

BTO fieldwork hazard checklist

As a BTO volunteer, you are under no obligation to participate or continue with a survey or scheme, nor to visit a particular site, even if local survey organisers or BTO staff have requested it.

H&S responsibility

Volunteers are responsible for their own health and safety, and should not put themselves in a position that could place them, or others, in danger. You should never undertake any work if you have concerns about your own or others' health and safety. If you have any such concerns, you should stop fieldwork immediately.

This document

The aim of this checklist is to help you improve your own personal safety while carrying out BTO surveys by identifying potential hazards and considering mitigating actions; the format is intended for easy translation to Risk Assessments should these be required. Note that this information is for guidance only and may not be exhaustive with respect to potential hazards; BTO surveyors carry out a wide range of activities across a range of habitats and regions, and any assessment of risk should take all relevant local factors into account, in addition to any risks relevant to specific individuals (e.g. pre-existing medical conditions). Further information regarding access permissions, insurance and safeguarding can be found at www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/take-part-project/health-safety.

Fieldworkers should pass on health and safety information provided to them by the BTO to other people helping them with BTO-related activities, and are encouraged to report any concerns or specific health and safety issues about the survey methods or the survey sites to the BTO, local survey organiser or their Regional Representative.

1.) General survey work

Potential hazard	Precautions that could be taken to remove hazard or reduce risk level (one precaution may tackle several hazards)
Danger of injury through accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identify potential hazards on arrival at each site● Wear suitable clothing and appropriate footwear for the location/terrain and weather conditions● Carry a mobile phone with sufficient charge and test for reception blackspots● Carry a torch and spare batteries● Carry a first aid kit, whistle and survival bag● Ensure you have access to drinking water and food● Avoid contact with livestock and agricultural machinery● Avoid well known danger spots; do not cross railway lines or other potential hazardous sites e.g. quarries or ravines● Heed warning signs and do not enter private (non-

	access) land that has been deliberately obstructed
Lone working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid lone working where possible ● If lone working, always notify someone (partner, friend, neighbour) where you are going, when you expect to be back and details of your vehicle. Agree on a course of action if you have not returned home by the time you stated ● Lone workers should be aware of the location of the nearest house or phone so that help can be called if required.
Inclement weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check weather forecast before leaving for fieldwork ● Wear appropriate clothing for the time of year, and be prepared for weather changes ● Carry waterproof and/or warm clothing. Hazards can increase significantly in heavy rain, strong wind and thunderstorms ● Avoid/terminate outside activity in inclement weather as appropriate
Uneven ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify potential hazards in daylight ● Wear sturdy boots or shoes ● Use footpaths where possible
Getting lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carry a mobile phone/GPS with spare batteries ● Don't rely solely on a mobile phone/GPS for navigation, always take a map and compass and know how to use them
Human confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider your personal safety when conducting fieldwork within the vicinity of known or likely trouble spots ● Avoid confrontation with landowners, land workers or members of the public ● Consider the privacy of residents when performing early-morning survey work in residential areas ● Carry some form of identification to confirm the activities you are undertaking ● If you have any concerns about your personal safety, cease fieldwork immediately
Traffic/driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High visibility clothing should be worn whenever working in the vicinity of roads, particularly at night ● Take care to park sensibly, preferably off-road, and do not block entrances

Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-swimmers should be accompanied when walking by water ● Keep at safe distance from banks, cliffs and the water's edge ● Do not cross rivers or streams unless by bridge ● Avoid work when there is a risk of flooding ● If operating below the high water mark, check high tide times before commencing fieldwork, and allow ample time to leave the intertidal area.
Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be aware of low, fallen and hanging branches and take care to avoid them ● Do not climb trees or onto tree limbs ● Be aware of other wildlife when investigating tree cavities or nest boxes – especially bees, wasps and hornets
Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid touching or climbing over electric fences ● Avoid touching or climbing over barbed-wire fences ● Ensure your tetanus vaccine is up to date
Bees/wasps/hornets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approach potential nest sites, e.g. tree cavities, with appropriate caution ● Carry appropriate personal medication if allergic ● Identify others with allergies if working in a group
Tetanus and leptospirosis (Weil's disease)	<p>While not common, these diseases can have severe effects, and in rare cases result in death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean any cuts etc immediately with clean water and cover adequately ● Ensure that your anti-tetanus treatments are up-to-date (normally within the last 10 years) ● Avoid contact with water, particularly if contaminated with cattle/rat urine ● Wash hands thoroughly and always before eating or smoking. ● If you contract flu-like symptoms, tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to Weil's disease
Lyme's Disease and Tick-borne Encephalitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to BTO guidance at https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/shared_documents/volunteers/ticks_lymes_leaflet.pdf

