

FIELD TRIPS

Background

“Field Trip” is a widely used term that generally means any excursion away from home base, whether it be school, place of work or residence and can be of any duration. When used as a definition in the Society’s Release of Liability form it includes every kind of outdoor activity arranged by the Society.

Definition

A Nature Vancouver field trip:

- Will be any field trip which is advertised or promoted as being sponsored by Nature Vancouver, and for which the Society could therefore be held responsible
- Does not involve Nature Vancouver in any financial commitment or obligation
- Does not allow the proponent or leader of the trip to make any financial commitments in the name of Nature Vancouver
- Is normally of only a few hours duration and seldom involves overnight accommodation
- Generally requires the participants to provide their own transportation to and from the assembly point for the trip
- Requires that any costs to the participant (such as entrance fees to a facility) are generally paid directly by the participants.
- Includes trips ranging from nature walks (e.g. birding in VanDusen Botanical Gardens) to full day hikes

While it is likely to be promoted as an activity of Nature Vancouver, the Board of Directors is not required to approve the details of a specific field trip

Any excursion which involves the hiring of transportation, making reservations with a tour operator or any other commitment involving financial obligations made in the name of Nature Vancouver will also be subject to the Nature Tours Policy and will require specific approval by the Board of Directors. However field trips organized during nature tours arranged by or sponsored by the Society will be subject to this policy.

Frequency and importance

Nature Vancouver’s field trips are scheduled for most weekends throughout the year and occasionally on weekdays. As such they are an important and integral part of Nature Vancouver’s calendar of events. Field trips may also be organized during the Society’s Summer Camp or during nature tours.

POLICY

Board responsibility for risk management

A field trip can vary from a half day of birding in Queen Elizabeth Park to a hike in Manning Park. The latter would not only include several hours of strenuous hiking in mountainous terrain but would also involve a long drive to get there and back in members’ vehicles. This broad range of possible physical activities means that field trips can carry a significant degree of risk of personal injury. They also carry the risk of injury

to third parties as well as possible damage to the property of others, generally described as third party liability. As a result Nature Vancouver's field trips require an exceptional degree of diligence on the part of the Board of Directors to ensure that they are carried out in as incident free and safe way as possible.

Field trip organization

The responsibility of the Board begins with the approval of this Field Trips Policy, the Field Trip Leaders' Guidelines set out in Part 8 of this Binder, and the Release of Liability form approved for use, a copy of which is included in Part 9 of this Binder. The Board is also responsible for the appointment of a suitable member of the Society to carry out the duties of Field Trips Coordinator. Such an individual should have experienced a number of field trips personally, be thoroughly familiar with the Field Trip Leaders' Guidelines and have personal knowledge of those individuals who are approved to lead trips on behalf of the Society.

Field Trip Coordinator

The Field Trip Coordinator is the link between the Board and the Society's field trip leaders. The Coordinator will be responsible for making sure that any field trips which are listed in the Society's publications, including the newsletter or any other calendar of events, or on the Nature Vancouver website, will be led by members of the Society having one of the following attributes:

- A member who has already had satisfactory experience with leading field trips for the Society and who is familiar with the Field Trip Leader's Guidelines;
- A member who has studied the Society's Field Trip Guidelines and who has familiarized his or herself with the route of the intended field trip; or
- A new member who can satisfy the Coordinator that he or she has sufficient knowledge from leading similar trips for other organizations and who has familiarized his or herself with the Society's Field Trip Leaders' Guidelines.

Field trip leaders at Summer Camp and during nature tours

Members who lead field trips during the Society's annual Summer Camp or during nature tours sponsored by the Society may be members who do not usually lead field trips. The Camp Committee and the Camp Manager will be responsible for ensuring that leaders during the Summer Camp meet one of the criteria set out above. The Field Trip Coordinator will be responsible for either ensuring that the person responsible for organizing the nature tour meets one of the criteria or that an experienced field trip leader will be responsible for field trips during the tour.

First Aid

As a matter of policy, Nature Vancouver considers it important for as many as possible of its field trip leaders to have taken courses in First Aid, with an emphasis on Wilderness First Aid. The Society will ensure that at least one First Aid course is organized for field trip leaders annually and the cost of the courses taken by field trip leaders who are approved by the Field Trip Coordinator will be borne by the Society.

Signing of Release of Liability forms by participants in field trips

Nature Vancouver has gone to great lengths in recent years to obtain legal advice on the best way to protect the Society, its field trip leaders and Directors, and members who participate in field trips from third party claims for personal injury or property damage. Based on that advice the Society requires a Release of Liability form to be signed by all participants in field trips, whether or not they are members. Forms similar to the form in use by the Society are sometimes described as “waivers”. A copy of the Release of Liability form is included in Part 9 of this Binder and instructions for its use are included in the Field Trip Leaders’ Guidelines. After a field trip has ended, the signed copies of the Release of Liability should be delivered to the Field Trip Coordinator or a designated member of the Board of Directors for safekeeping. They must be kept by Nature Vancouver for seven years to allow sufficient time for any possible claims to be filed and to be served on the Society or any individuals named.

Liability insurance

Nature Vancouver is a Federated Member, or member club, of BC Nature (the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists). As a member Nature Vancouver is entitled to participate in BC Nature’s liability insurance scheme which provides coverage of up to \$5 million for third party claims against the Society and its members and volunteers in the event a claim against them is found to be successful following the proceedings in court or elsewhere. The same policy also provides coverage of \$2 million for claims against the Society’s Board of Directors for errors and omissions. In addition to paying membership dues to BC Nature, Nature Vancouver reimburses BC Nature annually for the cost of insurance premiums paid on behalf of its members.

Participation by non-members

The present policy of Nature Vancouver is to permit members of the public who are not members of the Society to participate in up to three field trips before being requested to become a member. This policy is intended to encourage members of the public to become members. While it does not have a direct bearing on the question of liability, non-members should be reminded that they are not covered by BC Nature’s third party liability insurance so it is in their interest to be members. Signed copies of the Release of Liability forms will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that this policy is being respected.