

Piloting Guidelines for Small Unmanned Aircrafts (Drones) Around Cetaceans

1. Objective

There is a fear that small unmanned aircrafts (drones) may have certain effects on wild animals by getting too close to them and producing loud sounds from flight. We, the Ogasawara Whale Watching Association (“OWA” from here on), voluntarily enact these guidelines to aid the protection of cetaceans, which are a natural resource not only in the waters of the Ogasawara Islands, but in oceans all over the world, by eliminating stress put upon the animals. They also serve to reduce obstruction to the cetaceans’ natural actions and to protect the whales’ natural environment.

2. Applicable Waters

These guidelines will be in effect for the waters in a 20-mile radius from the coast of the Ogasawara Islands.

3. Applicable Species

These guidelines are meant to serve all types of cetaceans.

4. Concerning Flight in the Airspace Above Cetaceans

Drones are permitted to approach cetaceans from any angle as long as they are kept 30m from the target individuals, and they adhere to the other rules listed below.

- a The drone shall not approach a group of cetaceans being watched nor a whale watching vessel actively watching whales.
- b The drone may not approach cetaceans from the direction they are moving toward.
- c If the drone’s approach is seen to cause a change in the target cetacean’ or other wild animals’ behavior, the flight must end immediately.

5. Special Provisions

If one wishes to make an investigation or recording with a drone without adhering to the above guidelines, an investigation/reporting plan must be submitted to the OWA beforehand to be approved by the OWA. When approved, the person or persons provided the special provisions will carry a “special permission” flag with them while operating.

6. Miscellaneous

These guidelines are subject to change at the OWA’s discretion based on acquired knowledge of the ways drone usage and drone flight affects whales.