



Safety Guidelines for Field Work with Bats (Roost Count)

Please read our current COVID-19 guidance at www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/covid-19-advice-for-nbmp-volunteers

Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is to help you improve your own personal safety while carrying out surveys at bat roosts. In everyday life all activity involves hazards – but the activity may not be risky. Being hit by a car while crossing the road is a potentially severe hazard – but if road safety procedures are followed then the probability of it occurring is low - hence the risk that you will be harmed in that way is also low.

The following describes possible hazards associated with surveys at roosts and provides safety guidelines in response to these. **Please read the entire document before carrying out your survey.** It is very important that a safe system of work is considered in advance, which should include:

- Before the survey preparation
- During the survey support
- After the survey review

Carrying out a Risk Assessment

As you are carrying out this survey on behalf of BCT, it is very important that you carry out a Risk Assessment and keep a written copy. A full risk assessment is less essential if you are counting at your own property, though please do read the rest of this document to help you consider any potential hazards. Please download the “Roost Count risk assessment template” from: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/surveys/roost-count>. **Always give yourself time to consider the hazards and precautions in advance and contact us if you are concerned about the level of risk.** A safe system of work must be considered in advance covering a) preparation before the field work; b) support during the field work; and c) a review after the field work. **BCT does not need a copy of your risk assessment but you will be required to produce it in the event of an insurance claim.**

In particular, we ask that you do not survey alone. Always take a friend with you (even if they are not a bat expert). Make sure your friend is aware of your completed risk assessment and that you discuss the prevention/control measures with them. 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 when expected.

If you or your friend have a disability, please review the risk assessment to make sure it covers risks that might be present for you.

RIDDOR

BCT must comply with *The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)*. If, in the course of carrying out your survey, you suffer any serious injuries (those which fall under the severity 3 category in the risk assessment), it is important that you let us know so that we can report the incident in the correct way. There is no need to report incidents where people are taken to hospital purely as a precaution when no injury is apparent.

You must also let us know if:

1. Anyone who is accompanying you on the survey is killed or taken to hospital following an injury arising from the survey.
2. Any injury results in incapacity for normal work for more than seven consecutive days, excluding the day of the accident but including all other days.
3. Any injury results in incapacity for normal work for more than three consecutive days (but less than seven) (not RIDDOR but we must record it).

Before the Survey

Planning

If you are visiting someone else's property, then:

- Contact the property owner before carrying out the survey in order to arrange access and plan your visit.

Potential hazards

- Check with the property owner about any potential hazards to be avoided at night and do an initial daytime visit to identify these if necessary. This should include potential hazards associated with travelling to the site, e.g., in a remote or urban area.
- Be aware that hazards may increase with rain, strong wind, and thunderstorms.

Medical precautions

- Ensure tetanus jab is up to date (recommended every ten years)

Contingency plan

- If visiting someone else's property, then notify someone of destination (address of site). Have a clear contingency procedure if no contact within anticipated time of return.

During the Survey

- If you find a grounded bat, please contain it, making sure **not** to handle it with bare hands. This can be done by placing a box over the bat, sliding a piece of cardboard underneath and turning the box back over. If this is not practical, put on a pair of thick gloves, pick the bat up and place it in a box. See <https://www.bats.org.uk/advice/help-ive-found-a-bat> and call the BCT Helpline on **0345 1300 228** for further advice on what to do with a grounded bat.
- Do not survey alone.
- Carry out the count from a safe location on the ground from where the bats can be seen emerging. Do not lean out of windows or climb onto walls/buildings to observe the bats.

Clothing and Equipment

- Use a headtorch and pocket notebook to keep hands free if recording observations.
- If visiting someone else's property, then consider the following advice based on the nature of the site and the surrounding area:
 - Wear clothing/footwear appropriate to the location/terrain and weather conditions, carry torch and spare batteries & bulbs, and wear reflector jacket when walking on roads.
 - Take a fully charged mobile phone for use in an emergency.
 - Carry a personal alarm in urbanised areas.
 - Use maps (and GPS if available) where possible to avoid getting lost.

Potential hazards

- Avoid/terminate outdoor activity in poor weather (Do not survey in heavy rain/storms or high winds or at temperatures lower than 7°C).
- If visiting someone else's property, then consider the following advice based on the nature of the site and the surrounding area:
 - Avoid contact with animals and dung.
 - Avoid steep banks wherever possible and keep at safe distance from bank/cliff/water edge.
 - Do not cross rivers unless by bridge.
 - When working close to deep water, non-swimmers should be accompanied by a swimmer.
 - Avoid work when risk of flooding and be aware of tides.
 - Avoid contact with water especially if cut or grazed.
 - Avoid well-known danger/trouble spots including urban areas. Do not cross railway lines, or other potential hazardous sites e.g., quarries, ravines, and wire fences.

After the Survey

- If contact with water was made, wash affected area. If you contract flu-like symptoms, inform your doctor that you may have been exposed to Weil's disease.
- If you have spent time in an area known to harbour ticks, check and remove ticks as soon as possible. Removal of ticks within the first 24 hours of attachment drastically reduces the chances of acquiring the infection. If a tick is found and you contract flu-like symptoms, inform your doctor that you may have been exposed to Lyme disease (commonly associated with a 'bull's-eye' rash spreading from the tick bite).

Safeguarding

There is ever increasing scrutiny around safeguarding (of children and vulnerable adults) and our insurers expect us to exercise robust risk management in this area. This helps to protect BCT's, bat groups' and volunteers' interests and not leave any of us exposed to risk. To that end, we are required by insurers to communicate our safeguarding policy and procedure to any other organisation or volunteers covered by our insurance, i.e., surveyors, and to share with your relevant health and safety policies. BCT's safeguarding policy statement of intent is available online at <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/surveys/roost-count>. ***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 or more other volunteers, and in particular if you are leading a survey with a child or vulnerable adult in attendance.

Summary

- Before planning your survey please refer to our latest **COVID-19 guidance** at www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/covid-19-advice-for-nbmp-volunteers. Do not carry out the survey if you have any concerns about the safety of yourself or other people.
- Never survey alone – always take someone with you (even if they are not a bat expert)!
- Don't take any unnecessary risks and if in doubt don't do it 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 nbmp@bats.org.uk or on 020 7820 7166.

Checklist for use before undertaking the survey:

Task	Completed
Read the latest COVID-19 guidance at www.bats.org.uk/our-work/national-bat-monitoring-programme/covid-19-advice-for-nbmp-volunteers .	
Complete a risk assessment particularly if surveying away from your home (see Roost Count risk assessment template in your survey pack)	
Contact the property owner before carrying out survey/walk	
If visiting someone else's property, plan your route there carefully, aiming to avoid any potentially unsafe areas	
Identify potential hazards at the site	
Ensure tetanus jab is up to date	
Check you have all of the necessary clothing and equipment:	
• Torch/headtorch with spare batteries and bulbs	
• Mobile phone (fully charged)	
• Notebook and pen (if required)	
• Compass/map/GIS	
• Reflector jacket (if walking on roads to get to the site)	
• Personal alarm (for use in urban areas)	
• Warm clothing	
• Appropriate footwear	
Notify someone of destination and anticipated time of return	

April 2022 Bat Conservation Trust, Studio 15 Cloisters House, Cloisters Business Centre,
8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG
Tel: 0345 1300 228 Email: nbmp@bats.org.uk Web: www.bats.org.uk