

SDOS Birding Walks Risk Assessment Form

Assessor(s) : Tony Benton and Sue Miles

Date of Assessment: 29 April 2026 (finalised 20 July 2026).

Location: Mile Oak Farm and adjacent Farms. Information will be shared in advance of where to meet and car parking. This risk assessment covers an assemblage of farms, centred around Mile Oak Farm. Parking will generally be at Mile Oak Farm 'Farm Shop' (near Portslade) BN41 2RF & what3words - grass.judge.from

Advisory Notice: All participants are asked to read this document carefully. Walk leaders are not provided with First Aid kits, nor are they expected to be First Aid trained. All participants must take this into account and must also bring with them any medication that might be required.

Brief Description: A walk across downland. The downland terrain can be **very steep** and muddy in places and cattle and sheep might well be encountered, as well as working dogs and farm vehicles. Toilets are **not** available.

Suggested Clothing: Dress according to the prevailing weather conditions and remember the potential for mud on paths that cross grazed downland. Except in summer and very dry conditions, trainers are generally not suitable, a walking pole or similar might be useful. The terrain can be steep, undulating, and with trip hazards, so footwear should reflect this.

Hazard	Who might be harmed	Evaluation of Risk	Risk mitigation measures	Risk grading after controls put in place	Comments
Adverse weather conditions, including (but not confined to) torrential rain, very high winds, snow, ice, thunder and lightning.	All participants	Medium	It is essential that any weather warnings issued by the Met Office are adhered to, especially if the public are asked to avoid non-essential travel. Walks will be immediately cancelled if lightning is a threat.	Low	Adverse weather conditions can affect outings in different ways. By following Met Office advice, risks should be reduced to 'low' and where necessary, outings should be cancelled. Participants must dress according to the forecast and prevailing weather conditions. This includes clothing and footwear, and also appropriate liquids (eg hot or cold drinks line with the temperature).
Farm animals - this walk likely crosses working farms and cattle and sheep that are free grazing. There might also working dogs on the farm(s).	All participants	Medium	Farm animals must be given space, and never cornered so that they lack an escape route. Any farm dogs should be given space.	Low	Participants must follow the directions of the walk leader when around farm animals, or working dogs.

Farm vehicles and machinery.	All participants.	Medium	Listen and watch for farm vehicles on the move and step aside and warn other participants too. (Some people might be hearing impaired or distracted).	Low	Participants must follow the directions of the walk leader when around farm vehicles. Awareness that this walk crosses working farms is key.
Uneven and steep terrain, leading to trips, falls and slips.	All participants.	Medium	Participants need to remember that the terrain is challenging. (They need to be self aware and take great care.) For example, slippery after rain coupled with trip hazards. The guidance of the walk leader must be followed and participants must exercise care and attention. They should look for trip hazards.	Low	Appropriate footwear is essential, especially after a lot of rain or freezing conditions. Walking poles are a sensible option. Some of the downland terrain is steep.
Vegetation snags, which can catch eyes and bare skin, or penetrate clothing.	All participants	Medium	Participants must be aware of these potential hazards, particularly around scrub vegetation and any copses that are entered.	Low	

Vehicles driven by general public - only likely on the private road leading to the farm shop where we would park.	All participants	Medium	Always walk towards oncoming traffic and in single file.	Low	Vigilance is required by all participants and single file is essential on any narrow lanes and public byways.
Ticks See government advice: https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/03/21/what-is-lyme-disease-and-why-do-we-need-to-be-tick-aware/	All participants	Medium	Best to wear clothing that covers arms and legs.	Low	Inspect arms and legs after the walk for ticks. Refer to GP if concerned.
Snakes	All participants	Medium	Snakes should not be touched, nor should you get close to take photographs. Adders must be treated with respect. Stout footwear provides a level of protection and is recommended.	Low	In the summer months in particular, snakes can be present. Trainers and sandals do not provide much protection and are most definitely not recommended on this walk.
Barbed wire and electric fences	All participants	Medium	Look out for barbed wire and never touch electric fencing.	Low	Electric fences are moved around for grazing control - never, ever, touch an electric fence.
Stiles and gates	All participants	Medium	Care to be taken when climbing stiles or gates and participants should ask for help if they feel challenged.	Low	Stiles and gates can't be avoided so participants should think about their fitness and mobility in advance.

Falling trees	All participants	Medium	Only likely to be hazard in very strong winds, or occasionally after gales. Use eyes and ears to actively consider this hazard and divert from any perceived danger.	Low	Large trees are only encountered in a few place on the farm, but vigilance is required.
Cyclists and horses using bridleways and open access land.	All participants	Medium	Both cyclists and horse riders might be encountered. Cyclists can approach at speed and without using a bell. People need to be aware and look out for each other and give verbal warnings.	Low	Vigilance is required by all participants.