

This document outlines best practice in terms of health and safety when monitoring and working around freshwater habitats, including streams, rivers, ponds, lakes and ditches.

If you feel unwell after undertaking an activity where you have been in contact with water seek medical attention and ensure you notify them of the activities you have undertaken, make sure to emphasize you have been working around water.

River Thame Conservation Trust Contacts:

- General Enquiries – enquiries@riverthame.org
- Hannah Worker, Project Officer, hannah@riverthame.org

Volunteer Responsibility:

Whilst carrying out work for the River Thame Conservation Trust, the volunteer has responsibility for their own health and safety and that of others around them.

As a volunteer you should never put yourself or others in danger and you should never undertake work if you have concerns about your own or others health and safety. You are under no obligation participate in surveys or undertake work. You are under no obligation to visit a site, even if it is suggested by a member of the River Thame Conservation Trust staff.

If you have concerns about your health and safety or that of others around you, you should stop the work and raise your concerns with a member of the River Thame Conservation Trust staff.

Requirements:

Before volunteering you must read and apply the **precautions/controls** provided in the **Volunteer Risk Assessment** and **Lone Working Code of Practice**.

Volunteers must fill out the **Volunteer Information** form which identifies a person that can be contacted by the River Thame Conservation Trust in the event of an emergency. Details of relevant medical problems or illnesses should be recorded here.

Health and Safety reporting

Please report any health and safety issues or concerns to a member of the River Thame Conservation Trust. All accidents and any incidents that *could* have led to harm (i.e. near misses), must be reported to the River Thame Conservation Trust. Please record details of the incident and report it as soon as possible after the event.

General Precautions

- Always carry a charged mobile phone – as they may be useful in case of emergency. In case of emergency call 999.
- Take a map with you to avoid getting lost, especially in rural areas where they may be no phone signal. Don't rely solely on a digital tracking device!
- Always carry water with you, and food if you will be out for long periods of time.
- Check the weather forecast before leaving home and make sure to dress appropriately for the weather conditions.
- Avoid or abandon outdoor activities in adverse weather conditions.

Lone Working

Lone working should be avoided where possible. We strongly recommend that you are accompanied on your first visit to a site. If volunteers intend to work by themselves, they must read the **Lone Working Code of Practice** and follow the 'buddy system' procedure.

Volunteers should **never** undertake these activities by themselves:

- Any night time activities (e.g. newt torching).
- Any activities where it is necessary to enter the water (e.g. aquatic invertebrate survey).

Key risks to be aware of:

- **Difficult terrain:** Around water bodies you may find difficult terrain; steep banks, boggy areas, deep silt, loose rocks, underground burrows. Long vegetation can often hide difficult terrain or bankside edges. Please ensure you mind your feet, especially near the water's edge.
- **Livestock and agricultural machinery:** Take special care when entering areas with livestock. Bulls, cows with calves and rutting deer can be aggressive. If livestock are likely to be present **do not** take a dog with you, even if on a lead (as all dogs should be around livestock). Avoid working near large agricultural machinery.
- **Human confrontation:** Avoid confrontation with landowners, land workers or members of the public. You may wish to carry some form of identification with you to confirm the activities you are undertaking (i.e. a landowner permission letter or a RTCT volunteer card).
- **Waterborne diseases:** Working in water is a potential source of disease, including leptospirosis or Weil's disease, hepatitis A and tetanus. In all cases the best preventative methods are:
 - Be aware of how these diseases are caught and take precaution based on this knowledge.
 - Ensure tetanus jabs are up to date.
 - Ensure any cuts are covered by waterproof plasters and carefully clean cuts or grazes that occur while you are working.
 - Wear appropriate protective gloves and clothing.
 - Avoid getting water in or near your mouth or nose.
 - Always wash your hands after working around water, especially before eating or smoking.
 - If you have entered the water, wash thoroughly as soon as possible.
 - If you feel unwell after working near water ensure you seek medical attention and inform them of your activities around water.
- **Lyme disease:** This is a bacterial infection transmitted by animal ticks and can lead to severe symptoms if left untreated (for more information see: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease).

This risk assessment outlines the potential risk and precautions a volunteer must be aware of before visiting a site or undertaking an activity on behalf of the River Thame Conservation Trust. Volunteers must read this before undertaking any work or surveys on behalf of the River Thame Conservation Trust.

Hazard	Risk	Risk rating (<i>low, medium, high</i>)	Precaution/controls	Risk after control (<i>low, medium, high</i>)
Animals:				
Livestock	Physical injury, trampling	Low	Be aware of livestock behaviour, if in doubt leave the site. Do not take dogs on site	Low
Dogs	Bites, disease, lacerations, infection	Low	Be wary of dogs off lead. Disinfect bites and seek medical attention. Be wary of dog faeces.	Low
Adders	Poisoning, allergic reaction, paralysis, death	Medium, high in winter	Check the area you are visiting to see if the species are present. Take care to look when kneeling or placing hands on the ground. Wear stout boots. Seek medical attention if bitten.	Medium
Wild Animals (i.e. deer)	Physical injury, bites, tick bites.	Low	Do not touch wild animals or approach those with young. See below for ticks.	Low
Biological/stings and bites	Disease, allergic reaction	Medium	Wear long trousers and long sleeved tops to limit tick bites. Tuck your socks over your trousers, as this is a key place tick can get under your clothes. Check for ticks after site visits and always remove ticks correctly if found. If known to be allergic to stings, take medication on site. If you are feeling unwell after a site visit, seek medical attention and notify them of the area you have been working.	Low
Infection/diseases:				
Leptospirosis/Weil's disease	Infection/disease	Low	Cover all open cuts with waterproof plasters. Do not ingest the water in which you are working. If you are feeling unwell after a site visit, seek medical attention and notify them of the area you have been working.	Low

