

Biodiversity simply means the variety of plant and animal life on the planet, along with the ecosystems that support them. It includes protecting wildlife and endangered species, so in this document when we use the term 'biodiversity' we are including wildlife protection.

Animal welfare is about ensuring that any animals your operation has an impact on, whether directly or indirectly, are being well cared for physically and mentally.

Although these are separate subjects, we have included them together in this Member Guide because they are closely linked, and because many hotels will have the same staff working in both areas.

At Travelife, we expect our Members to take steps to ensure that local ecosystems, wildlife and animals are not harmed by their operations or the activities of their guests. This includes actively discouraging guests from taking part in activities that may negatively affect animal welfare and biodiversity. We also expect our Members to take into consideration ecosystems and wildlife that are outside their region. This includes:

- Complying with all relevant local, national and international laws, regulations and codes of practice.
- Not engaging in (or supporting) the hunting, killing/destruction or trade of protected species.
- Not displaying, serving or selling protected species or any items made from them.
- Informing guests and staff about how to protect any sensitive areas both on your property and in your destination. These could include things like sand dunes and reefs.
- Supporting relevant initiatives in your destination that protect or encourage biodiversity.
- Not operating or supporting any activities, excursions, entertainment or attractions that involve any of the Travelife Unacceptable Practices or that do not comply with the Travelife Animal Welfare Minimum Requirements.
- Ensuring that any refurbishments, new builds or landscaping do not harm biodiversity.
- Procuring products that are certified as using sustainable production and sourcing methods such as Rainforest Alliance, FSC, MSC and Fairtrade.
- Seeking ways within your own operations to protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Acting to correct any negative impacts you are already having on biodiversity or animal welfare.

Important information for Members operating animal attractions

Sometimes our auditors cannot assess if a Member is meeting our animal welfare minimum requirements because specialist veterinary experience is required. This usually only occurs at accommodation that has a zoo, aquatic shows or similar. If this happens you may be required to pay for a specialist animal welfare auditor from another auditing company. Travelife will recommend some reputable companies to you. Any contracting and payments will be made directly between your business and that company. We will only be able to certify your property against our animal welfare standards once a specialist and reputable auditor has provided us with evidence that you comply with our standards.

ASSESS YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS

Some businesses will have a lot more to consider than others depending on where you are and the type of accommodation you offer. We have produced a checklist that we recommend you follow to assess what your problem areas might be as well as opportunities to improve. You can find it in the Member Zone. The table below shows some common accommodation operational areas that have an effect on biodiversity and animal welfare.

Operational area	Possible negative impacts	Remedy
Procurement	<p>Purchasing animal products (e.g. meat, eggs, dairy) from a supplier that mistreat animals.</p> <p>Purchasing a product where the sourcing or production methods cause things like deforestation or pollution of natural environments.</p> <p>Purchasing products made from endangered species (e.g. for food preparation, retail).</p> <p>Contracting companies to provide entertainment and activities that involve the mistreatment of animals.</p>	<p>Look for reputable certification marks such as Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, FSC or MSC to verify that a product has been produced sustainably.</p> <p>Look for free-range animal products, ideally using a reputable certification, or in the case of local farmers, by checking conditions yourself.</p> <p>Use websites such as CITES and WWF to check the endangered species list.</p> <p>Avoid entertainment and activities that involve animals or check them against the Travelife Animal Welfare Minimum Requirements and List of Unacceptable Practices.</p>
Activities, attractions & entertainment	<p>Offering activities at your property that involve animals (e.g. live shows, photos with animals, feeding animals).</p> <p>Offering activities at your property that could harm important ecosystems/sensitive areas (e.g. reefs, sand dunes).</p> <p>Using brochures, signs or other forms of advertising that promote off-site activities, attractions and entertainment involving animals (e.g. zoos, swimming with dolphins, animal shows, camel riding, trekking with pack animals).</p> <p>Using brochures, signs or other forms of advertising that promote off-site activities, attractions and entertainment that could harm important ecosystems/sensitive areas. (e.g. reef snorkelling, off-road vehicle activities).</p>	<p>Avoid offering or promoting attractions, entertainment and activities that involve animals or check them against the Travelife Animal Welfare Minimum Requirements and List of Unacceptable Practices.</p> <p>Ask the operators you promote about the steps they take to prevent harming sensitive areas. If you are not satisfied, stop promoting them.</p> <p>If you know of any sensitive areas that are being harmed by tourist activities, warn your guests about these and about what they can do to minimise any harm.</p>
Grounds	<p>Pathways or access roads that go through sensitive areas (e.g. sand dunes, wetlands, grasslands, close to streams and rivers).</p> <p>Non-native plants that are either invasive, attract invasive species or remove access to an important food source (e.g. fewer flowers for bees and birds, an invasive plant that prevents native plants from growing, a plant that attracts pests such as non-native wasps).</p> <p>Litter from your guests or general operations, either on your property or in the areas around it</p>	<p>Pathways and access roads should be clearly marked and have clear signage explaining why it is important to stay on designated areas.</p> <p>Remove invasive plants from your grounds and encourage your neighbours to do the same.</p> <p>Plan to replace non-native vegetation with native options, especially ones that are known to support local wildlife such as bees, butterflies and birds.</p>

