

Running a Field Trip – A Practical Guide

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

Here are some top tips to making your day both enjoyable for those attending and 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 ask someone who does. The best places are those for seeing butterflies and of course those areas to be avoided are full of thorns, rabbit holes or other hazards. Therefore it is always best to give people a quick brief at the start of the walk

Tip 1

Tell people what butterflies you are likely to see and those areas to avoid. Wet their appetites

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 field guide with you

Though nets are often frowned upon, it may be necessary to catch certain butterflies e.g. Essex Skipper and moths seen on the field trip so that their features that distinguish them from other similar species can be shown to those present.

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 and how long the walk will take but ensure all those on the walk are happy with the arrangement. If people want to have a shorter walk then 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 brief 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 occasionally mishaps will occur. Fortunately most mishaps will be minor cuts bruises and bites.

Tip 6

Advise people not to mess with their minor injuries but if the discomfort is too great for them or their children they should leave the walk early, go home clean any wound and apply non-prescription self medication. If the symptoms persist then 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 sorted. Whoever has first aid training on the field trip should apply this dressing

Even rarer medical problems could occur. It is always possible if very unlikely; someone someday may collapse and need urgent medical attention.

Tip 8

Have a mobile phone with you and ensure it's 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 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 the start of your walk and/or carry the local ordinance 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.)

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

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.