

General Site Visit Risk Assessment for Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group Attendees

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Introduction

This document serves to give health and safety advice to any member of the Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group (BIG) whilst engaged in any group activity. BIG organisers do not accept responsibility for the health and safety of attendees beyond the most basic level required of ordinary members of the public by existing legislation. BIG event organisers serve to facilitate access to sites for its members and organisers do not accept the role of leadership during any event. Attendees at BIG meetings attend at their own risk and are responsible for their own wellbeing and must be mindful at all times of the wellbeing of other participants and members of the public. The advice given in this document is therefore advisory in nature and attendees should satisfy themselves that their behaviour and activities are conducted in a manner appropriate to the health and safety of themselves and other persons. **In the event of an emergency the emergency meeting point will be the car parking area.**

1 Risks associated with arrival at the event location

- Impact between moving vehicles
- Impact between pedestrians and vehicles

On arrival ensure you park with consideration to other road and/or site users. Be aware that persons alighted in the parking area may be distracted and not paying full attention to vehicular movements. Individual members, once alighted from cars, should be vigilant of approaching or manoeuvring vehicles and call out warnings to other pedestrians as appropriate. Be mindful of any members who may have vision or hearing impairment.

Some parking areas may be remote from the intended event location. In these circumstances, avoid any surveying until the group has left the public highway and is away from traffic.

A group awareness briefing may be given at the start of an event to draw attention to any site risks.

2 Other vehicular risks whilst traversing an event site

- Impact between pedestrians and vehicles and machinery

Be aware that even on nature reserves there may be vehicles manoeuvring including ranger vehicles and farm or land maintenance vehicles and machinery. Also, off-road cyclists may be present on sites, sometimes travelling at speed, so be especially careful when on site paths and trackways. Take extra care when working close to paths and driveways used by public and on-site vehicles. Ensure you remain visible to vehicles and avoid crouching or kneeling when on trackways. If surveying at ground level, consider working in pairs and alternating with one acting as a lookout whilst the other surveys. It is recommended that you wear a high visibility jacket when surveying close to vehicular routes.

3 Risks associated with the weather during an event

- Heat stroke, Sunburn and Dehydration
- Hypothermia
- Disorientation

Attendees should familiarise themselves with the local weather forecast before the visit and ensure they have appropriate protective clothing for any weather conditions. Drinking water, hot drinks and snacks should be carried with you whilst surveying. At higher risk of exposure to the elements are those unfamiliar with the outdoor environment, the elderly, the young and those with disabilities or ailments. **Low temperatures, wind-chill and wet weather** can rapidly lower the body temperature leading to hypothermia and can also exacerbate certain skin conditions. Wear layered clothing and waterproofs. If conditions deteriorate markedly whilst at an event, participants should assist each other in returning to the car parking area and end the event.

Poor visibility, mist and fog can result in disorientation and an increased risk of trips and falls. Events will not normally go ahead in such conditions. However, if visibility is reduced whilst at an event, participants should assist each other in returning to the car parking area and end the event.

High temperatures, strong sun and high humidity can result in heat stroke and sunburn (which in turn can lead to cancers and cataracts). In such conditions, wear a hat and UV sunglasses, apply sunscreen and drink plenty of water. At higher risk of exposure to the elements are those unfamiliar with the outdoor environment, the elderly, the young and those with disabilities or ailments. If conditions deteriorate markedly whilst at an event, participants should assist each other in returning to the car parking area and end the event.

4 Risks associated with the terrain and ecosystem

Terrain (scale of site, slopes, elevation, ground conditions, physical hazards).

- Isolation and disorientation
- Exhaustion and overexertion
- Trips and falls
- Transmissible diseases

Some of the event sites attended will be large and participants run the risk of getting isolated from other participants or even lost. Try to keep in visible or audible range of others at all times and carry a mobile phone at all times. Traversing large sites, and also sites with steep slopes, can be physically challenging leading to exhaustion, which may be aggravated by hot or cold weather. This can lead to injury or death especially for those with underlying health conditions, the elderly, those with limited mobility or poor coordination, or anyone who is nervous or unfamiliar with the outdoors environment. Advise other participants of any pre-existing health issues you have that may be relevant. Participants should at all times be mindful of their limitations and also be aware of the wellbeing of others. Consider limiting yourself to a smaller area closer to the car park if you have concerns, rather than trying to cover the whole site.

