

Generic Risk Assessment – Bushcraft & Forest Activities

Location: Various locations close to centre and along the river trips. All easily accessible for emergency services.

Reviewed by **Ian Sheldrake** 1st October 2025

Hazard	Severity	Likelihood	Control Measures	Residual Risk Rating
General			- Suitably qualified and experienced staff (activity award and current First Aid) - Clear demonstrations and activity instructions, vigilant supervision. - Code of conduct and expectations explained and sanctions used. - Participants required to wear trousers and secure footwear for walking through bracken, nettles and brambles. - Phone and first aid kit carried - Contact details of all present to be held by Group Leader - Session planning in place - All accidents, incidents and near misses reported and recorded appropriately and reviewed. - Any review recommendations implemented.	L
Group control / staffing ratios	Medium to high dependant on activity	Low Medium to high with challenging groups	- Ratio of staff to inexperienced student ratio 1:8, 1:12 with additional adult assistance - Ratio of staff to experienced students ration 1:12, 1:15 with	L / medium with challenging gp

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			additional adult assistance Ratio of staff to challenging students 1:4	
Burns – skin, eye, body	Low to medium	M	- Prior briefing and instruction by Group Leader - Demonstration to establish safe fire lighting protocols. - Safe site to be chosen, cleared & prepared in advance of fire lighting. - Perimeter established – no running or fooling about in the area. Walk round the fire. Safe seating positions established. - Fire to be started small and managed to be fit for intended purpose e.g. a cooking fire may be spread over a long area and fire for warmth may be higher. In all case the size of fire should be minimized and efficient. - Inexperienced or excitable groups limited to a demo fire and group fire. Numerous fires for small teams or individuals only planned for groups that have earned trust. - Strike matches / fire steel away from body and away from other people. Back to wind. - No burning / smoldering material sticks / embers to be taken from the fire for unstructured play - At all times review and maintain a safe staff to client ratio. - Implements provided to remove hot items - from fire. BC leader to demonstrate safe practice and supervise	L-M

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			any cooking activities. - Groups will not crowd firepit – max. 4 involved in cooking. - First aid kit & adequate water to hand	
Damage to clothing / shelter / equipment	M	L	- Advise of hazards of wearing synthetic clothing (combustion / melting). Ensure jackets, sleeves, long hair etc. fastened. - Location of tarps and other combustibles to be supervised with due regard to wind direction etc.	L
Damage to vegetation	M	L	- In all case the fire should be kept small and efficient - Avoid fires near growing roots - Avoid fires near overhanging vegetation. - Careful site selection to avoid danger of spreading fire. - Do not light a fire in high risk conditions (i.e. during periods of drought and / or high wind). - All fires to be fully extinguished and cleared at the end of the session. To be checked by staff	L
Control of accelerants	H	H	- Use of accelerants e.g. petrol, paraffin or meth's must not be permitted by participants or staff. - Use of Fire lighter cubes and BBQ gel is permitted as they are slow burning and do not flare. Use sparingly.	L
Injury from sharp tools:	H	M	Safety briefing prior to activity	L (M for 'clumsy')

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Bow Saw Bush Craft Knives Bill Hooks Carving Knives Spoon Knives Folding Saw Hatchet, axes Loppers Scotch eye auger			- Demonstration of safe use of tools - Protective equipment as needed - Constant monitoring - Safe place to keep tools until needed - Progressive session plan where participants earn trust first - With more challenging groups have a tool area where they come to use a tool supervised. - Use correct knife techniques as shown by instructor	participant
Damaged / unsuitable / blunt tools	H	M	- Tools to be maintained in good repair and used only for intended purpose - Unsuitable tools quarantined until fixed or disposed of.	L
Uncovered sharps	H	L	- Sheaths, covers and guards to be used when transporting and storing tools - Proper method of passing tools between participants demonstrated and insisted on.	L
Loss of sharps	H	L	- Where a sharps are considered to have been misappropriated advise the school promptly. - If necessary, and in consultation with the school, advise the emergency services	L
Camp cooking:	M	M	Ask participants about food allergies, intolerances and ethical	

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stomach upset			- or religious observances. • ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating • As preference only use meat products that are already cooked or preserved or that have a high surface to volume ratio (for fast cooking). E.g. hot dogs, and chipolata sausages. • For bread sticks and scones use gluten free flower. • Use of water, wipes and hand gel before handling food. •	
Misidentification of wild food	M-H	M	• Group not encouraged to eat wild food on most sessions • Some cooking sessions may involve wild food but the instructor will be confident in the identification of these and for the most these will be easily identifiable nettles, wild garlic, hawthorn leaf. • Final identification can be carried out by instructor for species that are more easily confused. If in doubt leave it out. • Do not collect from field edges that may be contaminated with • pesticides or herbicides. • Do not collect from roadside verges or where dogs are walked.	L

