



## SOS Birding Walks Risk Assessment Form:

Assessor: Jonathan Cook and Bob Hastings

Date of Assessment May 11, 2024

Location: Ashdown Forest

Brief Description: Meet at 20.45 (8.45) in Long Car Park which is left of A22 one mile before traffic lights at Wych Cross from the direction of Nutley. Please check SOS website as meeting point may change depending on bird sightings. The route is relatively flat, but in places may have significant steep slopes. Parking charge via app or phone. Torch and insect repellent recommended. Terrain will be grass paths. About 2 miles.

Suggested clothing: Warm, waterproof clothing depending on weather conditions; In summer, sun hat, sunscreen and appropriate clothing for sunny weather. Good footwear is recommended.

Fluids: Please bring sufficient fluids appropriate to the weather conditions.

Hazard	Who might be harmed	Evaluation of Risk (Low/Medium/High)	Risk mitigation measures	Comments
Losing participants	All, particularly the those who walk at different paces, wander off route, linger longer and those who need to leave early	Low	Head count in and out. Leader walks at the pace of the slowest and appoints a 'fit' back marker.	Brief the group at the start to keep together
Bad weather	All	Varies	Look at weather forecast Ensure all are appropriately clothed. If extreme cancel the event	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Lightning storms	All	High	Look at weather forecast Cancel the event.	
Snow and ice	All	Varies	Look at weather forecast. Probably cancel the event unless	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.

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			a light dusting and ice does not make it too slippery	
Darkness, cloud and fog	All	Varies	Keep the group close together, torches in the case of darkness and making people more aware of trip hazards.	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Hot weather	All	High	Look at weather forecast. If extreme heat, cancel the event. If normal summer heat, ensure the right clothing (hat, body covered), sufficient liquids and sun screen.	Leader takes additional water in case required by others.
Contact with biological agents	All	Medium	People advised not to handle plants/animals and to wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking if any contact is made. Where appropriate, participants are briefed on ticks and Lyme disease (risks, precautions and symptoms) before the walk	Participants warned of possible presence of these before start walk and along walk.
Uneven walking surfaces	All	medium	Announce at start, walk at a pace where people can negotiate, warn if there's particular locations	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Muddy conditions	All	medium	Help people through particularly muddy areas and ensure appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Standing water/flooding	All	varies	Look at weather forecast. If extreme flooding cancel walk	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.

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Slippery surfaces	All	medium	Help people through particularly muddy areas and ensure appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Trip hazards	All	medium	Announce at start, walk at a pace where people can negotiate, warn if there's particular locations	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Stiles/gates	Stiles and gates Not applicable on this walk		Help participants over or through these, especially in slippery/muddy conditions.	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Barbed wire/fences	All	low	Care should be taken walking and tripping near these	Ensure participants understand terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Obstructive vegetation	All	medium	Care in overgrown areas	This can become an issue, particularly in the late spring and summer months with abundant growth. Ensure participants are briefed.
Stinging/thorny plants	All	medium	Care in overgrown areas	This can become an issue, particularly in the late spring and summer months with abundant growth. Ensure participants are briefed.
Falling trees/branches	All	Low	Look at weather forecast	Cancel the walk if very windy conditions are forecast.
Biting insects	All	Varies	Warn participants of this and if anyone needs to carry an EpiPen, they have it with them and advise on insect repellent.	

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Snakes	All	Unknown	Take care, particularly on warm, sunny days	If bitten, keep the victim calm as possible and not to move around.
Farm and other animals	All	Medium	Give a wide berth to livestock. Do not run away.	
Cycles and horses	All	Low	Part of the routes around the site may be used by cyclists and equestrians. Be aware.	Blindly stepping back when focused through optics, can have unfortunate consequences,
Cars and other vehicles	All	Low	Single file walking, Walk on pavement if there, the right hand side of road if sensible unless the other side is better due to a bend for driver's awareness.	Take care in the car park and any roads on the walking route
Desk assessment of mobile phone coverage in the walk's area <a href="https://www.signalchecker.co.uk/">https://www.signalchecker.co.uk/</a>			Leader takes a fully charges mobile phone.	All major phone networks have good coverage in the Wych Cross area for voice and 4G connectivity outdoors.

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