Volunteer Starter Pack

Volunteer Risk Assessment

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Tetanus	Infection/disease	Low	Ensure tetanus jabs are up to date. Cover open cuts and make sure to wash and disinfect all cuts and grazing gained when on site.	Low
Hepatitis A	Infection/disease	Low	Do not ingest water the water in which you are working. Cover all open cuts with waterproof plasters.	Low
Lyme Disease (from a tick bite)	Infection/Disease	Low	Wear long trousers and long sleeved tops to limit tick bites. Tuck your socks over your trousers, as this is a key place tick can get under your clothes. Check for ticks after site visits and always remove ticks correctly if found. If you receive a tick bite and become unwell, seek medical attention and notify them of the tick bite.	Low
Environment:				
Sharp grasses & thorny shrubs.	Eye injuries, lacerations cuts, infection	Medium	Do not bend down in areas of known sharp grasses or plants. Disinfect any lacerations or punctures. Beware around eye level shrubs with hidden thorns – eg Blackthorn	Low
Concealed holes/ditches	Physical injury, ankle injuries	High	Take special care when walking through dense vegetation or areas with poor footing visibility.	Medium
Adverse weather	Physical injury	Medium	Check the weather forecast before visiting the site and dress accordingly. Do not visit site if adverse weather conditions and stop work if adverse weather starts when on site.	Low
Sun exposure/heat	Sun burn, heat stroke, dehydration, exhaustion	High	Drink plenty of water and do not rush. Apply sunscreen at points throughout day. Wear appropriate clothing (i.e. long trousers, long sleeves, hat). Plan in regular breaks	Medium

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Exposure to cold	Hypothermia	Medium	Wear appropriate clothing (i.e. thermals and waterproof).	Low
Uneven ground/difficult terrain	Physical injury, trips, falls, exhaustion	Medium	Wear footwear with good ankle support. Watch your footing, especially in muddy areas.	Low
Old and partially buried structures	Tripping, ankle injuries	Medium	Take care when footing is not visible. Look for signs of nearby partially buried structures (i.e. partially collapsed fence).	Low
<i>Waterbodies:</i>				
Deep water	Drowning	Medium	Take care near any waterbody. Do not work alone in/near deep/unknown water bodies where possible. Wear a life jacket when working near/in deep water.	Low
Floating mats of vegetation	Drowning	Medium	Avoid all areas where floating mats of vegetation grow over deeper water or mud	Low
Steep slopes/unstable ground	Physical injury, trips, ankle injuries	High	Avoid climbing steep slopes and take care with footing on unstable ground.	Medium
Slips/trips	Physical injury, death	Medium	Do not move quickly when in and around water. If you are unsure of depth, check first with a pole or net handle.	Low
Deep silt	Physical injury, death	Medium	Around water body edges always check your footing carefully before moving into the water. Deep silt is not always obvious to the eye.	Low
<i>Humans:</i>				
Sharp objects	Cuts, lacerations, infection	High	Take care when picking up potentially sharp objects. Wear gloves if appropriate. DO NOT TOUCH NEEDLES AND INFORM THE LOCAL COUNCIL	Medium

Hazard	Risk	Risk rating (<i>low, medium, high</i>)	Precaution/controls	Risk after control (<i>low, medium, high</i>)
Hazardous waste/fly tipping	Cuts, lacerations, infection, chemical burns	Low	Always wear gloves if you have to handle waste. If you are unsure about the contents of containers or if known to be hazardous contact emergency service or the local council.	Low
Motorcycle/horses being ridden recklessly	Physical injury through collision	Low	Be aware when walking in areas of poor visibility that may be used by motorised bikes (trail bikes or quadbikes) or horses. Wear high visibility jackets	Low
Assault	Physical injury, (sexual) assault	Medium	Avoid or try to diffuse confrontational situations. If possible, walk away. Contact the police if you feel threatened. If you are working alone, ensure someone knows where you are and what time you are expected back. Report abusive landowners to the River Thame Conservation Trust.	Low
Shooting	Physical injury	Medium	Do not approach any person suspected of carrying a weapon and immediately contact the police. If there is shooting allowed on the site, established where and when, so that you can avoid it, and wear high visibility clothing.	Low
Traffic	Collision with vehicles	Medium	Take care when crossing roads. Walk against the traffic when walking along roadsides. Wear high visibility clothing.	Low
Other:				
Manual handling	Physical injury, strains, sprains	High	Do not underestimate the weight of objects and remember that wet objects are heavier than their dry counterpart. Plan each lift, load, route, location and people. Always lift with your legs. Ask for assistance and use aids where possible.	Low