicate situations may arise if the animal is wounded, if it is a female bear with her cubs, if it is disturbed while hibernating, if it is annoyed by dogs or if it is surprised while eating.



- In the presence of a nearby bear, we must let it identify us in advance, showing our presence and letting us be seen and heard at a distance. It is important to move smoothly, without wild gesticulation, and not to get in its way or block the possible paths that the bear may use to run away.
- If a female bear and her cubs are encountered, it is essential not to stand between the mother and her cubs. A female bear may charge at a human if she feels that her cubs are in danger.
- When a bear approaches the intruder with an aggressive attitude, it is likely to stop at a short distance and turn around soon. If that is the case, do not show fear, move away from it slowly and do not lose sight of its face. Do not run, since you may fall down and hurt yourself or trigger reactions in the animal.
- If a bear approaches you spontaneously, because it is running away from dogs
 or due to any other circumstances, wait until you have figured out its path and
 then move away from it.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN

- Lynxes can show a threatening behaviour when defending their position or food. If that is the case, move away slowly and leave enough space for the lynx to leave.
- Wolves, due to their cautious and elusive character, will at all times avoid any contact with humans.
- Should any such incidents with these animals arise, the relevant authorities and other people in the area must be warned.



ENCOUNTERS WITH AGGRESSIVE DOGS

• This is a much more frequent risk than the aforementioned situations. The best thing to do is to calmly move away to a safe spot. If serious aggressions occur, the SEPRONA section of the Guardia Civil, the environmental agents or the surveillance staff must be immediately warned, together with other people in the surroundings.

FINDING DEAD WILD OR DOMESTIC ANIMALS, ILLEGAL WILDLIFE CAPTURING OR EVIDENCE OF OTHER SUCH CRIMES

• Do not touch or move anything and do not alter the scene. The finding must be immediately reported to the authorities (the SEPRONA service of the Guardia Civil, the environmental agents or the surveillance staff), especially if it involves protected species. If it involves a domestic animal, the owner should be notified. It is advisable to write down the coordinates or exact references for the animal to be correctly located.





FIRES

- Attention must be paid to the possibility of fires, since they entail an important safety risk. It is wise to identify the possible ways out in the event of fire. If a fire breaks out, inform the emergency services and leave the place as soon as possible.
- The regulations regarding the use of fire must be known and carefully respected.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER GROUPS

- Bear, wolf or lynx watching is practiced in environments with multiple uses
 (agriculture, stockbreeding, hunting...). All persons and groups sharing these
 areas must be taken into account, and their activities must not be disturbed.
- There are frequently several companies offering bear, wolf or lynx watching services in the same area. For the sake of the activity, they are advised to ensure collaboration between them and with other groups.
- A polite and friendly behaviour must always be shown. It is advisable to
 establish friendly relationships with the people that we may encounter in
 the fields. Dialogue, understanding and good will can avoid many conflicts. If
 other people are encountered, the most appropriate behaviour is to introduce
 yourself and explain the activity in which you are involved.
- It is not advisable to hide or not to greet the persons doing surveillance work in the fields or any other persons in general.

Public Administrations

- You must always have the relevant permits, e.g. to use certain paths, for photography activities, etc.
- Try to keep in contact and be in good relationships with the environmental agents and other surveillance staff.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BEAR, WOLF AND LYNX WATCHING IN SPAIN

- Inform the environmental agents or land managers of any sightings that may be of interest for preserving the flora and fauna, as well as of any possible threats.
- Notify the relevant authorities of any possible crimes or infractions that you may witness. It is advisable to avoid any confrontation with third parties and leave the intervention tasks for the persons in charge of the safety and surveillance of the area.

STOCKBREEDERS, SHEPHERDS AND FARMERS

- Respect the professionals carrying out their activities in the natural environment, as well as their activities, property, customs, etc. Do not disturb cattle, damage crops, collect fruits, trespass property, etc.
- If possible, ease their job by informing them of issues such as broken fences, animals in labour, lost or wounded animals, etc.
- Use the designated entrances to access areas that are fenced for hunting or stockbreeding purposes. Leave the gates as they were (open or closed).
- Stockbreeders, shepherds and farmers live together with wild fauna every day. Knowing their traditional activities, the techniques and infrastructures they use to prevent damage from predators, and understanding, valuing and acknowledging their way of life will incredibly enrich your experience.





