

Animal safety is your responsibility



A polar bear footprint is an adventure in itself.

Photo: Trond Aagesen / Governor of Svalbard.

**THE GOVERNOR
OF SVALBARD**

Respect Svalbard's wildlife!

Visiting the natural environment on Svalbard by snow mobile provides you with a unique opportunity to explore a vast wilderness in a very short time. This will also give you the opportunity to come close to wild animals.

Visitors are obligated by law to respect nature and not disturb the animals. Disturbance means that the animals change their behaviour due to your presence.

Keep your distance from seals

Ringed seals give birth to a single pup on the ice or in snowdrifts near their breathing holes. This happens in March and April. The pups are beautiful, but they are also extremely vulnerable to human interference. It is very important not to get close to them. Petting them or picking them up is forbidden. If you do this you may scare away the mother who may abandon her offspring for a dangerously long period of time. One lethal consequence of this is that the new-born can be attacked by glaucous gulls or other predators. It is important that you are aware of the risk of your actions and keep your distance from the seals.

Polar bears

Polar bears are considered as a symbol of arctic wilderness. Many visitors wish to observe and take pictures of them. However, this species is vulnerable to climate change, pollutants and confrontation with human beings in general. It is the world's largest land living predator and can be very dangerous. Polar bears may appear anywhere in Svalbard in summer and winter. If you encounter a polar bear, it is important to stay as far away as possible to avoid situations that could be dangerous for you and for the bear.

The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act sets the rules for how you can behave when encountering a polar bear. According to paragraph 30 in the act *it is prohibited to lure, pursue or otherwise seek out polar bears in such a way as to disturb them or expose either bears or humans to danger.*

In short:

Stay far away and do not disturb the animals!

Please take a look at the Norwegian Polar Institute's webpage **www.npolar.no/en** for more information and facts about ringed seals, polar bears and other animals on Svalbard.



By using binoculars or a telephoto lens you can study the nature and the animals at a distance without disturbing.
Photo: Lars Erik Alfheim / Governor of Svalbard.

