

HOPEFULLY HELPFUL NOTES FOR LEADERS OF BDS MEETINGS

The following is a summary of good practice. Further thoughts are always welcome so if you have something which works for you, please let us know.

Representing BDS

Your group and especially you its leader, represents BDS to the world at large: the example it sets in sensitivity to fragile habitats, conservation requirements and respect for access arrangements will be noted by others. The damage even single acts of thoughtlessness may cause to BDS's reputation may be considerable.

Organisation before your visit

- Ensure you obtain the necessary access permits or entry permissions in advance. (Written permissions are a good idea where the site owners are unknown to you and/or this is your first visit). Give advance notice to Site Wardens even when no permit is required, and take local advice about parts to be visited. Avoid taking large groups to small, fragile habitats.
- You should have prior knowledge of the site: also, if possible, visit it a few days before the meeting to check access/parking and unexpected developments.
- All walks and activities should ideally have two leaders – one to lead and one to round up stragglers. If a single leader only is running an event perhaps a responsible participant can be asked to fulfil this supporting role on the day. If an activity is likely to attract large numbers, then extra leaders may be needed at short notice – this should be considered before the event.
- Consider the impact on fragile habitats: if necessary divide the group into smaller groups (of 8 or less) and delegate leadership of each sub-group to a particular person; experienced individuals may wish to go off on their own. Be sure to arrange a time and place to meet up again.
- Plan a lunch break and other halts during the visit. Have a bad weather back-up plan – e.g. being able to look for resting adults in the rain. To engage peoples' interest you might have a few exuviae available to show and/or a few live examples of larvae/adults caught earlier in the day. Obviously another back-up for poor weather is pond-dipping for larvae if adult dragonflies are in short supply.
- Remember that your group may contain young or older people whose needs must be catered for. Get a feel for your audience before you start. What is their state of health! Do they have the right footwear and clothing for the site? What is their level of prior knowledge? Are there any photographers present etc? Are there any children present? Remind everyone to keep an eye on children near the water's edge.
- All meetings advertised on the BDS website are covered by the Society's insurance. If the meeting is a joint event with another organisation, agree the split of responsibilities before the event. The main activities planned for the meeting should be clearly communicated to all present. Explain at the outset what you intend to do, and check that no one has problems with this.

- **Safety is paramount:** identify and point out any hazards of the meeting – without undermining confidence! Make sure you are prepared to cope with accidents or illness. It is a good idea to carry a mobile phone and have one or two emergency telephone numbers with you. You should also know the whereabouts of the nearest landline telephone. In the event that you need to contact Emergency Services, the best information you should have to hand is the post code of your location or the nearest vehicle accessible location to you. This tells the emergency services who to deploy to you. Having the National Grid Reference is useful, but not all services use these as a prime locating device. If you are in a remote location be prepared for someone to go back to the vehicle access point to meet people. Android phones can be used by the services now to locate you precisely using Google's Emergency Location Service, so make sure your phone is ready for use.
- We suggest that you carry a simple First Aid Kit (in the form of waterproof plasters and bandages, for example). Point out risks of infection of cuts and abrasions from polluted water (e.g. by Weil's disease, Leptospirosis); encourage washing of hands before eating. Warn of the sites particular hazards e.g. biting insects, snakes, single plank bridges, steep-sided water bodies etc. (You could perhaps supply a handout for the site including safety information and a map, as well as information on the BDS, the history and size of the site, management objectives and a species list).
- To increase participation, introduce dragonfly recording, possibly using the iRecord app / website. Explain the importance of recording for conservation, education and research purposes.

During the visit

- Throughout the visit you are in charge and thus responsible for the conduct of the group. Make periodic checks on the number in your party; always wait for stragglers and seek any whose immediate whereabouts are unknown.
- Your group should respect the BDS Code on Collecting (available from the BDS website). Most collecting of adult insects and larvae will be for demonstration to the group: an experienced person should do this, and the catch should be promptly released on site. For permanent purposes, collect only exuviae.
- Tell inexperienced members about the biology of dragonflies, and explain any behaviour observed. Use Latin names sparingly and with explanation if necessary. Point out other features of natural history interest to the group: try to find out who has other expert knowledge they may wish to share – or try to include someone in the party who can give an 'extra dimension' to the day. As a guide, most field meetings cover some or all of the following:-
- adult ID, larval ID, habitat management, other nearby sites to visit, dragonfly biology, the role of the BDS, the role of dragonfly recording, dragonfly conservation and dragonfly research.
- If an undercover area is available at the site, it could be a good idea to have display boards set up to stimulate interest either as the group gathers or as a

finale to the meeting. These displays can back up the topics for the day or cover other issues from the above list.

- We always hope for an enthusiastic audience, but one way to check that what we are offering is actually what is wanted, is to provide a feedback form. This covers who the audience are on a particular day, where they found out about the event, what they've enjoyed or learnt, plus any ideas for improvements. A sample form appears as appendix 2 at the end of these guidelines. The Group Leader will need a supply of pens/pencils so that the forms can be completed before people leave the site.

