

# Code of Practice for Visitors of Coastal/Island Bird Colonies



Ireland boasts some of the most important coastal breeding bird colonies in Europe and many of these are accessible to people along coastal paths or on off-shore islands. Every year thousands of people visit these areas to enjoy the spectacle of Gannet colonies, cliff ledges crammed with Guillemots and Razorbills, colourful Puffins on grassy sea-pink slopes and much more. These are important places not only for birds, but also for people to appreciate and learn about our native wildlife. However this proximity can also bring problems for birds, which can be disturbed through inappropriate behaviour by some people. The Irish Wildlife Trust and BirdWatch Ireland have therefore developed this Code of Conduct to help ensure that these special places remain special – for birds and people.

1. The Wildlife Act of 1976, as amended in 2000, (section 22 and others) prohibits the disturbance of wild birds, their nests and their eggs. Visitors must therefore maintain an appropriate distance from any bird, even if it seems tame.
2. Birds that are sitting on nests should not be approached.
3. Nests and eggs should not be touched or handled in any way. Getting near a nest can result in people being dive-bombed by protective gulls, something that can result in injury to the observer.
4. Young birds should not be approached. Parent birds frequently leave their fledglings while foraging for food and so young birds are highly unlikely to have been abandoned.
5. Do not feed birds or leave food where it can be reached.
6. Photographers should note that while it is acceptable to take pictures of birds from an *appropriate distance*, birds should not be approached even if they seem tame. It is an offence to walk among nests, e.g. at Gannet colonies, or to seek close up shots without a zoom lens.
7. Children should be supervised at all times.
8. Please don't litter and follow the 'Leave no trace' campaign guidance.
9. Enjoy your visit and come again!

The Irish Wildlife Trust and BirdWatch Ireland are conservation charities that work to safeguard our natural heritage for the present and future generations. To support our work, participate in our events and learn more about our wildlife please join our organisations at [www.iwt.ie](http://www.iwt.ie) and [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie) .