



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

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Planning your first field trip and are feeling a bit nervous? Well don't be. You will be surprised at how much you know.

Running Field Trips - A Practical Guide

Here are some top tips to making your day both enjoyable for those attending and for yourself.

Preparation for the Big Day

Most people who are asked to run a guided walk know their sites really well, but, just in case it's a new site, seek advice and information from someone who does know the site well. Visit the site, find out where the best places for seeing butterflies are and, of course, which areas are best avoided because they are full of thorns, rabbit holes or other hazards. It is always best to give people a quick briefing at the start of the walk. This should cover what management is being carried out for the benefit of the butterfly and moth species that are present. It should also cover any health and safety issues of the trip. Use check list below:

- Length of walk and/or arduous conditions?
- Mud, boggy ground or open water?
- Any steep slopes?
- Does walk go over any difficult gates, barbed wire fences?
- Any poisonous or irritant plants?
- Insects? Warn of ticks
- Adders? Warn if present
- Any other animals e.g. cows?
- Check participants are suitably clad and any dogs under control. Weather?
- Advise on sunstroke/dehydration or fatigue/exhaustion/hypothermia

Tip 1 - Tell people what butterflies and moths they are likely to see (whet their appetites!) and point out those areas to avoid. Despite your best efforts, not everyone in your party will manage to see every butterfly seen on the day. One will always fly over a hedge and out of sight. Therefore it's good to have a picture to show, especially to new members or members of the public.

Tip 2 - Have a robust butterfly and day flying moth field guide or identification charts with you. Though nets are usually frowned upon, it may be necessary to catch certain butterflies e.g. Essex Skipper and moths seen on the field trip so that the features that distinguish them from other similar species can be shown to those present. Some canopy species such as Purple Emperor and Purple Hairstreak are also difficult to see so have a pair of binoculars with you and encourage other people to bring their own pair (close focusing binoculars are also very useful). Many people attending have a range of naturalist interests and will appreciate other field guides e.g. wildflowers, dragonflies and birds.

Tip 3 - Take one or two clear insect collection containers with you. Many of those attending will be keen on photography. Others will want to see every species, have a good long look and watch their behaviour. Parents may bring children not able to move quickly or travel long distances.



Other people attending may not be in the first flushes of youth.

Tip 4 - Not only explain how far the walk is and how long it will take, but also ensure that all those on the walk are happy with the arrangement. If people want to have a shorter walk, rearrange your walk to allow them to return to the start whilst the rest of the party continue (a 'figure of 8' type walk is a good idea). For many, this will be their first guided walk. They, or their children, will turn up in inappropriate footwear or inappropriate clothing. Unfortunately, we always have to expect poor weather on our walks.

Tip 5 - Whilst carrying out your briefing, have a glance around your party. Those wearing footwear such as flip flops will stand out. If people have obviously turned up unprepared, then advise them that they or their children could injure themselves if they insist on following your party as it goes on the walk. Despite the best preparation and briefing, mishaps will occasionally occur. Fortunately most mishaps will be minor cuts bruises and bites.

Tip 6 - Advise people not to mess with any minor injuries. However, if the discomfort persists, or is too great for them or their children, they should leave the walk early to go home, clean any wound and apply non-prescription self-medication. If the symptoms persist, then they should seek professional medical advice. The chances of a serious accident happening are extremely rare. Occasionally first aid will be needed.

Tip 7 - Carry a field dressing in your bag (saves carrying a big first aid box); this will stem any major bleeding until professional medical treatment can be sought. If someone has first aid training on the field trip, then they should apply this dressing. Even rarer medical problems could occur. It is always possible, if very unlikely, that someone someday may collapse and need urgent medical attention.

Tip 8 - Have a mobile phone with you and ensure it is fully charged and you know the number. Make sure you know where you can get a signal. If all else fails, just go to the nearest home or commercial premises and ask to use their telephone landline. (NB Don't forget that BC Head Office will need to know the name and address of any injured person for insurance purposes.) You might know where you are, but even with modern technology the emergency services probably won't.

Tip 9 - Know the grid reference for the start of your walk and/or carry the local Ordnance Survey map with you. You can then talk the emergency services to where you or the injured person is. To encourage people to attend further field trips, most Branches like to have a report on the field trip; numbers attending, species and numbers seen etc. (NB don't forget to submit your records to the relevant recorder.)

Tip 10 - Take a note book with you and record all these details. It is good to supplement your notes with photographs. Ask those photographers on the field trip if they are willing and have the facility to email them to yourself or your branch newsletter editor. Have membership leaflets for those non-members attending.

Finally - Remember to thank everyone for attending and get feedback about the trip by asking if anyone would have liked to have done something differently, or if any problems had been encountered. Also, it is useful to find out how people heard about the event.

For further details on First Aid, specific Health and Safety hazards etc. please return to the main [Health & Safety area](#) of the Branch Website.