

# Scottish Wildlife Trust

## Safety for Volunteers



### **Safety First**

Thank you for volunteering with the Scottish Wildlife Trust. We hope you find the experience a rewarding, enjoyable, and above all, safe one.

As with any organisation, there can be risks involved in the work we do. However, we will take all reasonable steps to safeguard your health, safety and welfare and will provide you with the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to help you stay safe.

- Please familiarise yourself with the relevant safety measures in place and comply with them at all times.
- If at any time you feel you do not have the physical capability or expertise to undertake a task or a role – please let us know.

### **Accidents**

In the unlikely event that you have an accident, it must be reported so that the details can be recorded and steps taken to ensure there is no repeat. Similarly, reporting any significant “near misses” to us can help prevent an accident happening later.

### **Fire Safety**

Where appropriate, you will be informed about fire alarms, appliances, evacuation procedures etc. Smokers please note, in line with current legislation, the Trust operates a no smoking policy in all of its buildings and vehicles. When working outside please do not smoke near flammable materials or substances and ensure any smoking materials are properly extinguished and disposed of sensibly.

### **First Aid**

First Aid kits are for the exclusive use of our trained first aiders. However, you will be told who the first aiders are, wherever you are working, and how to contact them in an emergency. On H&S Executive advice, our first aid kits do not contain tablets, lotions or ointments. If you feel you may require any such item please bring your own personal supply with you.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment is an important tool for us in identifying and controlling any risks in the work we do. It is also a legal requirement. You will be informed of the findings of the risk assessment for the task you are undertaking and advised how to work safely.

For volunteer groups working without SWT supervision, the completion of risk assessments is still required where there is an identifiable risk in the work activity being undertaken.

### **Lone Working**

Working alone is potentially dangerous and for this reason, certain tasks are prohibited. A lone working risk assessment must be carried out before any potentially hazardous activity involving one person. Where lone working does take place a “buddy system” operates, the details of which will be explained to you before lone working commences.

## **Tools and Equipment**

The law requires all work equipment to be suitable for the task, to be properly maintained and for users to have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to use it safely. Prolonged use of power tools can expose the user to the risks of hand and arm vibration. Keep power tool use to a minimum and follow the manufacturer's instructions closely. Privately owned tools and equipment must only be used where no alternative is available, they must be properly maintained and used only as the manufacturer intended

## **Driving at Work**

Anyone driving a vehicle on Trust business must hold the appropriate licence and be medically fit to drive. Vehicles, including private cars must be roadworthy and be properly taxed, serviced, MOT'd and insured. Drivers of private cars should ensure their vehicles are covered for occasional business use to avoid having insurance claims rejected in the event of an accident. Volunteers driving Trust owned or rented vehicles must first receive authorisation from our Admin Team at HQ

## **Lifting and handling**

Lifting and handling incorrectly can cause long term, or even permanent, damage to your back. Dragging heavy items or shovelling can have similar effects. So please use sensible lifting techniques and take breaks and alternate tasks where possible to avoid unnecessarily excessive or repetitive strain. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it!!

## **Hazardous materials**

Depending on the role you undertake, you may be working with chemicals or substances that are potentially hazardous. In such instances, you will be fully informed of the risks, shown how to work safely and issued with any protective clothing or equipment necessary

## **Clothing**

Always dress appropriately for the type of work, weather conditions and the site you are working on. Take advice from others who may be familiar with our sites and the work we do – particularly where there are exposed areas or water. Sturdy footwear and gloves are particularly important. Please note that occasionally it may be necessary for your supervisor to restrict certain activities to individuals wearing protective footwear.

## **Health Risks**

Always cover cuts and grazes before commencing work. This is especially important where the work is being done in ditches, rivers and lochs, where there may be a risk of Weil's disease if cuts are unprotected. Always wear gloves and wash your hands in clean water before, eating, drinking or smoking.

Ticks are common on heathland and in areas of rough vegetation and bracken. Some may be carriers of Lyme's Disease, which can be transferred to humans. To avoid being bitten, keep your skin covered when working in vegetation and check for ticks on your clothing and skin at regular intervals. If bitten, remove the tick gently, taking care to remove the mouth parts and body together. Tell tale signs of the disease are a ring-like rash around the bite, together with flu like symptoms and / or swollen glands. If you have any of these symptoms – see a doctor straight away.

The risks from Avian Flu are very remote. However, if you find large numbers of sick or dead birds, do not handle them. Instead, inform your supervisor who will make a decision on the appropriate course of action.

Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is an infection usually caused by rats but dogs, grey squirrels and other animals can also transfer the disease to humans. To prevent infection reduce direct contact with infected animals and indirect contact with animal urine. Take particular care when working around ponds, lochs and any sources known to be contaminated. If you are working in or around water keep cuts and abrasions covered at all times, avoid swallowing water, avoid or restrict skin contact with water and wash your face and hands thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking. Treatment for Weil's disease is usually a course of antibiotics

Sharps, such as needles, syringes etc. must not be handled. If you find a sharp, inform your supervisor who will make arrangements for the item to be disposed of safely.

We advise that anyone working on our reserves has an up to date tetanus jab. Seek advice from your doctor. Please note these risks are very rare if proper precautions are taken – so please don't be overly concerned and let it put you off volunteering!!

### **Medical Conditions**

Please let us know in advance if you are on medication or have a medical condition which may affect your ability to work safely (e.g. vertigo, asthma, epilepsy, allergies to plasters or wasp stings etc.).

If an accident occurs as a result of a medical condition we do not have prior knowledge of it may put you or others at risk and limit our ability to provide adequate care or treatment.

If we are only informed of a medical condition on the day, we reserve the right to prevent you from taking part in an activity if we believe doing so may put you or others at risk.

### **Finally.....**

We all have an obligation to ensure our actions do not put ourselves or anyone else at risk. While we have put measures in place to control risks and prevent accidents, the most effective way to stay safe is through vigilance and common sense. Always work safely and if you see something you believe is potentially hazardous, warn your colleagues and bring it to our attention immediately so that steps can be taken to control the risk.

*Jim Boyce*  
**Health & Safety Officer**