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			- Do not collect from areas of foul or contaminated water. - Always wash before consumption. - Do not use old or dying/deceased plants. - Awareness of particular requirements of individual plants for - example nettle stings. Etc. - Only use the IOL recommended list of plants.	
Ticks and Lyme Disease	M-H	L	- Low risk in mature forest areas with no sheep, deer and little bracken. - If using other areas groups required to wear trousers, warned of the danger of walking through undergrowth on animal tracks and told to check themselves.	L
Kellie/Ghillie kettle	M	L	- Use only kettles with whistles and not stoppers on spouts. - If a participant brings a stopper spout - make sure the stopper is NOT inserted into the spout of the kettle when heating. - Fire can only be topped up through the hole in base, NOT through the chimney spout – as the gases are superhot. - Use gloves to tip the kettle to pour.	L
Getting lost	Medium	Very Low	Area familiarisation by staff.	L
Presence of water	High	Low	Extra vigilance by leaders near water.	L

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			• Discussion of hazards and safe behaviour if necessary. • Approaching waters edge done with caution in controlled manner. • Any poor behaviour should not be tolerated. • If activities on water edge are planned then a throw rope is carried and the leader trained in how to use this. The length of this rope should be appropriate for the venue.	
Falls / trips	Low	Medium to low	• Walking in a group can be problematic if the group clump together – this prevents them seeing the ground in front of them and can also trip over each other's feet. Insist on calm behaviour and spacing out. • Participants told not to run in areas of dense undergrowth. • Participants are required to wear trousers and secure footwear. • Safety discussion about running and tripping	L

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Hypothermia	Medium to high	Low	Most sessions take places in locations no more than 10 minutes' walk from centre. Instructions on what to wear and what to bring is provided in the Joining information. This is to include food and drink Instructor checks group clothing and food and drink before setting off. Cagoules and trousers issued if necessary or participants turned away. Drink plenty of fluids before and during session to remain hydrated (major cause of hypothermia) Emergency food brought by instructor. Flask of hot fluids in Winter temperatures (wet and windy days too) if going to remote situations. Not necessary if within 20 minutes of a shop. Weather forecasts to be checked prior to session to allow for appropriate measures Instructor to monitor mood of group members	L
Heat exhaustion	Med to high	low	Instructor monitoring group, group should be hydrated prior to session, water bottle to be carried Heat exhaustion is caused by long rides, on warm days with poor hydration. Rides kept shorter	L
Sun Burn	Low – only face or arms exposed	Med	Suntan lotion to be brought and applied regularly, instructors to ensure children have applied lotion. Parents, carers to apply if possible.	L
Aggressive cattle	Med	Extremely low	Avoid grazing cattle in fields and on tow path side, especially when in calf or calving	L
Dog attack	Low to med	Low to med	Slow down whilst approaching dogs to allow walker to gain control of dog before group draws near.	L
Medical conditions and allergies	Low to high	Low to high (asthma)	Instructed to beware of any medical conditions and allergies, and to ensure individual has appropriate medication Instructor checks booking forms with medical details Instructor asks group to disclose and changes to medical conditions since the form was written.	L

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			Only conditions relevant to the activity need be disclosed. Be clear to explain what types of conditions are relevant and set participants expectations for the day (strenuous, get wet, no toilets etc)	
General public - Physical/ verbal abuse/ abduction of children/	Low	low	• Staff/ volunteers to be recognisable by logos on clothing • Regular headcounts • Staff to be vigilant - politely ask members of the public to leave work area if necessary • Front and back markers to be designated with each group • Attempt to de-escalate any potentially confrontational situation if safe to do so • Be prepared to remove group to alternative area if necessary • Follow serious incident procedures and notify police if appropriate	L
Separation of group member from group	Medium to high	Low	• Regular headcounts • Guidelines given to children about what to do if separated • Ensure participants let leader know if they are leaving the group early • Clear boundaries for activities • Ensure good behaviour • In the event of unacceptable behaviour, consider shortening sessions • Leader at front plus back marker when moving between activities • Follow lost child procedure	

Notes

- All leaders should be aware of **Venture Out** 'Emergency procedures' prior to delivering any sessions.
- All coaches to carry first aid kit and repair kit and appropriate equipment for weather conditions
- It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure equipment is safe and appropriate for use prior to each session.
- It is the responsibility of the coach to alert the **Director (Ian Sheldrake)** of broken or damaged equipment, or injury or near miss and to record this information in the Accident and Emergency book. If unclear how to complete this, then contact Ian immediately for support.
- If the coach is unsure of any relevant safety-related matters the problem should be resolved prior to the session
- This is an adventurous sport and some risk is assumed by participants. Removal of all risk is not only impossible but detrimental to the development of participants. However risk versus benefits have to be considered.

