



Personal Safety and Risk Assessment for ACT Wildlife Wardens.

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The ACT Ecology Group and its Wildlife Wardens can choose from many different roles:

- You can carry out surveys, fieldwork and practical work, **but only** after getting all of the necessary permissions and making risk assessments.
- You can't use **power tools** of any sort, as our insurance doesn't cover this.
- You can carry out practical work using hand tools that you are familiar with, and which are in good working order.
- You can **work alone**, but should always let a friend or partner know where you are, what you are doing and when you expect to finish – and remember to ring to let your 'buddy' know when you are home again (set a mobile phone alarm as a reminder!).
- Avoid arguments, for example, if talking about land management with landowners or farmers; try your best to **keep communication channels open**.

Risk Assessment.

We want our Wildlife Wardens to keep safe while they are helping wildlife, so this is a **really important part** of the Introductory Training. Whether you carry out work on your own, or with other Wildlife Wardens - we want you to think about the best and safest way to carry out a task, before you start.

Wherever we go, whatever we do, we subconsciously or consciously assess the risks and decide

- a) whether we should do the task, or
- b) whether to do it differently, so as to be safer

If you need to organise help with **people who aren't Wildlife Wardens**, then you will first need to complete a separate training module in **Leading Volunteers**. Please ask Flavio or Audrey when the next course will be and complete it before supervising people who aren't Wildlife Wardens.

When writing a Risk Assessment, first decide:

- What are the hazards?
- Who is likely to be harmed and how? (*include how many*)
- What controls are already in place?
- Are existing controls working?
- What is the risk? (*the likelihood of things going wrong and the consequences*)
- Is the risk unacceptably large, do you need to reduce it?



Table 1c

Risk Score

LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE				
	1 Insignificant	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Catastrophic
1 - Rare	1	2	3	4	5
2 - Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
3 - Possible	3	6	9	12	15
4 - Likely	4	8	12	16	20
5 - Almost Certain	5	10	15	20	25

Scoring Risks/hazards:

The Risk Scoring table, above, shows that multiplying the **likelihood** of an accident by the **consequences** of the accident, gives you a score that helps you to make decisions about how you should carry out your work.

Ideally all tasks should score within the **green band**.

If a task is within the **amber band**, look for further ways to reduce risk.

If a task is within the **red band**, then a complete re-think is needed in order to get into the green band.

Ways to reduce risk:

- Eliminate the risk or find a different way of doing the task
- Reduce the risk eg allow more time, more/less people
- Control the risk eg by training people and using agreed procedures
- Minimise impacts eg by using the right clothing, masks etc

Types of accidents (consequences):

Minor injuries: cuts, infected cuts, bruises.

Moderate injuries: severe sprains, fractures etc that need professional attention.

Major and Catastrophic accidents: When working outside it is possible to get stuck in pond mud, trapped by rising flood water, caught by the tide or hit by a car on a country lane.

Lone Working:

- Tasks with low risks when carried out by two people can be much more hazardous when you are working on your own.
- It is very important when carrying out a Risk Assessment for a lone working task to recognise that both the likelihood and the consequences will probably be higher. It is important to accept that **some work will not be possible on your own**.
- For example, having an accident while sampling water from a fast-flowing stream would probably have a likelihood score of at least 3 and a consequence score of 5. With a score of 15, it is not safe.
- Working to a plan with another fit and responsible person might make it safe.

- When lone working it is particularly important to have a **fully charged mobile phone** with you and to **set up a 'buddy system'** so that someone who lives within reach knows when you are **starting and finishing** work; you must ring them when you finish!
- Your 'buddy' must be available to take your calls and **take action** if they can't contact you - even if it is because your phone battery has run out or you don't have reception.

Use the information, above, to fill in the blank form attached to your training email.