Adverse underfoot conditions such as slime, broken substrates, slippery, wet, or loose substrate, animal burrows, unstable boulders, scree, and lush grass can result in falls, slips, trips, and stumbles leading to injury. It is easy to become distracted whilst surveying so always watch your footfall whilst moving and only examine any invertebrates whilst stationary.

Navigating physical hazards such as gates, fences, abandoned machinery, etc. can result in falls, or cuts, which can in turn result in illness through disease transmission via any skin abrasions. Participants should wear suitable, functional, well-fitting clothing and equipment including appropriate footwear with good grips.

Always keep at least one hand free to steady oneself whilst walking. Participants should go around physical hazards wherever possible and should have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination.

Ecosystem (flora and fauna, livestock).

- Allergic reactions
- Transmissible diseases
- Lacerations and crushing injury

Contact with plants can result in stings and scratches or skin irritation. This in turn can lead to allergic reactions or disease transmission. Those unfamiliar with the countryside and those who have allergic responses are at particular risk. Participants should familiarise themselves with those plants that bear stings, thorns or irritating hairs and avoid contact with those plants. Consider wearing long sleeves and long trousers or other protective clothing. Inform other participants if you have any allergy health conditions. Carry adequate personal medication and a mobile phone at all times. Seek immediate treatment where required. Plants may be contaminated with animal diseases (zoonoses). In particular, **leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)** is spread in the urine of infected animals: most commonly rats, mice, cows, pigs and dogs. You can get leptospirosis if soil or water from a river, canal or lake gets in your mouth, eyes or a cut. Symptoms to be aware of include a high temperature, or you feel hot and shivery, a headache, feeling sick (nausea), diarrhoea, aching muscles and joints, red eyes, and loss of appetite.

Avoid areas of bracken that are in spore as the spores can cause cancer.

Be aware that animal ticks may be present in vegetation on sites. Not all ticks in England carry the bacteria that causes **Lyme disease**, but it is still important to be aware of ticks and to safely remove them as soon as possible, just in case. Ticks that may cause Lyme disease are found all over the UK, but high-risk places include grassy and wooded areas. Check skin and clothing regularly and especially after leaving a site. Remove any attached ticks with a tick removal tool or seek medical assistance. If a tick bite has been infected with Lyme disease, a circular or oval shape rash around the tick bite can be an early symptom in some people. The rash can appear up to 3 months after being bitten by an infected tick, but usually appears within 1 to 4 weeks. It can last for several weeks. The rash can have a darker or lighter area in the centre and might gradually spread. It's not usually hot or itchy. On dark skin the rash can be harder to see and may appear bruise-like. Some people also get flu-like symptoms a few days or weeks after they were bitten by an infected tick. In the event that symptoms develop, you should seek immediate medical advice.

Larger wild animals such as badgers, deer, or foxes, together with farm livestock or loose dogs, may present a risk through aggressive or unpredictable behaviour (biting, charging or stampeding). Participants should remain aware of their surroundings at all times and steer clear of larger wild mammals and farm animals. Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group will have established with landowners prior to the meeting whether livestock will be present on site and will advise participants accordingly. However, in the event that unexpected farm livestock are present, the visit may have to be postponed to a later date.

5 Other hazards whilst navigating the site.

- Impact with moving objects
- Unsafe structures
- Dangerous goods

Contact with stationary or moving objects such as landslips, falling boulders (e.g. in quarries), or falling trees or branches can result in serious injury or death. Participants should not survey near to the edges of, or beneath, cliffs or potentially unstable slopes, especially after prolonged heavy rain. Keep away from large trees that are unstable or have only partially fallen. In the event of high winds, wooded areas should be avoided. Whilst surveying, keep a safe working distance away from other participants to avoid being struck by their equipment (e.g. nets, paddles, booms, etc.). Do not enter any areas or buildings that have been cordoned off or marked as unsafe. Also be aware of general hazards around you such as low branches, barbed wire, stiles, fences, and countryside furniture that may result in injury. Avoid areas where estate management work is being undertaken and advise contractors of your presence if it is safe to do so. On derelict sites, there may be harmful, flammable, or explosive chemicals and other pollutants around. Do not move or interfere with any containers, drums, or loose/friable building materials.