HUNTERS

- The presence of people in areas where hunting is being practiced may interfere with the activity and entail risks. In order to avoid this, you must know about the hunting seasons, dates, modes, etc.
- It is advisable to be in contact and have good relationships with hunting clubs in order to coordinate hunting and fauna watching, preventing these activities from interfering with each other.
- Avoid walking through areas where hunting is being practiced. Hunting entails an inherent risk, since long-distance weapons are used. If such areas cannot be avoided, it is advisable to use wide paths and make yourself visible, for example, wearing bright-coloured caps or vests. If the hunting activity is a drive, watching activities should not be held in the area. When hunting is being practiced, it is important to use natural elements as a protection while at the observation point. Once we are at the desire observation point, it is advisable

not to move around the forest seeking to get a better perspective. Many hunting accidents occur during these movements around the forest and not while using paths.

 If hunting dogs reach you, do not interact with them. If they approach you barking, you should take into account that they are likely chasing after one or several animals, so avoid getting in their probable way out (such as paths) and approach a safe spot.







LANDOWNERS

- You must always have the relevant permits to access private properties.
- Never collect anything (antlers, fruit, plants, mushrooms, etc.) in private properties where access has been granted for observation purposes. It is important to remember that having an access permit does not mean that you can carry out other activities.
- Build relationships based on trust with landowners and guards or keepers. Share with them the outcome of the sighting, let them know about incidents, etc.
- Try not to promote, or indirectly encourage, trespassing or mass access to the land

SOCIAL MEDIA

Sharing the exact location of these species, especially through social media, is strongly discouraged since it can create a pull effect that could have negative consequences for both the species and the properties.



 No photos with precise details or elements that allow a particular place to be easily identified must be shared in social media. Posting or sharing photos in real time is discouraged.



RECOMMENDATIONS ON SPECIFIC PRACTICES

BAITS, SIMULATED HOWLS, SOUND RECORDINGS AND OTHER MEANS TO ATTRACT ANIMALS

 Do not use techniques for attracting animals (baits, simulated howls, sound recordings, enticements or any other means that can be used to lure animals).
 The use of these methods is prohibited by law or regulated by specific regulations. Observing animals in licensed dunghills is not forbidden as long as you have all necessary permits.

Use of spotlights at night

• Do not use spotlights or any other kind of lighting at night, and do not conduct nocturnal observations of animals.

Observing burrows and hideouts

• Do not observe animals close to burrows or hideouts, especially if they are occupied or there are cubs. This is a disapproved practice.

CAMPING AND OVERNIGHT STAYS

• These activities are subject to the applicable legislation and have to be performed according to the provisions set forth in the rules and regulations.

Use of hides

- Use observation sites that have been especially arranged for this purpose, if any.
- Have, if necessary, the relevant permits for the use and set up of hides. These must be built in areas where animals are not disturbed, upset or bothered.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILMING

- Filming and taking pictures must be done in an ethical manner. There are several codes of best practices that may be used as reference.
- If this is a professional activity, the necessary permits are required. If you are carrying out this professional activity on private property, it is advisable to let the owner know when applying for an authorization.

Observing animals when accompanied by dogs

Dogs should not be taken when observing animals. Moreover, the regulations
of many protected areas and natural reserves expressly prohibit dogs
running loose. Having dogs with us while observing other creatures can
disrupt local flora and fauna, bother livestock or cause potentially hazardous
situations. Dogs that run free in areas populated by bears could trigger an
attack. This poses a threat for dog owners, as dogs tend to hide behind their
owners when under attack. Also, dogs running loose in areas populated by
wolves can be harmed.









DECALOGUE

- 1. Applicable legal regulations must be known and observed, paying special attention to the allowed, forbidden or authorized uses.
- 2. Observation must be based on due respect for animals, for the whole ecosystem and for all people with whom the natural environment is being shared.
- 3. Observers must try to be unnoticed by animals, avoiding alter their natural behaviour patterns. Observation points must be chosen with caution, preferably using those that have been prepared and signalled for this type of activity.
- 4. Observers must behave gently and politely towards other people that may be in the area, setting a suitable and ethical example. All persons and groups sharing these areas must be taken into account, avoiding interferences in their activities.
- 5. Inappropriate behaviour that imply risks to people or disturb animals shall be notified to the competent authorities. Observations of interest shall be notified as well.



- 6. Enjoying the activity should go beyond direct observation of these species and include an interpretation of natural environment, ethnographic heritage, local populations living patterns, etc.
- 7. Information on precise locations of the species must not be shared, especially through social media.
- 8. Do not deliberately disturb or attract animals, observe young cubs, burrows and hideouts and do not bring dogs along.
- 9. Short-distance encounters with animals should be always avoided. If it happens, behave without abruptness and let animals leave calmly.
- 10. It is always recommended dealing with honest, reliable and responsible companies or guides, who align their activities to the "Best Practices for Bear, Wolf and Lynx watching in Spain".



LIST OF AUTHORS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

(In order of appearance, from left to right and from top to bottom)

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