



Safe Distance Policy:
safe for you and safe for the wildlife.

Pusat Penyelamatan Satwa Tasikoki - Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Centre

Jl. Raya Tanjung Merah-Kema, Pimpin Jaga XV Desa Watudambo, Kec. Kauditan, Kab. Minahasa Utara; 95372 Sulawesi Utara, INDONESIA
www.tasikoki.org

Please read this section carefully: Ignoring or breaching this policy can endanger not only yourself, but also put others and the wildlife at risk. Not adhering to this policy means being dismissed from the project.

Always keep a safe distance of at least two arm lengths between yourself and the wildlife. This helps to:

AVOID interfering with natural behaviour. Tasikoki aims to rehabilitate and release the wild animals we care for. In the wild these animals would not interact or socialize with humans. We want to reduce the wildlife's habituation to humans, not encourage it. When humans interact with wildlife it can damage social relationships, particularly with primates that exist in pairs or groups. Gibbons are very jealous primates that live as monogamous pairs and giving attention to a macaque can lead to it's victimization from higher ranking individuals

AVOID injury to either you or the wildlife. In most cases the female and male individuals of a species can be equally dangerous and these are wild animals. They may appear tame, passive and tolerant of humans but that can switch to aggression without any warning. Startling an animal by shouting or making sudden gestures can trigger a flight or fight response. Macaques communicate visually through expression. Stare or smile at an individual and they could mistake either of those as an aggressive challenge. Fight or flight is the choice an animal makes when it perceives a threat or challenge. It is instinctive and if you are in an animal's way and it wants to flee it may well choose to go through you. If it chooses to fight then you are likely to come out on the losing side.

AVOID transmission of disease. Yes, you could unwittingly transmit disease to the wildlife here and the reverse is also true. Viruses and bacteria can be transmitted through bites, scratches or contact with saliva, urine and faeces. Respiratory diseases can cross over between non human primates and human primates through the air without you even coming into contact with an animal. Hence, non human primates are not allowed to pet, touch or hand feed any of the wildlife at Tasikoki. We also need you to report feeling unwell so that we can ensure you are less likely to be in a situation where cold/flu or a gastro intestinal illness could be transmitted to the wildlife.

Avoiding anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is when you assign a human trait or characteristic to wildlife. A gibbon reaching out of it's enclosure at you is not seeking physical contact for the pleasure of it. They are more likely wanting to scratch you to assert dominance or because your presence is seen as a threat.

People who keep wildlife as pets often anthropomorphise the wildlife. A baby animal is dependant and will respond to human affection. The human will see it as a human child who "loves" them. However, as the animal grows it will seek independence, leadership or freedom. The human, confronted with behaviour viewed as rebellious or downright dangerous, will often abandon or neglect the "ungrateful" wildlife, sometimes locking them away.

Many of the animals here were once pets but they are still potentially dangerous wild animals. Remind yourself of that whenever you feel like touching the wildlife or getting up close. You could be undoing all the hard work that has previously gone into rehabilitating that individual.

Domestic animal and livestock have been through centuries of controlled breeding in order to promote or suppress both genetic and behavioural characteristics. They have been bred to tolerate the presence of humans. Wildlife has never been through this process and therefore it does not typically accept a human presence never mind the touch of a human. Tasikoki observes the Five Freedoms of animal welfare which means we will never handle or interfere with the wildlife unless we have to. We want them to express their natural behaviour.

In order to condition wildlife to tolerate humans touching or riding them, for example circus elephants, the owner has to recondition that wildlife's natural instincts and behaviours. This is typically done through a variety of violent practises. Just ask yourself whether you think a wild elephant would ever let a human ride on it's back.

Wild horses in America are considered extremely dangerous. They are examples of wildlife (the clue is in the name.) These mustangs do not seek human companionship. In order to ride one you have to break it's spirit and this is what happens to any wildlife used for human amusement.

When a situation occurs that demands wildlife needs special attention experienced and trained staff members, such as keepers, vets or long term volunteers, will handle an animal as required. This does not in any way justify visitors or volunteers breaching the Safe Distance Policy and this includes the local wildlife not just those animals we care for in the rescue centre.

Please help Tasikoki to maintain this policy and inform the volunteer coordinator if you see anyone breach the Safe Distance Policy. Not for our sake but the sake of the wildlife.