



Safety Guidelines for Evening Field Work with Bats (National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project)

Important additional guidance for 2022 – COVID-19

Before planning your surveys, please ensure you are following the latest government guidance for your country and also the latest survey-specific guidance at www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/covid-19-advice-for-nbmp-volunteers. ***Do not take part in the survey if you have any concerns about the safety of yourself or other people.***

Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to help you improve your own personal safety while carrying out surveys of bats in the field. In everyday life all activity involves hazards – but the activity may not be risky. Being hit by a car while crossing the road is a potentially severe hazard – but if road safety procedures are followed then the probability of it occurring is low - hence the risk that you will be harmed in that way is also low.

The following describes possible hazards associated with evening field work and provides some guidance and 'must dos' on the measures that you can take to prevent or reduce the risks. ***Please read the whole document before carrying out your field work.*** We ask you to think about the hazards and risk level which may be present for your survey at your site.

Carrying out a Risk Assessment

As you are carrying out this survey on behalf of BCT, it is very important that you carry out a Risk Assessment (RA) and keep a written copy. **Please download the "NNPP H&S RA template 2022" from:** <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/surveys/national-nathusius-pipistrelle-survey>. Always give yourself time to consider the hazards and precautions in advance and contact us if you are concerned about the level of risk. A safe system of work must be considered in advance covering a) preparation before the field work; b) support during the field work; and c) a review after the field work. BCT does not need a copy of your risk assessment but **you will be required to produce it in the event of an insurance claim.**

In particular, we ask that you do not survey alone. Make sure your survey team is aware of the completed risk assessment and that you discuss the prevention/control measures with them. Leave details of where you are going and when you will be back with someone who can alert emergency services if you do not return when expected.

If you or your friend have a disability, please review the risk assessment to make sure it covers risks that might be present for you.

RIDDOR

BCT must comply with *The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)*. If, in the course of carrying out your survey, you suffer any serious injuries (those which fall under the severity 3 category in the risk assessment), it is important that you let us know so that we can report the incident in the correct way. There is no need to report incidents where people are taken to hospital purely as a precaution when no injury is apparent.

You must also let us know if:

1. Anyone who is accompanying you on the survey is killed or taken to hospital following an injury arising from the survey.
2. Any injury results in incapacity for normal work for more than seven consecutive days, excluding the day of the accident but including all other days.
3. Any injury results in incapacity for normal work for more than three consecutive days (but less than seven) (not RIDDOR but we must record it).

Diseases and medical precautions

Rabies

This is an infectious disease caused by rabies viruses, in the UK the low risk from bats is with European Bat Lyssaviruses (EBLV). EBLV is normally transmitted by means of a bite or scratch from an infected bat. It is essential that people follow best practice when handling any species of bat: anyone handling a bat should wear gloves, anyone regularly handling bats in the British Isles should be routinely vaccinated against rabies (even those areas where EBLV has yet to be confirmed), and **anyone bitten, nipped, licked or scratched by a bat, of any species, should seek medical advice (even if they are already vaccinated)**. PHE have information aimed at the public and medical professionals dealing with bat contact cases, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-risks-from-bat-bites/information-for-individuals-who-have-been-bitten-by-a-bat>. For information about rabies pre-exposure vaccinations see: <https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/bats-and-disease/bats-and-disease-in-the-uk/rabies-vaccine>.

Weil's disease (Leptospirosis)

This is an infection caused by bacteria in water and so is a risk near rivers and lakes if open cuts come into contact with water. Workers should avoid contact with water especially if cut or grazed. If contact with water is made, you should wash the affected area. **If you contract flu-like symptoms, you should tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to Weil's disease.**

Lyme disease

This is an infectious disease caused by bacteria transmitted via the bite of an infected tick and is commonly (though not always) associated with a 'bull's-eye' rash spreading from the tick bite. If you have spent time in an area known to harbour ticks, you must check and remove ticks as soon as possible. Removal of ticks within the first 24 hours of attachment drastically reduces the chances of acquiring an infection. **If a tick is found and you contract flu-like symptoms, you should tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to Lyme disease. Check you know how to remove a tick by visiting this website: <https://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/about-ticks/tick-removal/>.**

Tetanus (lockjaw)

Tetanus is a serious but rare infection caused by bacteria found in soil and human/animal waste. It usually occurs when a flesh wound becomes contaminated. **Please ensure your tetanus jab is up to date (recommended every 10 years) and that cuts and scratches are covered.**

Toxocariasis

Toxocariasis is an infection caused by roundworm parasites. The risk comes from handling soil or sand contaminated with infected animal faeces (most commonly cats, dogs and foxes). If you come into contact with sand, soil, or the faeces of dogs, cats or foxes, ensure you wash your hands with clean water and soap or an antibacterial gel as soon as possible; do not rub your eyes. Most people experience no symptoms with toxocariasis infection, however some have symptoms such as coughs, headaches, stomach pains and/or high temperatures. **If you experience any of these symptoms you should inform your doctor that you may have been exposed to toxocariasis.**

Safeguarding

There is ever increasing scrutiny around safeguarding (of children and vulnerable adults) and our insurers expect us to exercise robust risk management in this area. This helps to protect BCT's, bat groups' and volunteers' interests and not leave any of us exposed to risk. To that end, we are required by insurers to communicate our safeguarding policy and procedure to any other organisation or volunteers covered by our insurance, i.e. surveyors, and to share with you relevant health and safety policies. BCT's safeguarding policy statement of intent is included in the survey

pack, and the full version is available online at <https://www.bats.org.uk/the-trust/policies/safeguarding>. ***It is important that all volunteers take the time to read through and understand the policy.*** This is relevant if you are leading a survey with one or more other volunteers, and in particular if you are leading a survey with a child or vulnerable adult in attendance.

Further Advice

For further information or advice please contact us at nbmp@bats.org.uk or on 020 7820 7166.