

Code of Practice No. 14

MOTH TRAPPING AT PUBLIC EVENTS

Reviewed September 2013

This code of practice sets out the main principles for the organisation and management of safety at moth trapping events for the public. The guidance is intended for staff and volunteers.

These events organised by Butterfly Conservation vary considerably in scale, type and risk. This code will help organisers identify the points that must be considered before launching moth trapping events for the public. It sets out the main principles to follow in order to minimise risks to you, as volunteers or staff, and to the general public.

Planning and organisation

Good health and safety practice involves good communication about the risks and precautions. For events of this nature it is helpful to appoint a group or an individual to be in charge of the arrangements for the event and its planning. It is good practice for an organiser to have had previous experience of moth trapping at public events. An experienced public event organiser should accompany an inexperienced colleague, during their first events. Wherever possible there should be more than one moth trapper at public events in case there are large numbers of people attending.

Moth trapping takes place in the dark, outside, and normally involves the use of electrical equipment. Like many other field events, moth trapping may be potentially hazardous. However, the level of risk is fairly low – provided that common sense precautions are taken ahead of, and during, the event.

For many attending these events, it will be a first time experience and we hope an enjoyable one, opening their eyes to a fascinating new aspect of the natural world.

The planning process must start with a review of the risks listed in the Standard Risk Assessment before and during the event to which volunteers, staff and the public are likely to be exposed. Further guidance is given below.

Before the event

Moth traps

If you are using light traps, you need to ensure that all the electrical equipment is functioning properly and that the equipment is not damaged in any way that could result in someone suffering an electric shock.

Therefore all electrical equipment should be maintained to prevent any danger to the public. It is strongly recommended that this includes visual inspection each time you intend using the equipment. For example, inspect cables, plugs and extension leads connected to the light traps. By concentrating on a simple, inexpensive system of looking for visible signs of damage or faults, most of the electrical risks can be controlled. Extension leads are particularly liable to damage as a result of being moved around extensively, to their plugs and sockets, to their connections and to the cable itself (apart from ordinary wear and tear, rabbits or rats have been known to gnaw the cables).

Any responsible individual can carry out a visual inspection so long as they know what to look for and what to do; basic electrical knowledge or simple training, together with common

sense, can cover this. Depending on usage of the light trap and leads, it is recommended to have the equipment tested by a competent person (electrician), every 1 to 3 years.

You do not have to keep records of inspections or tests carried out, but you may find it helpful if you have a number of light traps to keep track of, and also to help you review your maintenance procedures. Experience of faults found will determine whether inspection intervals can be lengthened and whether and how often there should be a test.

Note: Provide a safe device if your equipment operates at 230 volts or higher. A residual current device (RCD) can provide additional safety, as it is able to detect some, but not all, faults in the electrical system and rapidly switches off the supply. When used with a generator, the RCD may have a tendency to keep tripping the lights due to the fluctuating current delivered by the generator.

Bulbs

On rare occasions, bulbs may be imperceptibly fractured during or after use, and it is recommended that all bulbs be checked for hairline fractures before any moth trapping activity to try to avoid accidents. Blended bulbs are more prone to shattering and actually throwing the glass, than the standard MV bulbs (125w & 80w). Some manufacturers, for example Anglian Lepidopterists Supplies can supply the use of bulb guards for their own Skinner type traps, for safety at public events. The bulb guard has a Perspex top (5mm thick) and a fine metal gauze down the sides allowing the UV light to escape but not any glass in the event of an accident. The gauze lets out 90% of the UV light and so should not reduce the moth catch. It is advisable to use such protection at public events.

Perhaps the commonest bulb type used in moth traps is the 125watt MBF lamp that is powered through a separate choke. Those of you who regularly use this type of bulb will know that they are very bright, more than three times as intense as an equivalent value tungsten filament bulb, but with the added UV light. Examining a moth trap with the bulb working and from a short distance of a meter or so may cause damage to your eyesight, this damage being cumulative. It is sensible to include in pre-event publicity that visitors shield their eyes with their hands or they could provide themselves with Polaroid sunglasses to protect their eyes from the bright light and as extra protection to the eyes in case of bulb breakage. Mention of this hazard needs to be made in the introductory safety words at the start of the evening. Of course, moving around in the dark when one forgets to take off the glasses can be a hazard in itself!