	<p>(e.g. cigarette butts on the beach, plastic cups and straws blowing in the sea or a stream).</p> <p>Food waste (including compost) not being contained well enough to prevent animals from accessing it as a non-natural food source.</p> <p>Food waste attracting pests such as rats that have a negative impact on native species (e.g. rats eating birds eggs or spreading diseases to other species).</p>	<p>Assess litter to establish the source and if you can, reduce or eliminate it (e.g. stop offering plastic straws).</p> <p>Place bins that can properly contain waste in areas where you are finding the most litter.</p> <p>Take steps to properly contain food waste to prevent access by wild animals or pests.</p>
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Complying with laws and regulations

Travelife wants to be sure that you are complying with all relevant laws and regulations relating to animal welfare and protecting biodiversity, and have any necessary licences and permits.

SETTING TARGETS AND GOALS

Once you have an idea of the how your business can impact biodiversity and animal welfare, you should set targets and goals to make improvements.

Targets are usually numbers and they will need to be measured against a starting point and have a measurable deadline. Ideally, you should have at least one short-term and one long-term target. Here are some examples:

Work with our community to reduce the amount of litter collected from the annual beach clean by 50% by the end of 2020.

Replace 90% of plants with native species by 2025.

Goals can still include numbers, but they are usually about projects or actions. You still need to know your starting point, have a deadline and be specific so it is easy to see if you succeeded. You should also include a mixture of short and long-term plans. Here are some examples:

Check all of the activities, attractions and entertainment we promote to our guests against the Travelife List of Unacceptable Practices by the end of 2020.

Build a fence along our current beach access pathway to prevent guests from walking on the sand dunes by 2021.

Build a butterfly garden with plants that support butterfly populations by 2025.

Your targets and goals should be:

- ✓ **Specific** and easy for anybody to understand.
- ✓ **Easy to measure** so that you can clearly see if they have been achieved.
- ✓ **Relevant and achievable.** For example, there is no point in setting a goal that you cannot afford to implement or spending time on an area where you cannot have a lot of impact.
- ✓ **Have a deadline.** This will help keep everyone on track.

MAKE IMPROVEMENTS

The five main things that you can do to support animal welfare and biodiversity:

1. Implement procurement policies and procedures that favour sustainable products and services.
2. Stop offering or promoting activities that can harm animals and biodiversity.
3. Help local ecosystems to develop and flourish by protecting sensitive areas and planting the right vegetation.
4. Educate your guests about the things they can do to support biodiversity and animal welfare in your destination.
5. Work with your community on initiatives that protect, support and develop biodiversity.

We have listed many ideas of how you can support animal welfare and biodiversity to help get you started.

Litter

- Reducing the amount of waste you produce is one of the best ways to control litter. [Click here](#) to view our tips and ideas for reducing waste.
- Composting your own food waste for use as a fertilizer on your own gardens is a great way to reuse waste but you need to make sure it is well contained so that wild animals and pests cannot access this as a food source. Eating this kind of food could harm wildlife and they could distribute it as litter.
- Conduct a litter assessment both on and around your property. See if you can identify litter that is coming from your guests, staff or general operations then think of ways to improve, such as reducing the use of items that commonly end up as litter and/or better placement of bins so they are easier for guests to use.
- A common source of litter is items blowing out of bins so replace open-top bins with closed-top options, or any other solution that will do a better job of containing litter.
- If you have an outdoor bar or dining area, consider eliminating things that easily blow away, such as paper napkins, aluminium cans, straws, plastic cups and bottles. Here are some ways you could address that:
 - Replace plastic items with reusable options, or at least heavier options that are less likely to blow away.
 - When serving guests, pour items from plastic bottles or aluminium cans into their glasses instead of leaving them on the table or bar for them to pour.
 - In outdoor dining areas, decant water into glass jugs or reusable bottles instead of leaving a plastic bottle on the table.
 - Ask guests if they want a straw or paper napkin instead of automatically serving drinks with them.
 - Whenever it is safe to replace plastic cups with glass or metal reusable alternatives, you should do so.
- Educate your guests about the harm that litter causes to your community and to wildlife.

Other pollution

By complying with the Travelife Standard you will already be addressing many of the pollutants your property produces through good management of energy, water, waste and hazardous substances. Here are some other ways you can help reduce pollution that harms biodiversity:

- Sunscreens containing oxybenzone and octinoxate can be damaging to coral reefs. This could even cause harm when these chemicals end up in waste water from guest showering. Properties near reefs should research this issue and implement appropriate measures that also factor in sun safety for guests. There are many reef-safe sunscreens on the market that do not contain these chemicals.
- Noise pollution from activities that include motorised boats, jet skis, snowmobiles and off-road vehicles (4x4, ATVs, dirt bikes) can interfere with the natural activities of animals, either by scaring them or confusing them. Consider ways that any such activities that you offer or promote can be changed to reduce these negative impacts. If you feel that you do not have any influence on this, you should consider informing guests about the potential harm these can cause.
- Light pollution can confuse wildlife in a way that disrupts migration, feeding and breeding. You should conduct some research on whether there is wildlife in your destination that could be affected by this and find out the best ways to make any necessary changes. This is particularly important if you are near a beach where sea turtles are nesting as artificial light can disorient hatchlings and lead them away from the sea.