Whilst on site it is advisable to carry basic first aid supplies.

6 Terrestrial Invertebrate Surveying.

- Impact with moving objects
- Heat stroke, Sunburn and Dehydration
- Hypothermia
- Isolation and disorientation
- Exhaustion and overexertion
- Trips and falls
- Repetitive strain injury from sample methods
- Back injury from carrying or moving heavy loads
- Allergic reactions
- Transmissible diseases
- Lacerations and crushing injury

When surveying on a site, maintain a safe working distance from those around you to avoid injury from impact with surveying equipment. Use any surveying equipment in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and follow standard methodologies. Be aware that prolonged sweep netting and plant beating can lead to repetitive strain injuries to the wrists and elbows. When handling or carrying glass specimen tubes be careful to avoid breakages and avoid carrying glass tubes in pockets where a fall could result in breakages and resultant puncture wounds. Wear protective layered clothing to avoid heat or cold exposure. Wear a sunhat, cover limbs, wear UV protected sunglasses and high factor sunscreen when appropriate. Bring sufficient hot or cold drinks and snacks as appropriate to the conditions. In adverse visibility keep within visual range of other participants and obtain prior information of the terrain. Discontinue surveying if weather conditions deteriorate. Surveying can necessitate carrying a large volume of equipment. Keep loads to a minimum and carry in suitable, adjustable rucksacks to avoid back aches and sprains. When ground searching, move any rocks or logs with care, rolling rather than lifting the item where possible. At all times be mindful of animal or plant transmitted diseases. Avoid surveying in areas of bracken that are in spore as the spores can cause cancer. Carry a hand sanitiser and ensure hands are thoroughly clean before and after handling any food or drink or toilet use. Make sure that any existing wounds are covered with a medical dressing and that tetanus vaccinations are up to date. Be particularly mindful of sanitation around dung or animal carcasses. Avoid direct handling and clean hands with sanitiser after sampling.

7 Aquatic Invertebrate Surveying.

- Impact with moving objects
- Heat stroke, Sunburn and Dehydration
- Hypothermia
- Isolation and disorientation
- Exhaustion and overexertion
- Trips and falls
- Repetitive strain injury from sample methods
- Back injury from carrying or moving heavy loads
- Allergic reactions
- Transmissible diseases
- Lacerations and crushing injury
- Drowning

When surveying on a site, maintain a safe working distance from those around you to avoid injury from impact with surveying equipment. Use any surveying equipment in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and follow standard methodologies. Be aware that prolonged use of pond nets, etc. can lead to repetitive strain injuries to the wrists and elbows. When handling or carrying glass specimen tubes be careful to avoid breakages and avoid carrying glass tubes in pockets where a fall could result in breakages and resultant puncture wounds. Wear protective clothing to avoid heat or cold exposure. Wear a sunhat, cover limbs, wear UV protected sunglasses and high factor sunscreen when appropriate. Wear suitable hand and footwear to avoid hypothermia from exposure to cold water and carry a towel. Bring sufficient hot or cold drinks and snacks as appropriate to the conditions. In adverse visibility keep within visual range of other participants and obtain prior information of the terrain. Discontinue surveying if weather conditions deteriorate. Surveying can necessitate carrying a large volume of equipment. Keep loads to a minimum and carry in suitable, adjustable rucksacks to avoid back aches and sprains. When ground searching, move any rocks or logs with care, rolling rather than lifting the item where possible. At all times be mindful of animal, plant or water transmitted diseases especially Weil's disease. Carry a hand sanitiser and ensure hands are thoroughly clean before and after handling any food or drink or toilet use. Make sure that any existing wounds are covered with a medical dressing and that tetanus vaccinations are up to date. Working with hands or feet in cold water can cause shock and hypothermia. Be mindful of the dangers of slipping or tripping around water bodies. Slippery grass, mud, heavy rain, bogs, swollen streams and rivers, jetties/platforms all present a risk and injury or death from drowning can result from falls into/near water and cold-water immersion. Wherever possible, water sampling should be carried out from the bank. If working in, or near to, water it is recommended that you should work as a pair. This is especially important if the surveying requires that you enter the water. It is also recommended that you wear a buoyancy aid and use a wading pole if standing in water as uneven surfaces and immersed trip hazards can result in falls and subsequent drowning.

Approved by:

On behalf of:

Date: