

Safety Guidelines for the Bats in Churches Study

Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to help you improve your own personal safety while carrying out the National Bats in Churches Study or Church Bat Detectives surveys. Please read the safety guidance before carrying out your field work.

Safeguarding

BCT's safeguarding policy sets out the principles and procedures for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults involved in Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) activity.

There is ever increasing scrutiny around safeguarding (of children and vulnerable adults) and a 'tightening up' by insurers around risk management of health and safety generally. This is with the ultimate aim of protecting BCT's, bat groups' and volunteers' interests and not leaving any of us exposed to risk. As a result, BCT's insurers now insist that BCT's safeguarding policy and procedure is communicated to any other organisation or volunteers covered by our insurance, i.e. surveyors, and that you also have a set of relevant health and safety policies.

The safeguarding policy statement is available online at www.bats.org.uk/the-trust/policies/safeguarding. It is important that all volunteers take the time to read through and understand the policy. This is relevant if you are leading a survey with one of more other

Minimise potential hazards by following the instructions below:

Daytime bat evidence survey

- Do not climb ladders as part of this survey.
- Do not enter the Bell Tower to search for evidence of bats.
- Be mindful of steps, trip hazards and low doorways.

Clothing and Equipment

- Churchyards are often uneven so wear appropriate footwear.
- Churches are often cold so wrap up warm.
- Take a fully-charged mobile phone for use in an emergency.
- It can be useful to take a torch as light levels can be low in parts of the church. Shine a torch on the ground to illuminate where you are walking to help spot trip hazards, steps etc. Also watch out for potential hazards to your head such as low doorways.

Lone working and contingency plan

- It's recommended to complete the survey with someone else.
- Inform someone of where you are going and what time you'll be back.



- Have a clear contingency procedure for if no contact is made within anticipated time of return.
- Always have a contingency plan in case your car breaks down or you can't get back via public transport.

Handling droppings

- You may decide to do the crumble test and handle droppings. Please use a tissue or use the gloves we provide. If you do this, please wash your hands afterwards.
- The gloves we provide are latex free but if you are allergic to vinyl gloves, please get in contact with us to arrange an alternative before your survey.

Handling bats

- You should not need to handle bats in this survey.
- There is a very small chance that you may find a grounded bat or a dead bat during your survey. If this happens you can call the free Bat Helpline (0345 1300 228) for advice.
- If you absolutely have to pick up and contain a bat you MUST wear gloves and follow advice from the Helpline team.

Summary

- Don't survey alone – it's always best to take a friend with you.
- Don't take any unnecessary risks and if in doubt don't do the survey, or stop what you are doing and return via the shortest and most accessible route.
- Always have a contingency plan in case your car breaks down or you can't get back via public transport.
- Leave details of where you are going and when you will be back with someone who can alert emergency services if you do not return.

Further Advice

For further information or advice please contact us at churches@bats.org.uk.

Checklist for use before undertaking field work

| Task | Completed |
|---|-----------|
| Contact the church before doing the survey | |
| Find a second person to help with the survey | |
| Wear appropriate footwear | |
| Take warm clothing | |
| Take a fully charged mobile phone | |
| Notify someone of your destination and anticipated time of return | |
| Contact the church before doing the survey | |

