



Ethical Code of the Association of Professional Bird and Nature Guides of Extremadura (GUIDEX).

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish the obligations for compliance and the recommendations to take into account as members of GUIDEX, referring to ethical aspects and the conservation of nature and biodiversity associated with the activities of professional guides, serving as a best practice manual, with the objective of ensuring that the members of Association of Professional Bird and Nature Guides of Extremadura (GUIDEX) always show exemplary conduct in terms of awareness and respect for the welfare and conservation of nature, as well as the highest quality care of their clients. This code deals with all of the professional activities of the members, including observation as well as photography of wildlife. To enter the Association, each member will confirm his/her commitment to the compliance of the code and will accept that the Board of Directors can take action in case of non-compliance. In extreme cases of non-compliance of this code, action may be taken to expel or suspend the person as member of the Association.

Obligations

- All professional nature guides should put the welfare of wildlife first. The guide has the responsibility to ensure that his/her conduct and that of his/her group does not cause a negative impact to the wildlife being watched.
- At all times, the clients are under the responsibility of the guide and the guide should call to the attention of any showing inappropriate behaviour.
- The guide should at all times set a good example, and encourage other members of the group to behave likewise.
- Under no circumstances should playback of calls and songs be used to attract species listed as threatened, under the categories of Endangered, Sensitive to habitat alteration or Vulnerable, based on the Regional List of Endangered species in Extremadura (CREA). - There should be no wilful disturbance of nesting birds and guides must ensure that clients are kept at

a safe distance from nests or other sensitive areas (e.g. lekking grounds) during the breeding season.

- Except in the case of places which are protected areas that enjoy good levels of vigilance and places where there are observation infrastructures like hides and where there is no risk to the birds, nests should not be shown nor should information be given regarding the location of nests or young birds. Each season, the Board of Directors will advise the members which well-known nest sites can be shown to clients, with specific recommendations about the best observation site in order to avoid possible disturbance.

- Do not divulge information about sites which are sensitive because of the presence of endangered species or because of the particular characteristics of the site.

- The authorities should be informed if a member is aware of disturbance near a nest or breeding areas in general, or other situations where endangered species may be at risk.

Recommendations

- The guide will inform the clients about the need to put the welfare of wildlife first. - It is advisable to work with small groups if possible to reduce the level of disturbance to birds and other wildlife and also offer a higher quality experience.

- It is recommended not to use playbacks to attract birds because of possible negative impact, as well the risk that others may follow the example and do the same. In the case of using playback with species that are not listed in the CREA as Endangered, Sensitive to habitat alteration or Vulnerable, the duration of playback should be short and should not take place in inappropriate places (such as places well visited by other birders).

- Try to keep the group as close together as possible and do not leave paths or tracks, especially during the breeding season.

- The guide should provide prior information to clients about sensitive species that will be looked for and about the characteristics of the place to be visited to ensure that the group's behaviour at the site is appropriate. Clients need to be advised of the best places to be watching the birds from, the appropriate distances from the birds and how long to stay at the site.

- In case it is necessary to enter private property it is preferable to have obtained permission from the landowners.

- The guide should be very familiar with the route and the stopping places to make sure that the services are provided will minimise disturbance to wildlife, to other people and that the route is safe.

- One should avoid interfering with other activities taking place in the field, be they related to people working or taking leisure.

- The guide has a duty to denounce actions which may be detrimental to the environment and wildlife.

- Guides should have all of the permits required for the undertaking of these activities professionally.

- The guide should be publically identifiable as a professional guide.