



General health and safety information for GSMP volunteer fieldworkers

This document contains notes on good practice, which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful before undertaking fieldwork.

The term fieldwork covers ornithological surveying done on behalf of WWT for the Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme (GSMP).

The term Local Organiser refers to the person who coordinates a given survey in a particular region. Not all regions have a Local Organiser nor do all surveys require them. If you do not have a Local Organiser for the survey in which you take part, please contact WWT GSMP Team directly if you have any queries or issues.

Volunteer responsibility

As a volunteer, you are under no obligation to participate or continue with a survey or scheme. 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 the work and raise these with your Local Organiser and/or WWT. You are under no obligation to visit a particular site, even if the organisers have requested it.

Insurance

WWT carries insurance for liabilities to third parties for loss, damage or injury, and can provide written confirmation for any landowner requesting it. However, this does not cover loss, damage or injury to volunteers and their helpers, who should make their own arrangements as they see fit. WWT cannot provide fieldworkers with total immunity from the consequences of any lapse of care, consideration or common sense in the course of any fieldwork activity. Therefore, please be conscious of your own safety and that of others at all times.

Access permission

Always obtain permission from the relevant landowner or tenant to enter any private land not subject to open access legislation before commencing fieldwork. Do not continue fieldwork if access permission is later revoked. A letter confirming your participation in WWT GSMP fieldwork can be provided on request (please contact either your Local Organiser or WWT). You may not need permission to count birds on open access land - please consult the relevant websites suggested in the further information section below. Please abide by the codes of practice for the geographic region in which you are working (see further information).

Risk assessment

Before undertaking any activities, every fieldworker should consider the particular health and safety hazards associated with their individual study sites and whether their individual circumstances and medical conditions expose them to particular hazards. Individuals should assess any potential risks arising from their fieldwork activities, which should include considering the risks specific to individual sites. You should think about what precautions should be taken against any risks. If you have any concerns, please raise these with your Local Organiser and/or WWT.

Health and safety reporting

Fieldworkers should pass on health and safety information provided to them by WWT to other people helping them WWT GSMP surveys. You are encouraged to report any particular health and safety issues about the survey methods or the survey sites your Local Organiser and/or WWT.

Mobile telephones

It is advisable to carry a mobile phone, which may be useful in case of an emergency. Please note that mobile phone may not work in some remote areas and are only of any use if you are conscious and capable of operating them.

The Hollie Guard app is a free lone worker app if volunteer surveyors want to download it.

<https://hollieguard.com/>.

Working in remote areas

If going to a remote place, always leave a note of your whereabouts with a responsible person. This should include: date and time of departure, method of travel to and around the site, proposed itinerary, expected time of leaving the site and return to base, and vehicle identification details. The person to whom these details are given should be told whom to contact if you do not return and at what time to raise the alarm. If possible, do not work alone.

It might also be useful to leave a note/sign visible on the dashboard of your vehicle with details of what you are doing and an expected time of return

If working in mountains, moorlands or unpredictable and extreme environments, hypothermia is a significant hazard. In such situations, it is appropriate to wear footwear with good ankle support and to carry warm and waterproof clothing. Carry a map and compass and know how to use them. Carry a whistle, waterproof watch and where appropriate, a survival bag with extra high-energy food supplies.

Avoid or abandon outdoor activities in bad weather.

Fieldwork at night or in the evening

When working into the hours of darkness, carry a torch and spare batteries. Where appropriate, inform local police and other locals of your intended area of operations. Be extra vigilant at night and wear something bright or reflective when walking on roads. If possible, do not work alone.

Livestock and agricultural machinery

Take special care when entering areas with livestock, especially cattle, rams and horses. Do not enter fields containing bulls and be especially cautious with farm dogs. Rutting deer can also be aggressive in the autumn. Avoid undertaking fieldwork in close proximity to working agricultural machinery or forestry operations. Adhere to any signage or instruction by the land owner.

Parking

Take care to park sensibly, preferably off-road, and do not block entrances.

Terrain

Take special care when carrying out fieldwork along watercourses, cliff edges, or in areas that contain boggy ground, reedbeds or loose rocks. Avoid working in these areas at night and try to avoid lone working. Wear brightly coloured clothing when carrying out fieldwork along busy roads. Do not cross potentially hazardous sites, such as quarries, ravines and railway lines, and do not attempt to climb steep slopes, walls or fences. Please heed warning signs and do not enter private (non-access) land that has been deliberately obstructed by fencing or barbed wire.

