



SOS Birding Walks Risk Assessment Form:

Assessor: Jack Curry and Josh MacCullum-Stewart

Date of Assessment: August 23, 2025

Location: Sheepcote Valley, Brighton

Group Leader: Josh MacCullum-Stewart

Brief Description: Half day (approx. 3 hours). Meet at 7:00 am in the Brighton Nature Reserve car park (free) on Downland Road, BN2 6DT. GR: TQ 34506 05523, what3words: ///jams.oldest.rift. If the car park is full, there is also free parking on the housing estate

opposite – please meet in the small car park. Early morning walk to catch the best of passage migrants – some ascents and descents, covering around three miles. If arriving after 7:00 am, you can join the walk by following the obvious path through the valley.

Suggested Clothing: Wear long trousers – bramble paths. Warm, waterproof clothing, depending on weather conditions; good footwear. In the summer, sun hat, sunscreen, and appropriate clothing for sunny weather. Please bring sufficient fluids appropriate to the weather conditions.

Hazard	Who might be harmed	Evaluation of Risk (Low/Medium/High)	Risk mitigation measures	Comments
Dynamic risk assessment	All	Varies	Circumstances may change from expectations during the walk, e.g. changing weather conditions, or an accident involving a participant.	Group leader will make considered, pragmatic alterations to the plan based on the circumstances.
Losing participants	All, particularly those who walk at different paces, wander off route, linger longer, and those who need to leave early.	Low	Head count participants 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 the weather forecast. Ensure all participants are appropriately clothed. Cancel the walk if extreme weather conditions are forecast.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.

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Lightning storms	All	High	Look at the weather forecast. Cancel the walk.	Take extra care with tripods.
Snow and ice	All	Varies	Look at the weather forecast. Likely cancel the walk, unless a light dusting and ice does not make conditions too slippery.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Darkness, clouds, and fog	All	Varies	Look at the weather forecast. Keep the group close together, use torches in case of darkness, and make participants more aware of trip hazards.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Hot weather	All	High	Look at the weather forecast. Cancel the walk if extreme heat conditions are forecast. If normal summer heat, ensure the right clothing (hat, body covered), sufficient liquids, and sunscreen.	Group leader to take additional water in case required by others.
Contact with biological agents	All	Medium	Participants advised not to handle plants/animals and to wash their 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 the possible presence of these before the start of the walk and during the walk.
Uneven walking surfaces	All	Medium	Announce at the start, walk at a pace where participants can safely negotiate the terrain, and warn about specific locations that may require extra caution. Ensure all wearing appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered. Note that there are inclines and declines along the route.

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Trip hazards	All	Medium	Announce at the start, walk at a pace where participants can safely negotiate the hazard(s), and warn about specific locations that may require extra caution. Ensure all wearing appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Falling trees/branches	All	Low	Look at the weather forecast. Cancel the walk if very windy conditions are forecast.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Muddy conditions	All	Medium	Help participants through particularly muddy areas and ensure all wearing appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Slippery surfaces	All	Medium	Help participants over particularly slippery surfaces and ensure all wearing appropriate footwear.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Standing water/flooding	All	Varies	Look at the weather forecast. Ensure all are appropriately clothed. Cancel the walk if extreme flooding forecast.	Ensure participants understand the 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. Participants are advised to wear long trousers due to brambles along paths.	This can become an issue, particularly in the late spring and summer months with abundant growth. Ensure participants are briefed.

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Snakes	All	Unknown	Be alert, particularly on warm, sunny days. Do not approach or disturb snakes.	In the event of a bite, keep the person calm and still, and seek medical attention immediately.
Biting insects	All	Varies	Warn participants of this and advise on insect repellent. Ensure that anyone who needs to carry an EpiPen has one with them.	
Stiles/gates	Less agile	Medium	Help participants over or through these obstacles, especially in slippery or muddy conditions.	
Barbed wire/fences	All	Low	Care should be taken when walking near barbed wire/fences.	Ensure participants understand the terrain and conditions to be encountered.
Farm and other animals	All	Medium	Avoid disturbing livestock. Maintain a calm, steady pace and give livestock a wide berth. Do not run and, if approached by cattle, walk calmly away without turning your back.	
Cycles and horses	All	Low	Be aware that some paths may be shared with cyclists and/or equestrians.	Stay alert, especially when using binoculars or telescopes. Avoid stepping back without checking behind you.
Cars and other vehicles	All	Low	Walk in single file on roads; walk on pavements where available. If no pavement, walk on the right-hand side of the road, unless visibility or road layout makes the left-hand side safer.	Take extra care in car parks and on any roads along the walking route.

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Desk assessment of the mobile phone coverage in the walk's area www.signalchecker.co.uk/			Group leader to carry a fully charged mobile phone.	All major networks have good coverage in the Brighton area for voice and 4G connectivity.
First aid kits	All	Low	SOS walk leaders are required to carry a small basic first aid kit, which will be provided by SOS. This does not mean that the leader has formal qualifications to use the contents, but they will act with common sense if a situation arises.	Please note that the contents of these first aid kits will expire, and SOS will replace these kits when required. A central register of recipients will be maintained for their ongoing replacement.
If a serious accident occurs during the walk.	All	Low	SOS walking groups are not required to have trained first aiders present. In the event of a serious accident, it is advised to contact the emergency services immediately.	In the event of a serious accident, it is advised to contact the emergency services immediately, even if there is someone present who has completed a first aid course.