



Charity No 224018

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Union operates under provisions of the 1974 Health and Safety Act and produces a statement of policy with respect to everybody who attends its meetings or is acting on behalf of the Union on another person's or organisation's premises. The Union recognises the importance of each individual acting in a responsible manner and co-operating in ensuring that the Health and Safety Policy and any associated procedures are followed.

It is the policy of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union under its Executive Committee:

1. To regard health and safety as a core function.
2. To develop, refine and monitor a system of responsibility for health and safety matters and to communicate the findings on a regular basis.
3. To operate in a safe and healthy working environment, ensuring safe operations.
4. To produce written guidelines on the conduct of our meetings in order to promote an attitude of safe, responsible working amongst those attending.
5. To recommend appropriate safety equipment and procedures whilst on Union activities.
6. To require immediate and accurate reporting and investigation of accidents or other incidents.
7. To ensure that individuals follow any specific health and safety information given by landowners and other occupiers of premises, whilst on Union activities.

Insurance cover is available to Union members whilst on Union activities, since we have Public Liability Insurance. However, mountaineering, cliff work, caving, boating and sub-aqua diving require a risk assessment performed by a trained individual, who should copy the risk assessment to the Treasurer, before the meeting proceeds, in order that insurance clearance is obtained. Should any incident occur which may require a claim on the policy, please contact the Treasurer by telephone immediately. A summary of *Defra* Biosecurity Guidance is available below. The Health and Safety policy was reviewed at the Executive meeting on February 15th 2023.

2. HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

Potential hazards and procedures to consider before starting the survey/field excursion.

Please spend a few minutes reading this guidance. If you have any questions, please ask the organiser/leader. Health and safety is an individual's responsibility and each person is responsible for drawing the attention of the group to any hazard observed during the course of the day.

A risk assessment should be carried out before the field survey is commenced.

General points:

- Wear appropriate clothing, including footwear. Consider the weather forecast but be prepared for unexpected changes in the weather.
- Sun and wind protection to prevent sun-burn or wind-burn.
- Make sure sufficient drinking water is available, even on cool wet days.
- Ensure supplies of any required medicine are packed, e.g. hay fever tablets, diabetic's medication. An up-to-date tetanus vaccination is advised and possibly other vaccination (e.g. hepatitis, or rabies if handling bats). Carry a small first aid kit & latex gloves for handling biological material, (e.g. dead animals or dung) or when working in water.

Working in pairs/lone working.

- It is advisable to work in communicative pairs whilst surveying, i.e. in earshot of each other, but

there are times when this is not possible.

- Isolation: Check your mobile phone is packed and charged. Check location of the nearest settlement.
- Advise a reliable contact of the exact site where you are working, its location and likely route and parking place; advise them of the estimated time you will leave the site.

Excursions

- At the beginning of an excursion meeting organisers should alert the attendees to the particular risks associated with the excursion site.
- Before commencing recording organisers should collect the names, mobile phone numbers and car registration numbers of all those attending, whether they intend to leave before the Reporting Meeting and, if so, approximately at what time.
- Any attendee needing to leave the excursion earlier than they originally planned should inform the organiser or another attendee who can pass on the information to the organiser.

Terrain

- Be aware of your surroundings and be conscious of the dangers associated with the different natural habitats in which you are working, e.g. fissures in the ground hidden by vegetation, wet flushes, slippery wet rocks and fallen wet timber.
- Scrubby areas may have a lot of prickly shrubs so consider thorn-proof clothes.
- On steep slopes ensure you have appropriate footwear and possibly a stick/walking pole for third point of contact with the ground.
- If working close to a water body, it may be advisable to carry emergency flotation equipment or "throw line"; Carry dry clothing and equipment to prevent hypothermia.
- Water bodies can be contaminated with Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) transmitted through rat urine, potentially entering the body through cuts, grazes etc. or mucous membrane (eyes, mouth or nose); cover cuts with waterproof plasters; avoid rubbing eyes, nose and mouth; wash hands thoroughly after the survey; if flu like symptoms develop within 3 to 19 days of survey, contact a doctor and ask for an ELISA blood test.
- Keep well away from unstable cliff edges and if working at the base of cliffs, a hard-hat may be required
- For coastal work always be aware of tide times, being particularly vigilant when working on an incoming tide and take extra care on slippery rocks, soft sand and mud.
- A number of marine animals have protective, spines, nippers, poisonous stings, etc. so always be careful where you place your hands and feet and handle all animals with care.

Surveying along roads and railways.

- Wear appropriate clothing for visibility, ideally fluorescent; try to keep off roads and work from the verge.
- Place warning signs 100m either side of a survey area where there is no verge.
- If the survey involves a railway, you may need consent of Network Rail or other track owner. When crossing railways on foot, check for the approach of a train. If a train is coming, stay well back from the track, look directly at the driver and raise your hand high in the air to indicate you are aware of the danger.

Fauna and flora.