2.) Additional risks: ringing and nest recording

Potential hazard	Precautions that could be taken to remove hazard or reduce risk level (one precaution may tackle several hazards)
Bites and stings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check for bees, wasps, hornets and fleas when visiting cavities or cleaning out nest boxes ● Wear gloves when cleaning out nest boxes ● Clean boxes in autumn (legal after 1 August) to avoid a build-up of fleas
Injuries from talons or bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wear safety spectacles and gloves as appropriate
Whoosh nets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wear eye protection when setting nets ● Set in pairs, allowing one person to hold the peg in place while elastic is tensioned by a second person ● Use pegs of sufficient length and ensure they are securely hammered into the ground ● Do not use excessive tension
Cannon nets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to guidance in the Cannon-netting Manual
Ladder work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to HSE Guide INDG405 for guidance
Climbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refer to HSE Guide AFAG401(Rev2) for guidance
General diseases, including Salmonellosis and Avian Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash hands after handling animals or coming into contact with animal droppings, soil, sand or water that may be contaminated ● Cover existing cuts/abrasions and clean and cover any that occur during operations ● Wash hands/use hand wipes before touching your face or eating ● Wash clothes after fieldwork and avoid using fieldwork clothes for other purposes ● Open bird bags away from face to avoid inhaling powdered faeces and feather scale ● Wash bird bags between ringing sessions and store ringing equipment away from domestic areas ● Seek medical advice should you display symptoms of any illness that may be related to ringing or nest recording
Rabies	<p>May be encountered via bats caught in mist nets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure you have up to date rabies vaccination if the probability of capturing bats is significant ● Avoid sites/times of day when the probability of capturing bats is greatest

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If a bat is caught in a mist net, wear gloves during extraction ● If bitten, wash the wound immediately with soap and water for at least five minutes and cleanse with disinfectant ● Seek immediate medical advice from your GP, even if you have up to date rabies vaccinations
--	---

3.) Additional risks: Covid-19

As with the other sections of this document, the hazards and potential mitigations outlined below are advisory, provided with the aim of helping volunteers to manage the risks they may encounter during fieldwork. These mitigations are not mandatory and may therefore be more restrictive than the mandatory government guidance provided in the country of operation.

Potential hazard	Precautions that could be taken to remove hazard or reduce risk level (one precaution may tackle several hazards)
General practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain social distancing, keeping a minimum distance between individuals from different household as per latest government guidance ● Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water, or use hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content) ● Wear a face covering over your mouth and nose ● Avoid touching your face with your hands ● Sneeze/cough into your sleeve, the crook of your arm or into a tissue that can then be disposed of
Group operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimise the number of people from different households involved in group operation, noting the additional risks potentially incurred by lone working ● Avoid interacting with members of the public; give vehicles and house a wide berth where possible and communicate with landowners by phone/email
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid use of public transport where possible, and wear a face covering if unavoidable ● If using a private vehicle, do not share it with a member of another household ● Ensure sufficient fuel, food and water is carried to prevent stopping at garages or shops en route ● Avoid staying away from home overnight

Equipment and surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Avoid sharing equipment with individuals from other households● If sharing of equipment is unavoidable, disinfect it between uses and adopt frequent hand-washing or use of hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content)● Minimise contact with multiple contact points such as gates; if possible, wear gloves or wash / sanitise hands afterwards
------------------------	---