Sea Safety

- Always carry a means of calling for help and keep it within reach (waterproof VHF radio, mobile phone, whistles and flares).
- Wear a personal flotation device.
- Get some training: contact British Canoeing www.britishcanoeing.org.uk or the Poole Harbour Canoe Club www.phcc.org.uk for local information.
- Wear clothing appropriate for your trip and the weather.
- Always paddle with others.
- Let someone ashore know your plans and what time to expect you back.
- Check the tide, wind and weather before launching – be aware of wind strength, especially offshore winds.
- If in difficulty, stay with your craft. It provides buoyancy and extra visibility.
- In an emergency dial 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.
- Take a drink and snack with you (energy bars, dried fruit, nuts, chocolate).
- Keep clear of the main shipping channels. If you must cross them then cross at right angles and when clear of traffic.

Check, Clean & Dry

- Check your equipment and clothing for living plants and animals.
- Pay particular attention to areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
- Clean and wash all equipment, using water only.
- Dry all equipment and clothing – some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don’t transfer water elsewhere.

Birding

- **Avocet**
  - Key Features: Elegant white and black wader with distinctive upturned bill and long legs.
  - Best to spot: August to April
  - Where: On a low tide Avocets can be found in several favoured feeding spots with the southern tip of Round Island and the mouth of Wytch Lake being good places. However these are sensitive feeding zones and it’s not advised to kayak here on a low or falling tide.
  - Fact: Depending on the winter conditions, Poole Harbour hosts the 2nd or 3rd largest overwintering flock of Avocet in the country.

- **Red Breasted Merganser**
  - Key Features: Both males and females have a spiky haircut on the back of their heads and males have a distinctive green plummy head and red eye.
  - Best to spot: October to March
  - Where: Any area of open water and the shallow bays around the harbour.

- **Osprey**
  - Key Feature: Large, long-winged pale and brown bird of prey. Has distinct brown stripe through eye.
  - Best to spot: August to September
  - Where: Any of the shallow bays around the southern shores of the harbour, but the Wareham Channel in August is a hot spot.

- **Spoonbill**
  - Key Feature: A large white bird with a long spatula shaped bill.
  - Best to spot: Over winter
  - Where: On a low tide Spoonbills feed right the way around the harbour, in shallow channels and bays. On a high tide they roost on Shipstal Point, Arne and on the Brownsea Lagoon.

- **Sandwich Tern**
  - Key Features: Black hood and spiky crest on its head and a yellow tip to its long black bill.
  - Best to spot: Summer
  - Where: Sandwich Tern feed on Sand Eels and small fish, making the large shallow bay of Whitley Lake, in the Wareham Channel a great place to watch them fishing.

Poole Harbour

Poole Harbour is home to a wealth of wildlife as well as being a busy commercial port and centre for a wide range of recreational activities. It is a fantastic sheltered place to explore by canoe all year round, although it’s important to remember this site is important for birds (Special Protection Area).

Watch Out For Wildlife

Disturbance can lead to breeding birds abandoning chicks and eggs. Disturbing overwintering birds can reduce birds’ energy reserves prior to their long migrations. To help ensure the site continues to be enjoyed by future generations please:

- Avoid overwintering bird sensitive areas between November – March (see map).
- Avoid breeding bird sensitive areas between April – June (see map).
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Land at landing points and keep to paths.
- Avoid dragging your vessel as this can damage natural banks and habitats.
- Avoid approaching large groups of birds.
- Enjoy your trip and leave the environment as you found it – keep Poole Harbour litter free. www.litterfreecoastandsea.co.uk.