There are several other types of bulb in use. These tend to be the less powerful actinic tube style bulbs. Frequently these are unguarded, so there is the potential for these to be a hazard through shattering. Every effort should of course be undertaken to avoid breakage. However, if a breakage occurs on site, this area should be avoided during the course of the event and effort should be made to thoroughly clear up the site when others are not in the general area, for example after the event has finished.

Use of generators and extension cables

If using a generator try to run these away from where the public will be. Generators will run hot and could result in minor burns if mishandled. Run generators on flat ground and away from potential fire hazards, i.e. dry grass, thatching etc. Cables used in conjunction with moth traps should ideally be clearly identified, particularly near the trap itself, where a trip over the wire could result in the bulb and its cones coming away from the trap and shattering. Ideally cable guard should be in place near the trap, but at the very least the public should be made aware of where the cable is and asked to avoid this.

Risk assessment

A Standard moth trapping Risk Assessment (RA) has been produced. The first part of the risk assessment process is to identify the hazards associated with the event and the local circumstances of the site where the event is taking place. These will vary from event to event so it is important to use the standard RA as a basis and note any additional hazards for your local event.

Greater attention must be given to significant hazards that are likely to cause serious injury to an individual, or affect several people during the event. Hazards should be eliminated wherever possible. Where a hazard cannot be eliminated, precautions must be put in place to minimise the risk.

First aid provision & emergency

There is no legal requirement to provide first aid for the public. Butterfly Conservation, however, takes the view that it has a moral duty to provide a caring attitude towards people attending events such as moth trapping evenings, and this would include the provision of first aid. If around 10-15 people are expected to attend, then it may be appropriate to arrange for first aid cover. The event organisers need to risk assess each situation and make a judgement based on:

- Response time of emergency services
- Number of people attending
- Ease of access to the venue.

If it is determined that first aid cover is required, but no first aiders are available, organisers should seek help from organisations such as St John Ambulance, British Red Cross etc.

The organiser should always carry a mobile phone; although it is appreciated that in a few situations it is not always possible to obtain a reception. Making sure that someone else (a Buddy 'back at base') knows of the whereabouts of the event and has details of expected time of return is advisable and recommended.

Pre-event publicity

Below is a suggested form of words that could be included in any pre-event publicity (eg in a newsletter, website) prior to the event:

Moth trapping events take place in the dark and there are a few things that you will need to bring so that you have a safe and comfortable evening.

- *a torch (don't forget to check the batteries are not running low)*
- *warm clothing (even if it is a hot day, it can get chilly after dark)*
- *suitable footwear (please ask if you are unsure what is suitable for a particular event)*
- *something to drink and perhaps a snack to eat*
- *insect repellent (may be useful as mosquitoes can be a pest sometimes)*
- *dark glasses (you may wish to bring these as the light from the moth traps is very bright)*

Please try to arrive at the advertised time, take care of your own personal safety and listen to the short introductory briefing by the event organiser, about any hazards in the area such as electric cables, slippery paths etc. Children are most welcome but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian if under 16. If you have any queries before the event please contact

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At the start of the event

The event organiser must include in their introductory briefing, details about any hazards in the area and associated with the event. Things to mention, briefly:

- slips and trips in the dark; any local hazards to be aware of
- trailing cables
- avoid staring at the MV bulb and keep a safe distance from the trap (eg do not step on the ground sheet)
- who should be contacted in case of an accident, ie normally the event organiser
- first aid provision
- that the generator can get very hot; they should avoid going near it
- not to move around from one trap to another without the event leader

It may be necessary during the evening to remind people attending of the safety aspects highlighted in the introductory briefing. If you are using several light traps ensure that these are visited regularly, to observe the public's behaviour as much the moths! Remember to store any unused generator fuel in a secure place.

Insurance

Staff and volunteers organising and running moth trapping public events are covered under the Butterfly Conservation's insurance policies. There is public liability cover (for third party), and personal accident cover for BC staff and volunteers, where all reasonable precautions have been taken; staff and volunteers are covered under the employers liability cover. The moth traps and associated equipment may be insured under the BC's policy if Branches elect to pay £15 per £500 of equipment. Some Branches have already taken up this offer.

Evaluation

All aspects of public events should be reviewed after an event, to determine if further precautions and improved arrangements are necessary for subsequent events. Feedback is always helpful.

Footnote:

A **hazard** is something that can cause harm, eg electricity, chemicals, noise, stress etc.
A **risk** is the chance, high or low, that any **hazard** will actually cause somebody harm.