

# Bucks Fungus Group Walk Guidelines



## What happens on our Walks?

- **Meet time:** Usually 10:00 (weekends), 10:30 (midweek), but do check the programme.
- **Before setting out:** Members are welcome to bring along fungi from elsewhere and we chat about these whilst the group assembles.
- **Walk format:** After a short welcome and site intro, we set off. Pace is slow and everyone shares in the searching and collecting of fungi with frequent pauses for discussion and learning.
- **Species list:** All finds are recorded by the leader who is shown everything as we proceed. Most specimens will be named on the spot but some will need identification later at home.
- **Paths and 'off piste':** We tend to spread out for maximum coverage of the area, but taking care to keep within earshot or eye contact with the leader at all times, not only for safety especially if you're unfamiliar with the area but also for further opportunity for sharing knowledge.
- **Leader's whistle:** Five blasts on the whistle (long short short short long!) is a signal for the group to gather together midwalk. If you hear it please respond immediately by following the direction of the sound.
- **Walk ends:** Usually by 13:00.
- **After the walk:** Please email your photos to the leader asap for possible inclusion in the report.

## Weather & Cancellations

- Walks go ahead in most weathers but occasionally need to be cancelled for safety (e.g. storms, wind, snow, forestry work).
- If the forecast looks doubtful check for a last-minute email from the leader before leaving home.
- Unwell or can't attend? Please email the **booking secretary** asap so your place can be reallocated.

## What to Wear

- Sturdy footwear (walking boots or wellies) and clothes suitable for uneven, off-path terrain.
- Dress for the weather - bring waterproofs if rain is forecast—sometimes even sunscreen is needed!
- Gloves for protection from fungi are not recommended unless you have a specific risk of infection or allergy. Even deadly poisonous fungi are safe to handle, the toxins do not pass through skin. Furthermore, gloves restrict ones ability to collect carefully and also to assess mushroom texture.

## What to Bring (Optional but Useful)

- A small flat basket and a few plastic pots (e.g. margarine tubs) for collecting fungi – **NOT plastic bags**.
- A hand lens (x10) for close examination.
- A notebook and camera.
- Any snacks, drinks or medication you might need eg Inhalers.

(For further tips on how to make the most of your experience, see *Foundations in Field Mycology* at <https://www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/beginners.html> :Document 1: *Learning about fungi – the first steps*)

## Children & Dogs

- Member's children are very welcome and are often great at spotting fungi!
- Dogs are permitted at most (but not all) venues if well-controlled—check the website instructions.

## Scientific Collecting

- Before collecting it's useful to photograph your find in situ first. Collect 1–2 whole specimens (if possible at different stages of development), including the base, and note also the substrate/tree association.
- Once a particular species has been identified and recorded by the leader, please endeavour to **avoid repeat picking**, leaving fungi in situ for others to enjoy.

## Consuming Fungi

- Our main aim is identification, recording and learning—**NOT foraging**.
- Edible fungi may be collected (in moderation) at **some but not all sites**—please check with the leader.
- Whilst leaders will offer advice with identification, **you are solely responsible** for anything you collect to consume – it is entirely at your own risk.
- We regularly come across very poisonous, even deadly, species. **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

## Insurance

- Our walks are insured through the group's affiliation to the British Mycological Society.

## Respect the Countryside Code

- Follow signs, close gates, leave no litter, and cause minimal disturbance to vegetation, leaf litter, soil and other features to preserve the habitat.
- We always acquire a permit to visit and make scientific collection for all our walks—please treat the land and the site-managers or landowners with respect.

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**Please be aware that YOU are entirely responsible for your own safety and that of any children, dogs, or equipment you bring with you.**

### Your Health and Safety Checklist:

- Wear clothing and footwear appropriate for outdoor activity and local weather forecast.
- Bring any required medication and refreshments.
- Take care, especially off the path: brambles, ditches, overhanging branches, hidden potholes, log piles, barbed-wire, ditches and slippery areas etc can be hazardous.
- Stay near the group; don't rely on mobile signal (often unreliable in woodland areas) —consider bringing a whistle or compass for use if you get lost.
- Let the leader know if you're leaving early.
- Be **'tick-aware'**: Learn about prevention of tick bites, safe removal, and symptoms of Lyme disease at <https://lymediseaseuk.com/>.
- Do not pick up material that can carry disease (e.g. dog faeces or carcasses) even if it has a fungus growing on it!
- Cover cuts before handling material near stagnant water (risk of Weil's disease).
- Follow any site-specific information eg avoiding Ash Dieback areas.
- If you are at particular risk of allergy or infection please seek independent advice about handling fungi.
- Keep any poisonous or unidentified fungi well away from anything likely to be consumed later.
- **Always wash your hands after handling fungi and after our walks, especially before eating.**

**By booking on our walks you are agreeing to follow these Walk Guidelines.**