Animal welfare and wildlife protection

In addition to complying with the Travelife Standard, here are some other ways your business can support animal welfare:

- Procure animal products (meat, fish, dairy, eggs etc.) from suppliers that treat their animals properly. In some destinations these will be easy to identify through certifications or endorsements from reputable animal welfare organisations. At other destinations you might have to do a bit more research by consulting with local animal welfare groups or visiting the websites of similar groups in other countries. This is a way to use your influence as a buyer to encourage better practices and you will have even more influence if you team up with other businesses in your community or other hotels in your chain/group.
- Work with your community to support initiatives that use humane solutions to deal with stray cats and dogs.
- Educate your guests about the importance of not interfering with free-roaming wildlife at your property and/or destination. This includes discouraging them from feeding or petting wild animals, as well as activity that could frighten animals or otherwise disturb their natural behaviours.
- Use your business influence within your destination to speak out against tourism activities that may appear on the Travelife List of Unacceptable Practices, encouraging other businesses to follow your lead by not supporting these activities. Businesses that involve these unacceptable practices are more likely to improve if they feel pressured economically to do so.
- Ask your suppliers to reduce, reuse or eliminate packaging. If that is not possible then ask them to find more sustainable alternatives, e.g. using recycled shredded paper to protect fragile items instead of polystyrene. You might be able to return the shredded paper to them so they can reuse it.
- Dedicate some time to checking that products that claim they are environmentally friendly or biodegradable definitely are. For example, some plastics claim to be biodegradable yet still take decades to degrade and/or release toxic chemicals during the process.
- If there is a specific animal issue in your destination, see if there are ways you can support it. This include things like problems with abandoned pets, mistreatment of working animals such as donkeys, urban development leading to shrinking natural habitats, disruption of breeding grounds. Here are some things you might be able to do:
 - Raise funds to support initiatives that address these issues.
 - Invite speakers with specific expertise/experience to educate your staff and to give ideas about how you can help.
 - Provide information to guests about the issue and ways they can help.
 - Allow your staff an extra paid day off per year/season to volunteer for one of these initiatives.
 - Use your influence as a business owner to lobby for change.

General ideas

- Set aside an area of your grounds to 'grow wild'. This means not interfering with the growth of native grasses, shrubs and trees except to remove any non-native and/or invasive species. In addition to supporting biodiversity, there are a few other ways you could use this:
 - Use signage or guided visits to the area to educate guests about why you have an untidy piece of garden and about local flora and fauna. This could be especially good for children's activities.
 - Partner with a local school, college or university so they can use it to study things like the regeneration of native plants and local ecosystems.
- Most parts of the world have native bees, birds and butterflies that are under threat. Research the best ways to support them such as planting vegetation that attracts them, avoiding certain pesticides and removing vegetation that attracts their predators.
- Find out about sustainable methods for controlling invasive pests that can harm biodiversity in your area. For example, too many invasive wasps can devastate butterflies, and rats can raid bird nests for eggs.

- Build fenced or roped pathways that cross sensitive areas like sand dunes, native grassland and areas that are being regenerated so that people are discouraged from trampling on or polluting these places. Consider erecting signs that not only explain why people should keep to the pathways, but also about the wildlife you are protecting.
- Educate guests about what they can do to protect biodiversity. Here are some examples:
 - How to enjoy water activities like snorkelling, scuba diving, boating and swimming responsibly.
 - Why it is important to not collect things like shells, stones and plants from natural areas.
 - How to take nature walks and bike rides (and longer treks) in a responsible manner – bringing their rubbish back to the hotel for proper disposal, sticking to pathways, not disturbing or feeding wildlife, sanitary and hygiene advice if there are no toilets available in the area.
 - How to deal with unwanted insects or other animals guests find in or around their room. This is particularly relevant to destinations where there are things like native bats, important moths, snakes, spiders and other creatures that scare your guests! You should have a process in place so that guests can notify your staff who can arrange for their quick, safe and humane removal.

ASSESSING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

Travelife expects Certified Members to have a continuous improvement cycle. That means that you will need to complete the following steps at least once every year:

- Reassess your operations each year to look for ways to improve your impact on biodiversity and animal welfare.
- Review how well you are doing with reaching your targets and achieving your goals.
- Recommend improvements to make over the next year.
- Set new short-term goals and targets.
- Include your findings in an annual report that is reviewed and discussed by senior management.
- Include the appropriate parts of your findings in your annual public sustainability report. This normally includes progress against current goals and targets along with any new goals and targets.

We have produced a checklist to help you assess your performance each year that you can find in the Member Zone.

MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Appendix I and II: Travelife Animal Welfare Minimum Requirements and List of Unacceptable Practices

Travelife Biodiversity and Animal Welfare Self-Assessment Checklist