

Risk Assessment – Duck Race Support (Kayak / Canoe)

Activity: Duck Race support – collecting ducks that do not complete the race

Location: River Itchen: Mansbridge to Woodmill (and local bank access points)

Activity Type: Supervised Support Activity (task-focused paddling with public present)

Date last reviewed: 23 January 2026

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by:

Review due: January 2027 (or after event / incident)

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers St Denys Boat Club members providing on-water support for a community duck race. The activity includes collecting ducks that do not make it down the river from Mansbridge to Woodmill, under the guidance of the event organisers. The environment includes other river users and members of the public on banks/bridges.

Duck collection introduces specific hazards compared to a normal paddle, including distraction, repeated manoeuvring close to banks/trees, handling multiple floating objects, and potential entanglement risk if ducks are carried inside closed cockpits.

Additional Controls (Duck Race Specific)

- Lead paddler appointed as point of contact with the duck race organisers; all paddlers briefed on roles, boundaries, and the collection plan.
- Only competent paddlers to take part. Recommended competence: experienced club paddlers; at least one PSRT or higher present; first aid cover available.
- Buoyancy aids/lifejackets mandatory; clothing appropriate for immersion risk
- Participants must be able to swim at least 25 m and be confident in controlled rescues.
- Use open canoes and/or bank-based collection where practical. Avoid collecting from within overhanging trees where entrapment risk is high.
- Closed cockpit kayaks: do not carry more than 5 ducks at a time inside the cockpit (entrapment hazard in capsized).

- Work in pairs: buddy system at all times, particularly when operating near banks/trees. Maintain communication and line-of-sight.
- Avoid stepping into unknown mud/banks; use stable access points. When launching from high banks, a second person stabilises the boat.
- Public interface: maintain safe distance from swimmers; do not encourage the public to enter the water; keep clear of anglers and fishing lines.
- Emergency plan: identify nearest safe access/egress points; phones in waterproof cases; clear process for calling 999 and directing ambulance.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures	Risk Level	Further Actions
Drowning	Everyone, particularly the inexperienced	Serious injury or death	Buoyancy aids/lifejackets mandatory. Competent paddlers only. Supervised support with buddy system. Swim confidence (25 m). Maintain group control and avoid high-risk areas near obstacles.	Low–Medium	Review competence on the day; shorten area if needed
Entrapment in trees/vegetation at bank edge	Support paddlers	Capsize, injury, inability to exit	Do not enter overhanging trees. If ducks lodge in trees, inform organiser and collect from bank where safe. Approach slowly; keep paddle ready to push off. Work in pairs.	Medium	Identify high-risk snag points pre-event
Duck handling causing distraction	Support paddlers	Collision, capsize	Slow controlled manoeuvres. Stop paddling before collecting where possible. Maintain lookout for other users. Keep group compact with clear roles.	Low–Medium	Brief “stop to collect” rule
Ducks in closed cockpit (entrapment risk)	Kayakers	Entrapment during capsize	Do not carry more than 5 ducks in a closed cockpit kayak. Prefer open canoe/bank collection. If kayak used, keep ducks secured and avoid packing around legs.	Medium	Use canoe where available
Collision with other river users/public activity	Paddlers, other users, swimmers	Injury / near miss	Keep to agreed side; maintain lookout; avoid congested zones; keep distance from swimmers; do not cross tow/collection lines without clear space.	Low–Medium	Adjust working area if busy
Slips, trips and falls (banks/slipways)	All	Minor to moderate injury	Use stable launch points. Second person stabilises boat for entry/exit, especially from high banks. No running; suitable footwear.	Low	Move to safer access if slippery
Manual handling of boats	All	Strains, crush injuries	Use correct lifting techniques; team lift where required. Move boats safely; avoid carrying long distances if fatigued.	Low	Plan access/egress to reduce carrying

Equipment failure / damage (boats/paddles/leashes)	All	Injury / loss of control	Pre-check boats and kit. Do not use damaged equipment. Report defects. Carry spare paddle/line in group if possible.	Low-Medium	Maintain defect log
Medical emergency	All	Injury/illness	First aid cover present. First aid kit carried. Clear emergency access points and call procedures. Phones waterproofed.	Low-Medium	Ensure location info shared

General Notes

- This is a task-focused support activity and can become more hazardous than a normal paddle due to distraction and proximity to banks/obstacles.
- Leads are responsible for dynamic risk assessment and may stop the activity if conditions or public behaviour make it unsafe.
- Participants must follow instructions and raise concerns promptly.
- This risk assessment should be reviewed after the event and updated based on learning points.