



Photo tips for diving with dragons



Leafy seadragon (*Phycodurus eques*)

Photo: Carl Charter

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

- ① **FACETIME** – did you know that seadragon eyes can rotate independently of each other? Instead of using flash or strobes which may disorientate the animal, adjust your camera settings (aperture, shutter, ISO, etc.) to maximise underwater light and visibility.
- ② **HIDE AND SEEK** – seadragons are not the fastest of fish, using only their dorsal fin to swim. Their leaf-shaped fins (appendages) give them camouflage among the 'seaweed'. To get the sharpest photos and avoid damaging the animals, make sure you maintain your own good buoyancy and trim around seadragons.
- ③ **CHAMELEON** – seadragons change colour as they mature, and can also colour shift by altering skin pigments to blend in to their background. 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 please do not try to "herd" dragons to get a good shot).
- ④ **STAY-AT-HOME DAD** – both seadragon and seahorse eggs are incubated by the male. During this time when he carries the eggs tucked around his tail he is quite slow, so please keep at least two metres away, and use a zoom for close shots.
- ⑤ **ZOOM, DON'T LOOM** – an internal swim bladder helps seadragons maintain buoyancy but can be damaged if the animal is moved up or down. When filming or photographing, allow the seadragon to move at its own pace.

You can be a Citizen Scientist and help seadragons! Each seadragon has unique face markings and fin shapes which can help identify individuals. Upload your photos to www.inaturalist.org to help protect seadragon populations.



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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.