Intertidal areas, including open mudflats and saltmarshes, are potentially very hazardous. You should be particularly careful if you need to go below the high water mark; check high tide times before commencing fieldwork, and allow ample time to leave the intertidal area. Remember that tides can come in very quickly and that distances can be deceptive on wide, open tidal flats. Small tidal creeks or flows can rapidly deepen on an incoming tide, thus cutting off an apparently safe retreat.

Human confrontation

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 (please contact either your Local Organiser or WWT). If you have any concerns about your personal safety, cease fieldwork immediately.

Diseases

Fieldworkers may be exposed to disease during survey work. If a disease is suspected, then it is important to inform your doctor that you may have been exposed to diseases associated with outdoor activities. Take hand sanitiser and wipes with you if you have no access to handwashing facilities.

Typical diseases that may be encountered are:

- *Tetanus* may result from the infection of even minor wounds and scratches with *Clostridium tetani*, a common micro-organism in soil.
- *Leptospirosis* (Weill's disease) that can be fatal if left untreated. The organism is carried by rats and excreted in their urine, and persists in water such as in puddles and slow-moving rivers in rat-infested places. Thus visits to the nests of rat-eating species or places where rats might occur may pose a risk.
- *Lyme disease*, a bacterial disease transmitted by animal ticks associated with rank vegetation, which leads to severe symptoms if left untreated. A variety of animals act as hosts for the bacteria, including domestic mammals, wild mammals and birds.
- *Avian Influenza*. Although low chance of getting ill, please do not handle any dead birds you see.

Minimising the risk of such diseases requires straightforward actions; for example, immunisation against Tetanus and during fieldwork, cover cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing. Remove ticks from the skin as soon as possible, wear light-coloured clothing so that ticks are visible, tuck trouser bottoms into socks so that ticks cannot attach or climb up the leg, and make regular checks of skin and hair.

Under 18s

All volunteers must inform WWT if they are less than 18 years of age. Parents or guardians of the under-18 will be asked to sign a 'Parental Consent Form' stating that they agree to their child undertaking the activities and have made them aware of the associated risks. To obtain a copy of the Parental Consent Form, please contact WWT.

Covid 19

Please also see the separate guidance notes which can be found at <https://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19-guidance-for-GSMP-participants.pdf>

Volunteer surveyors should NOT undertake surveying if they are experiencing Covid symptoms or are self-isolating.

Volunteer surveyors should make themselves aware of all relevant government law and guidance, particularly around- travel, meeting people from outside your household, wearing face coverings, hand hygiene and social distancing. Ensure that you take wipes and hand sanitiser with you, this is particularly important when you have no access to hand washing facilities.

Volunteer surveyors should make themselves aware of the guidance around who is classified as vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable.

If a landowner is shielding or self-isolating, they may post signage or divert paths away from their farmhouse, please respect these.

Contacts at WWT

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Further information

UK

- Rights of way and accessing land: <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land>
- Countryside code: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

England and Wales

- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/31/introduction>
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

England

- Rights of way and accessing land: <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam>
- Open access land: <http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk/wps/portal/oasys/maps/MapSearch>

Wales

- Open access land: <https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/recreation-and-access-policy-advice-and-guidance/managing-access/open-access-land/?lang=en>
- Open access land maps: <https://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/evidence-and-data/maps/open-access-land-maps/?lang=en>

Scotland

- Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/8-9/30/contents>
- A Brief Guide to Occupiers' Legal Liabilities in Scotland in relation to Public Outdoor Access: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/brief-guide-occupiers-legal-liabilities-scotland-relation-public-outdoor-access>
- Outdoor access Scotland: <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>
- Scottish Rights of Way: <https://www.scotways.com/>

Isle of Man

- Public rights of way: <https://www.gov.im/categories/travel-traffic-and-motoring/public-rights-of-way/>

Northern Ireland

- The Occupiers' Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1987/1280/contents>
- The Countryside Code: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/countryside-code>

Republic of Ireland

- Occupiers' Liability Act, 1995:
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1995/act/10/enacted/en/html>
- The Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1983/1895>
- Public rights of way: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-rights-way>