



Photo tips for diving with dragons

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Leafy seadragon (*Phycodurus eques*)

Photo: Carl Charter

Want to get the BEST SHOTS of seadragons without disturbing them? Here's how:

- ① **FACETIME** – each seadragon has unique facial, head and appendage markings which can help identify individuals. Seadragons can get stressed if photographed continuously, so only photograph them for a few minutes. If you must get more photos, take a break away from the seadragon first.
- ② **HIDE AND SEEK** – seadragons are not fast fish. Their leaf-shaped appendages give them camouflage among the algae or 'seaweed' and seagrass. When filming or photographing, allow the seadragon to move at its own pace. A seadragon may become stressed if divers crowd around it or get too close. Use a wide-angle or mid-range lens to photograph the whole animal.
- ③ **CHAMELEON** – seadragons change colour and pattern as they mature, and can also colour shift to blend into their background. If possible, wait until the seadragon is against a dark or solid coloured background to film or photograph it – this will give you the best contrast. But never try to "herd" dragons to get a good shot.
- ④ **STAY-AT-HOME DAD** – seadragon eggs are incubated by the male. During this time when he carries the eggs under his tail, he is quite slow and the eggs are vulnerable, so please keep away if possible.
- ⑤ **GIVE WAY TO SEADRAGONS** – never touch, move or chase a seadragon. An internal swim bladder helps seadragons maintain buoyancy, but can be damaged if the animal is chased, or if water under or around it is pushed, to move the animal. To get the clearest photos and avoid harming the animals, make sure you maintain your own good buoyancy around seadragons. Please respect all seadragons' need for space.



You can be a citizen scientist and help seadragons! Upload your photos to www.inaturalist.org to contribute to seadragon research and help conserve them.

For more information, search online for Seadragon Code of Conduct. The Seadragon Code of Conduct is supported by the Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia.