

Bat Conservation Ireland

Health and Safety Guidelines for Volunteers

In order to minimise risk you are required to familiarise yourself with, and adopt, Bat Conservation Ireland health and safety protocols while carrying out surveys on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland, these include but are not limited to:

You are under no obligation to carry out any Bat Conservation Ireland survey.

You are responsible for your own health and safety.

Do not put yourself or others in danger in the course of surveying on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland.

You are not obliged to visit a site, even if a member of Bat Conservation Ireland staff has requested it.

If you have concerns cease surveying and contact the survey supervisor.

Always obtain permission to access privately owned land. Bat Conservation Ireland may be able to assist you with this and can provide proof of insurance provided you and your assistants are registered Members or Temporary Volunteer Members.

Do not continue to visit a site if permission has been revoked.

Be aware of your own limitations and those of your accompanying surveyors.

We recommend that survey work should be carried out in teams of two or more people.

Familiarise yourself fully with your site(s) during daylight hours.

Always bring a fully charged mobile phone on surveys with you even though network coverage may not always be available in remote or hilly areas.

For off-road surveys wear footwear with suitable ankle support for walking on uneven surfaces.

To prevent hypothermia, wear and/or carry warm and waterproof clothing and a hat.

Risk Assessment

You must ensure that you have read and agreed to abide by the Risk Assessment for the site(s) you plan to survey, or if one has not already been completed, to carry out a Risk Assessment for the site(s). We can provide you with a template for a Risk Assessment if you have not already received one. All accompanying persons should also be familiar with health and safety protocols for the relevant survey and must read and sign that they have agreed to abide by the Risk Assessment for the site(s) in question.

Working Along Rivers

Stand well back from the river's edge.

Avoid muddy areas or pools.

Be aware of potential trip hazards such as rocks, uneven surfaces or vegetation that may increase the risk of falls occurring.

Be aware of flooding instances and do not survey if there is a risk of rising water level or if your normal survey route is inundated.

Working At Night

Bring two working torches and spare batteries for both.

It may be appropriate to inform the Gardaí and/or PSNI and/or local wildlife ranger and/or Coillte forest manager and/or Inland Fisheries of your intended work.

If your survey route includes a walk along a road or you are required to walk along a road to return to your car, wear a reflective jacket. Bat Conservation Ireland can supply you with one of these if required.

Parking

When choosing where to park your car, consider access and safety.

Do not block or obstruct access to any site, field, house or property.

If parked along a roadway ensure that the car is not on a bend or in a location that could cause an accident

Working in Remote Sites

In the form of a written note always inform a responsible person of your intended whereabouts.

This note should include

- date and time of departure
- method of travel to and from site
- method of travel within the site
- an approximate time of return

- include your car registration details

This person should be told who to contact in the event that you do not return and when to raise the alarm.

Do not work alone.

Working in remote areas, particularly on or near mountains, weather can be unpredictable and temperatures can drop significantly after dusk.

Carry a hard copy map (in waterproof casing) and a compass. Do not rely solely on digital sources of information: connectivity, battery power and weather conditions can affect how usable these tools are.

Carry some high energy snacks and a hydrating drink with you.

Carry a basic first aid kit to address minor cuts or grazes – we can supply you with one of these if you need one.

Avoid or abandon the survey in bad weather – bats are much less likely to occur during temperatures <8°C, rain, high winds and fog anyway.

Diseases

Lyme disease is carried by ticks. You are referred to the HSE website for further information on symptoms and diagnosis. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/L/Lyme-disease/>

As a precaution against Lyme disease

- cover skin as much as possible
- wear brightly coloured clothing
- tuck trousers into socks
- check for ticks following surveys and remove them as guided
- use insect repellent
- monitor the site of tick bites for any signs of infection.

Other diseases that field workers may be at risk of include Tetanus, Weil's disease etc. ensure your Tetanus vaccinations are up to date and always follow basic hygiene guidelines.

Animals

Domestic and farm or even wild animals may present a risk to surveyors. Avoid areas with cattle, horses or other animals that may be aggressive.

This document was last updated June 2nd 2016