- Some frequently occurring shrubs have sharp thorns and protective gloves or a hat may be needed.
- Avoid startling animals and livestock where possible.
- Some plants and caterpillars release irritants and toxins (e.g. Giant Hogweed).
- Are there deer or sheep in the area? If suspected, protect the skin from ticks to reduce the risk of Lyme-disease. If you find ticks, seek medical help to remove them. You may need antibiotics to prevent Lyme-disease.
- Bracken spores are carcinogenic. It is advisable to either wear a mask or avoid bracken-covered areas from mid-July onwards.

Fences and gates

- Consult with landowner/manager for any potential hazards before starting survey. Be careful of barbed wire fences and electric fencing
- If you need to climb over a locked gate, it is safer to use the hinged end. Some stiles have barbed wire.

Surveying at night.

Such surveys should always be carried out in communicative pairs. Equipment should include primary and back-up torches as well as a whistle for each surveyor. Sites should be visited in daylight and a risk assessment carried out before night time surveys are undertaken. Consider the following:

- It may be advisable to wear high visibility clothing
- Mark hazards with hi-viz tape, lamps or light sticks.
- Consider marking the way to the survey site.
- If using a generator, follow the manufacturer's safety instructions.

Insurance

Some landowners require the surveyor to have insurance or indemnification. The organiser is responsible for ensuring such insurance is in place.

The guidance given above is based on appendix II of the *Hedgerow Survey Handbook* by Catherine J. Bickmore. English Nature, Peterborough.

3. BIO-SECURITY GUIDANCE.

In the past few years, there have been a number of outbreaks of disease amongst farm animals and, most recently, Avian Flu. We ask that field naturalists working in areas where farm animals are present or when encountering dead birds, should follow some simple guidance:

- If visiting farmland by car, try to avoid parking in a farmyard where animals are kept. Try to park on hard standing, not in muddy gateways, likely to be used by animals.
- Avoid touching farm animals or deer. Always wash your hands if an animal is touched.
- Clean mud from boots and/or your car after each farm visit.
- In areas of potential high risk, wash/ spray your boots with an approved disinfectant, (see the Defra website for a list of suitable disinfectants obtainable from an agricultural merchant.)
- Seek permission from the farmer to enter premises or fields.
- We also alert you to an increase in Lyme Disease from ticks. The number of cases has doubled in the past two years. Should you have difficulty removing a tick or suffer from a fever after a tick, seek medical assistance and ask for a Lyme disease test.
- While Avian Flu is a serious threat avoid touching any dead birds encountered. Guidelines on reporting dead wild birds are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#report-dead-wild-birds>

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Some definitions:

- An accident is an unforeseeable event. Most incidents that occur during surveys are not accidents.
- A hazard is an object, which is capable of causing harm to people.
- A risk occurs when somebody is exposed to a hazard that causes serious harm, is in close proximity to a hazard or is exposed to a hazard for an extended period of time.

Five steps to risk assessments:

1. Identify hazards
2. Identify who is at risk from hazards identified
3. Establish how hazards can be removed or risk of injury reduced.
4. Record steps 1-3 above
5. Review the risk assessment periodically in the light of working experience.

Each surveyor/excursion organiser should take part in the risk assessment process. Surveys should only go ahead if measures could be taken to reduce risks to an acceptable level. * Report all incidents to the leader and afterwards to the Treasurer.***

February 2023

THE YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION
Risk Assessment Form

Location: Yorkshire Dales National Park Kettlewell

Project: Kettlewell Survey 11 -Aug-07

Date of Assessment: 20-Jul-07

Undertaken by: J A Newbould

If working alone telephone your base before starting and after finishing the survey

HAZARD	RISK	SEVERITY High/Medium/Low	PROBABILITY High/Medium/Low	MITIGATION
Outdoor working	Weather Uneven/steep terrain, fissures in limestone pavement:- trips/falls	High/low/medium	Medium	Dress appropriately for conditions. Use sun screen Take care Ankle support boots with good tread.
Working on roads	Injury by passing vehicles	Medium	Low	High visibility clothing
Working near farm animals	Injury from attack	High	Low	Do not enter field where there are bulls. Do not walk between any animal & its young & walk a safe distance away.
Biosecurity	Spreading infection	Low	Low	Be aware of any grazing stock & their location, avoid touching, clean boots of mud after visit. Use disinfectant if appropriate. Follow DEFRA Biosecurity guidance.
Animals, insects, plants & respiratory sensitisers	Insect stings & bites Plant toxin Allergic reactions e.g. hay fever, asthma Bracken spore	Medium High	High High	Be aware of ticks from sheep & deer Seek/use medical treatment Avoid (spores are carcinogenic)
General hazards (e.g. wire fences or ditches)		High-low	High	Assess situation regularly. Report to base on starting & finishing survey.
Water bodies	Drowning Sinking into mud Surveying the river	High-low High-low	Medium High-low	Assess situation regularly; follow advice in accompanying guidance. Keep out of rivers & streams after heavy rainfall. Work in pairs.

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Risk Assessment Form

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If working alone telephone your base before starting and after finishing the survey

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