Risk Assessment for Wildlife Wardens:

An example Risk Assessment

Description of activity and main risks: Working with another Wildlife Warden to plant a hedge				
Hazard	Measures being taken to prevent the problem	Likelihood 1-5	Consequences (seriousness) 1-5	L X C = 6 and under acceptable
Cuts, bruises etc because people don't keep to safe working distances. Also, increased risk of Covid transmission from working too closely.	Ask people to maintain a distance of at least 4 m while working and at least 2m when talking/getting more whips etc. This is important for Covid and general safety.	1	5	5
Pokes in the eye etc	Show people how to carry, use and plant whips & canes that could poke you in the eye, or elsewhere.	1	4	4
Safety while working outside: slips, cuts and infected cuts.	Make all aware of muddy/slippery, conditions. Warn about handling blackthorn and other prickly vegetation, which can cause infected scratches. Have a first aid kit that people can use if necessary. Take an alcohol-based disinfectant hand gel.	1	4	4
Getting cold and wet	Ask people to wear strong, comfortable work clothes, gloves and footwear and bring Waterproofs.	2	1	2
Needing emergency help when lone working	Having a 'buddy' you knows where you are; who you can ring in an emergency; who will take action if you don't contact them at the pre-arranged time.	1	5	5

Task: Fill in a blank Risk Assessment

Either for the sort of task that you might do (for example, when going wildlife-watching on a tidal reserve, such as Jetty Marsh Local Nature Reserve) **Or** think of a minor accident that you or a friend have had, and fill it in so that it shows how it could have been avoided!

You don't need to fill in a form every time you go for a walk - but you do need to plan in a structured and methodical way, weighing up the risks.

Here are some infections that can be caught while working outside - including special measures needed to prevent/reduce the risk of infection during practical work:

Ticks and Lyme disease:

A **small percentage** of ticks carry diseases which affect humans and animals; the main disease that humans can catch is Lyme disease; it is not common.

Where do ticks live? Ticks have become a much bigger problem over the last 30 years and can now be picked up in short grass, as well as bracken and tussocky grass.

When are ticks active? In most months of the year, though the **peak months** in Devon are from March to June and August to November.

How can you reduce the risk of being bitten?

- clothe as much of yourself as you can, including tucking trousers into your socks.
- wear light-coloured clothes so that any ticks show up - they are **very tiny** before they latch on to their 'host'.
- use insect repellent if you can.

What do you do if you have a tick?

- remove it carefully with a tick-removal tool or tweezers, grasping it close to your skin.
- pull upwards - if possible, without squeezing or crushing the tick.
- watch the site for a circular skin rash around the site, which can appear up to 3 months after the bite.
- be aware that a high temperature, headaches and muscle/joint pain are symptoms of Lyme's disease.
- in either case, see a doctor at once as rapid antibiotic treatment may be needed.

Staphylococcus aureus:

This bacterium, which many people carry, can occasionally cause a serious bacterial infection.

In the context of practical conservation work, it can be caught through scratches, particularly from blackthorn.

It is important to take an alcohol-based hand disinfectant on work tasks, for use when someone has a scratch and whenever soap and water would usually be used.

Symptoms: Any reaction, such as more redness and swelling than you would have expected, should be carefully watched and anyone experiencing this after the workday should **always contact a doctor**. This should be done as an **emergency** if there is also a temperature/fever. *S. aureus* can occasionally cause sepsis, which is extremely dangerous.

Prevention: Wear long, strong, preferably leather gloves when cutting back scrub such as blackthorn; wear tough footwear to prevent puncturing of shoes.

Leptospirosis/Weill's Disease:

This is a rare disease most often caught when working in ponds and waterways. It is present wherever there is pee from infected animals, such as rats.

Symptoms are a high temperature; feeling hot and shivery; a headache; feeling sick or being sick, or you having diarrhoea; aching muscles and joints; red eyes; loss of appetite. **It is important to tell the Doctor you have been working in water.** Antibiotics usually clear this up quickly.

Prevention: It can be prevented by good hygiene, using an alcohol-based hand disinfection whenever soap and water aren't available. Any scratches should be well-covered before working in water - or simply don't work in water if you have scratches/cuts.

Covid 19:

This is not easily caught outside, but Government guidelines must be checked **carefully** before working in groups.

During the pandemic, prevention methods **must** be in the Risk Assessment. For example:

- planning and preparing ahead so that people can work at safe distances from each other
- providing hand sanitiser
- asking people to bring their own equipment and snacks, rather than sharing