



The Agence Territoriale de l'Environnement de Saint-Barthélemy (ATE) and the Agoa Sanctuary for marine mammals would like to draw your attention on the **high risk of collisions between vessels and large whales** during sailing races, both for participating and supports vessels.

Indeed, competitors are likely to encounter several species of marine mammals present in the Agoa Sanctuary, including:

- **humpback whales**, spending their breeding season (December-May) in Caribbean waters to breed, give birth and nurse their calves. They are regularly seen close to shore;
- resident delphinids (dolphins, pilot whales), particularly the **bottlenose dolphin**, a relatively coastal species, and spotted dolphins (panropical and Atlantic species).

To a lesser extent, competitors may encounter other delphinid species (Clymene dolphin, rough-toothed dolphin) or deep-diving species (beaked whale, dwarf sperm whale, sperm whale).

The risk of collision is a serious concern. The Agoa Sanctuary shares with you some key recommendations. The goal is to minimize the risk of collisions to preserve the integrity of crews and their vessels and reduce disturbance to these species protected by law, in particular within a sanctuary dedicated to their peacefulness.

Maintain visual watch at all times. Whales are air-breathing mammals that must surface to get the air they need. At sea, marine mammal can be spotted by their blows – exhalation of air through their blowholes that looks like small cloud of water and air from 1 to 2 m high.

In case of a last-minute encounter with a large marine mammal, reduce your speed and sail away from the animal, or the group of animals, preferably bypassing it from the rear.

Pursuing animals is strictly forbidden.

Do not interact with cetaceans.

In the event of **cetaceans voluntarily approaching under 300m** of the vessel, **reduce your speed** and alter course only if there is a risk of collision.

We invite all following vessels to moderate their speed. In addition to the necessity of complying to speed regulations, **speed is an aggravating factor in collisions**, both for mariners and marine mammals.

Marine mammals are protected by a decree of July 1st, 2011 which lists marine mammals that are protected on the national territory and the terms of their protection. It also **prohibits the prosecution and harassment of animals**. The local decree n°R02-2024-07-

12-00001 from July 12th, 2024 regulates the approach of cetaceans in water under French jurisdiction in the West Indies and **prohibits the approach of marine mammals closer than 300m in all French West Indies**. We remind you that failure to comply with these rules constitutes an infraction punishable by up to **three years of imprisonment and 150,000€ fine, doubled when the offence is committed in the waters of the Saint-Barthélemy Reserve**.



During the race, **any disturbance of cetaceans in the French Exclusive Economic Zone must be immediately reported to the Agoa Sanctuary (+596 696 33 19 15) and to the MRCC (phone 196 / VHF 16)**.

If you witness entanglements, strandings or marine mammals in distress, immediately notify the local person in charge of the National Stranding Network:

- Saint-Barthélemy: Agence Territoriale de L'Environnement de Saint-Barthélemy (ATE) +590 690 31 70 73
- Agoa Sanctuary: Jérôme COUVAT +596 696 33 19 15

In order to improve knowledge of marine mammals, **the organizer is requested to forward all marine mammal observation data collected during the race to the following address: sanctuaire.agoa@ofb.gouv.fr (+596 696 38 45 38)**. This information should include date, GPS location and species identification. It can then be used for future studies.

We are at your disposal for any further information you may require.