**Wildlife Guardians**

**Volunteer Wildlife Surveys**

**Health & Safety Guidelines**

*These guidelines are intended for registered volunteers undertaking wildlife surveys on behalf of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.*

Derbyshire’s countryside can be a dangerous and unpredictable place.

However, most of the advice given in this pack is common sense and, if you follow it and are generally careful, you should be perfectly safe and enjoy yourself.

***IMPORTANT***

***Always have regard for your personal safety***

***We recommend that you DO NOT WORK ALONE. If you must, make sure that you tell a responsible person where you are going and when you expect to return. Make sure you check in with them on your return, and that, if you fail to return, they will know to raise the alarm. Above all, look carefully, be sensitive and observant and have fun!***

***Before attempting to carry out wildlife surveys, make sure you have read and understood the health and safety information provided here. Using this information, you must have read the associated risk assessment form before undertaking any survey.***

***If you feel it is too dangerous, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CARRY OUT THE ACTIVITY***

**WORK ACTIVITY :** **Carrying out Wildlife Surveys in a range of habitats**

**PHYSICAL HAZARDS :** Uneven/wet/soft surfaces

Low Hanging branches

Falling Dead Wood

Water:

Strong currents

High water levels

River/stream/canal banks – steep/crumbling surfaces

Other people, pets, animals

Vehicles/roads

Using tools: nets

Lone working

**ERGONOMIC HAZARDS :** Stress and fatigue

**BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS :** Weils’s disease (leptospirosis)

Lyme disease

Tetanus

Toxicara

Phytophotodermatitis

Hypothermia/exposure from extremes of cold/heat

**Main Hazards and Risks of Injury**

Injury from tripping/falling/slipping etc. on uneven, rocky, loose, wet, marshy ground

Injury amongst dense/tussocky vegetation where fallen branches and holes can be hidden and ground can be slippery

Injury from falling branches whilst surveying in woods/under trees

Injury from walking into low hanging branches/whippy twigs

Cuts/abrasions/bruises from contact with natural vegetation and/or man-made objects (e.g. barbed wire)

Working along riverbanks/streams/canals - these can be steep/uneven/crumbling, leading to injury or stumbling/falling into water.

Falling in water/damp areas can lead to cold – hypothermia/drowning

If working alone and/or in remote situations accidents can happen. This may make it difficult to receive help

Injuries from other people, animals or pets

Contracting Weil’s disease (leptospirosis) from infected rat’s urine along watercourses

Contracting Lyme Disease if work takes place in area infested with deer or large mammal ticks

Contracting toxicara from dog faeces

Contracting phytophotodermatitis from skin contact with some plant species

Exposure to extremes of temperature – cold/wet in winter, sun and high temperatures in summer

Injury from animal stings

Injury from using tools including nets

**Safe Working Practice - Precautions required**

Never attempt to carry out a survey if you consider it dangerous to do so.

Take note of the weather forecast before you set off. Do not be caught unawares by sudden changes in the weather.

Carry a mobile phone, if you have one and check that a signal is available. If you do not have a mobile phone, locate the nearest public telephone before starting work.

Avoid confrontations with members of the public by, wherever possible, walking away from confrontational situations.

Work in pairs whenever possible. **DERBYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST RECOMMENDS THAT YOU NEVER WORK ALONE.**

Stop your work before daylight fades.

Wear suitable clothing and footwear.

If clothing becomes wet, particularly in winter weather, change into replacement dry clothes as soon as practicable to reduce risk of hypothermia. **ALWAYS REMEMBER TO TAKE SPARE CLOTHES.**

If working by watercourses, beware of soft and crumbly banks. Be especially careful where banks are steep, even if not very high. **DO NOT ENTER WATER TO WORK.**

Beware of muddy or marshy areas which may be softer and deeper than they look. It is advisable to use a strong stick to help keep your balance in muddy or marshy areas,

Beware of holes, branches etc. hidden amongst vegetation underfoot.

Beware of stepping on logs - these may be rotten and unstable.

Wet rocks, logs and vegetation can be very slippery.

Be aware of the potential for branches to fall from trees. **DO NOT WORK IN HIGH WINDS**

Check that if there is stock in the field it is safe to enter - ask the landowner before carrying out work whether stock/bulls are safe.

To reduce the risk of contracting Weil’s Disease observe high standards of personal hygiene at all times. After working in water or coming into contact with anything contaminated with sewage or animal faeces, wash your hands and forearms with soap and water. This is particularly important before eating, drinking or smoking and after handling contaminated clothing or equipment. Any such equipment should be rinsed and dried as soon as possible.

Always clean cuts thoroughly and cover with a waterproof plaster.

Do not eat, rub your eyes, nose and mouth, or bite your nails. when your hands are wet or dirty,

If you have any feeling of being off-colour or develop flu-like symptoms following contact with water, you must consult your doctor and make sure they know that you may have been at risk of Weils Disease.

Make sure your Tetanus booster is current.

If you come into contact with dog faeces, ensure that you clean up as soon as reasonably practical and wash hands thoroughly before eating and drinking.

Ensure that you are aware of the dangers of deer ticks, how they should be removed, and of the symptoms of Lyme’s Disease. If symptoms become apparent medical help must be sought.

Conduct safe working practice when using tools including nets. Use tools correctly. Make sure they are in good condition. Do not work close to other people.

You will need to **get landowner permission** before carrying out a survey on private land. It is important for the success of the project to maintain good relations with landowners.

**Suggested Equipment List:**

• Appropriate OS map

• Recording form, transect map and pencil

• Species identification book

• Suitable footwear

• Waterproofs

• Warm clothes in cold weather

• Suncream and hat in sunny weather

• Towel and spare set of warm clothing

• Drink

• Camera

• Mobile Phone

• First Aid Kit

• Net and pots