

British Entomological & Natural History Society (BENHS)

Hazard & Risk Assessment for Field (Outdoor) Events & Activities

(For group and solo participants)

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INTRODUCTION

This risk assessment document is intended to highlight the hazards likely to be and potentially encountered when partaking in entomological and general wildlife surveying and collecting activities in the field, i.e. generally outdoors, in association with or on behalf of BENHS. Suggestions for mitigating and minimising the risks associated with these hazards are included.

BUT FIRST – BENHS members please read the "**NOTES TO LEADERS OF FIELD MEETINGS**" and "**GENERAL NOTES ON BENHS FIELD MEETINGS**" given at the back of each annual "Field Meetings Programme".

This document is in three Parts. **PART 1** is a list of generic hazards with associated risks and risk mitigations. Event/activity leaders must make participants aware of, and encouraged to read, **PART 1** before commencement of the event/activity. **PART 2** is a form-template for hazards, risks and mitigations considered to be specific to an event/activity. **PART 3** is a form-template for the inclusion of emergency and comfort information relating to the site being worked. Completion of these two forms (**PARTs 2 and 3**) is advised but optional. It is important, however, that an event/activity leader, or specified responsible person (e.g. site ranger), communicates any event-specific hazards and potential risks to participants prior to the commencement of the event/activity, e.g. at the meeting point.

Note: for solo (single participant) activities the participant is considered to be the leader of the activity. Those participating in solo activities should be aware of associated hazards, e.g. for night-time procedures and those involving aquatic sampling. It will often not be practical for **PARTs 2 and 3** to be completed for solo activities due to their spontaneous nature but it is advised that all members at least read **PART 1**.

Please also see sections on corrections and amendments and the author's disclaimer at the end of this document.

Important considerations

1. Every BENHS member and non-member participating in a BENHS event/activity is responsible for his/her own safety. The BENHS cannot be considered liable for the consequences of obviously unwise or unsafe practices carried out by event/activity participants.
2. Every BENHS member and non-member participating in a BENHS event/activity must be made aware of this document, i.e. event/activity leaders must ensure that participants are either presented a copy of this document, or given the location where the document can be found, e.g. the BENHS website, prior to an event/activity taking place, and strongly encouraged to read it.
3. The hazards and associated risks and mitigations given in the tables below cannot include every possible situation that might be encountered when undertaking fieldwork, the nature of which can often lead to unpredictable or unthought-of situations. A large degree of commonsense must therefore be exercised by everyone participating in an event/activity so that the adverse effects of likely, or unexpected, hazards met are minimised.

4. This assessment is not suitable, or intended, for under-water activities.

PART 1: Generic Activities

Hazard	Risk(s)	Mitigation(s) (Numbers relate to risk numbers)
Weather conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exposure from heavy rain and cold 2. Sunburn & heatstroke 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate clothing, headgear and footwear. 2. Apply sunscreen (Factor 15+ recommended), especially during hours 11am to 3pm. Cloudy and hazy conditions may be more dangerous than direct sun
Terrain, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven ground • Steep inclines • Rocky slopes • River and lake banks • Tracks and roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slips, trips & falls • Potholes • Encounters with public and private (e.g. farm) traffic and equipment • Suitability for disabled, e.g. wheelchair access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to describe terrain and accessibility at start of event/activity • Know your capabilities, i.e. don't work in areas you might have difficulty in negotiating • Avoid areas where road maintenance or farm activities are being carried out
Site navigation	Getting lost!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a map of the site • Mobile phone recommended • GPS tracker recommended (useful for data recording too)
Infection & disease (Biocenoses)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lyme disease (<i>Lyme borreliosis</i>) from tick bites 2. Weil's disease (<i>Leptospirosis</i>) from rat urine 3. General insect/spider bites and stings 4. Soil & water borne infections, e.g. Weil's disease & hepatitis A 5. Infections from animal remains & faeces 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Body check for ticks when get home, especially if worked in long grass 2. Keep cuts and abrasions covered. Wear rubber gloves if practical, especially when working in water 3. Can't usually avoid but insect repellent advisable on exposed skin. If susceptible carry appropriate measures against extreme reactions, e.g. anaphylaxis 4. Wear rubber gloves if practical or, if can't wash hands on site, clean hands with antiseptic wipes. Avoid touching mucus membranes, e.g. eyes 5. As 4.
People	Some may question and criticise what you are doing, possibly aggressively	Be prepared to explain what you are doing as politely and succinctly as possible. Avoid confrontation
Domestic animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock, e.g. cattle • Pets, e.g. dogs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cattle – crush injuries 2. Bulls – direct injuries 3. Dogs – trips and bites 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid cattle, especially with calves and/or if dogs in field 2. Avoid fields with bulls 3. Avoid aggressive & dodgy-looking dogs!