Finally remain flexible in your leadership, be responsive to particular requests or opportunities, and try to make sure everyone enjoys themselves, even if it rains all day!

After the visit please remember to write a Report about the day and send it to the Field Meetings Organiser for forwarding to the Magazine Editor. For walks up to and including July please ensure Reports are sent in by the 31st July for inclusion in the autumn Dragonfly News magazine.

Planning Ahead for Next Year

Good advance planning is necessary to ensure details of events can be published in the spring Dragonfly News. Later adverts can also be placed just on the BDS website and additionally in local 'What's On' diaries to try to reach non-dragonfly people.

To attract more members we need to broaden our appeal and stress that our walks and other activities are open to all. (We'll then wave a BDS membership leaflet at participants). If meetings can be jointly arranged with Butterfly, Orthopteran or local Wildlife Trust groups etc, we may attract new people. We need to offer our members and the public a greater variety of activities in addition to the guided walks, surveys and larval ID workshops currently on offer. One suggestion is that we could include pond-dipping for children. This could be a springtime activity, thus providing a way to extend our dragonfly season. Please note, children must always be accompanied by their own responsible adult.

In general, to attract a new wider audience, we need to broaden our wildlife appeal. It is recognised that when on a walk we actually look at other insects as well as dragonflies, birds and plants etc. We ought to make more of this when we advertise our events. In local advertisements, stress the general appeal of the meetings so that they do not appear too specialised. We also need to try to publicise our events in a wider range of ways. You will know locally the best free newspapers and Radio Stations etc to contact or the ideal places to put up posters.

Please note:-

The BDS insurance only operates if the BDS knows about the activity – field events need to be publicised on our BDS website to show that they emanate from the Society. Make sure all details of the rendezvous; site grid ref., (description for those not used to maps), route and any unusual aspects are available in advance, including any need for adequate footwear, packed lunch, waterproofs.

If the event is limited on numbers you should implement a booking system. If the event is on private property or limited only to local group members, then please make this clear on your entry for the BDS website.

Thank you for your help and co-operation, without which our Field Meetings programme could not exist. We hope you continue to enjoy your Field Events.

Mike Averill, Field Meetings Organiser
Pam Taylor, Convenor, Dragonfly Conservation Group

Appendix 1

Indoor talks and courses - It is useful to have static display boards and/or exuviae collections etc available at slide-talks so that people have things to look at during a coffee break or at the end of the talk. This should lead to increased interest and involvement by the audience and may prompt further questions or points for discussion.

It is a good idea for slide-talks to have a basic (1 hour) section, plus an optional (20-30 minute) add-on section. It is probably best if the add-on section contains different kinds of images/information to the basic section, rather than just more of the same. This extension material can be offered to audiences at the end of the basic section, if they appear to want more information. Please note however, this add-on option should always be discussed with the organisers prior to the meeting, to ensure that it is compatible with the format and timing of their events.

To add interest in a talk, for example to a set of adult ID pictures, put in little tips such as “the Small Red is all red”, to distinguish Small Red from Large Red Damselfly. For the ‘blue damsels’ pointing out the S2 ‘whisky tumbler’ or ‘beer glass’ (*Coenagrion puella*) from the ‘wine goblet’ (*C.pulchellum*) and the ‘upside-down apple’ or playing card ‘Spade’ symbol (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), always works well. Any such tricks for people to learn as memory joggers are highly useful and add relevance to the talk. If people feel they have learnt something, even if it is from a generalised talk to the public, then their level of satisfaction will increase.

If you have access to PowerPoint there are several things you can do that are not possible with conventional slides. For example you can put a small map on the same screen, at the same time, as an image for the dragonfly species or you can link text information with illustrative slides.

If you are running a course, limit the number of participants to those you can easily cope with in the time and space available. Realise that people can only take in so much information at a time, so vary activities frequently and don't make the courses too long.

In general, many of the points above concerning Field Meetings also apply to indoor events. Know your audience, invite feedback and share your obvious enthusiasm for this wonderful group of insects!

Guided Walk and Field Meeting Feedback Form

**Please complete and return this form before you leave today.
Just tick one answer for each question - thank you!**

Are you a member of the BDS? Yes No

Where did you see this walk/meeting advertised? BDS magazine
Poster Local Press Other _____

Have you enjoyed the walk/meeting? Yes Some parts No

Have you learnt anything? Yes, a lot Yes, a little No

Did the walk/meeting match your expectations? Better Yes No

Would you join another walk/meeting at this site? Yes Maybe No

Have you seen what you hoped you would? Yes Some No

**So that we can improve our events in the future, please tell us what else
you would have liked to have seen or been told about today.**

Any other comments?

**If you would like more details about the BDS or would like to volunteer
your help for our recording scheme, please write your name and address
below.**

Name _____

Address _____

Optional: Phone _____ Email _____