Hazard	Risk(s)	Mitigation(s) (Numbers relate to risk numbers)
Equipment	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light trap bulb heat or catastrophic failure • UV light from light traps Note – UV emission from broken M/V bulbs is highly dangerous – can cause serious eye and skin injury • Electric shock when using generators or other electrical equipment • Falling from ladders • Tool accidents, e.g. from hammers, saws, knives etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your equipment – take extra care if using sharp or cutting equipment • If using a ladder for placing traps at height it is advised that assistance is sought • Make sure all electrical equipment is safe before use – take extra care to avoid electric shock when using in wet conditions. • If using a light trap take care to let bulb cool before dismantling. • Avoid M/V bulb use in wet weather. Use rain-guard if raining or rain expected as bulb failure more likely • If UV emission bulb in use avoid looking directly at the light, <u>especially if glass is broken</u>; wearing eye protection with UV filter is recommended
Water (i.e. when on a boat or on shore), e.g. rivers, ponds and lakes. See also Infection & Disease	Falling in!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A personal flotation device (e.g. life jacket) must be worn at all times • Avoid working alone on water • Avoid working from a boat in high winds or during a thunderstorm
Wildlife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small mammals • Large mammals • Snakes • Insects & spiders • Aggressive plants (e.g. thorns) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General injury 2. Bites and stings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoidance 2. See Infection & disease
Physical activity	Tiredness & muscle strain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your limitations • Avoid heavy weights without assistance (e.g. turning large logs and stones etc.)
Motorised traffic. e.g. on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads and roadsides • Farmyards • Farm tracks • Public amenity/park maintenance tracks 	Collision with vehicles, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cars • Tractors • Trucks • Agricultural machinery • Roadside mowers 	Stay alert – avoid working close to roads or where vehicles are operating. If this is necessary for research work, working with a partner is advised.
Night-time working (includes crepuscular)	All of the above apply. However, many of the risks are enhanced after dark, especially in difficult terrain and near water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra care needed – carry a strong torch with spare batteries. Using a head torch (in addition) is advised • Be vigilant. Avoid working on own if possible

PART 2: Event/Activity-specific Details Form

(Advised but dependant on the leaders assessment of conditions)

Required only if additional hazards/risks can be identified that are not included in the general document, i.e. **PART 1**.

Event name:

Site name:

Name(s) of leader(s) and site host(s):

(As appropriate)

Accessibility

(e.g. terrain and wheelchair access):

Description of activity:

Number of participants:

Comments:

(Include any additional hazards and risks specific to the site that might be encountered)

PART 3: Emergency & Comfort Information (fill in as much as possible)

(Advised but optional, dependant on the leaders assessment of conditions)

Nearest hospital Accident and Emergency Dept.	
Nearest first-aid kit	
Nearest defibrillator (if available nearby)	
Name of first-aider (if available)	
Nearest building for shelter	
Mobile phone reception (if known)	
Nearest public phone	
Nearest toilets	
Nearest cafe/pub (if available nearby)	

CORRECTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Suggestions for corrections and amendments to this document are actively encouraged by users; means for contacting BENHS can be found in the Society's Journal or on the Society's website (www.benhs.org.uk).

AUTHOR'S DISCLAIMER

This document was prepared by the author at the request of the BENHS Council. The contents of the document are based on the author's extensive experience in the leadership of field ecology projects in the UK and overseas. The author has no specific, professional qualifications in the production of such documents.