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Open Water Swimming at Upper Bittell Reservoir

Guidelines, rules and safety information

We are fortunate to have a licence with Barnt Green Sailing Club to enable open water swimming in Upper Bittell Reservoir as long as due care, consideration and courtesy are shown at all times. By adhering to the good practice guidelines and the terms of the licence, not only are the health and safety of BRAT club members and their guests protected, but also Barnt Green Sailing Club members and other users of the reservoir know what to expect.

The BRAT Club Open Water Session Rules

Entry into the Water

- BRAT members and guests:** BRAT members will be checked against a membership list. If members have not submitted emergency contact information on joining they will need to supply it before swimming. BRATs may sign in guests to swim at Bittell. Non-member guests must complete a registration form. All swimmers must sign-in with the administrator and pay the session fee before entry into the water and then sign-out and return their number tag at swim exit. University of Birmingham triathlon club members are also permitted to swim on completion of the registration form and payment of the session fee.
- Leadership:** Each session will have a designated session leader who will make themselves known to all relevant personnel. This will normally be the lifeguard or the safety boat operator on duty that night. This person carries absolute authority on behalf of the BRAT club with regard to the open water swimming session and has the responsibility to ensure that the good practice guidelines are adhered to.
- Water entry:** No entry into the water will be allowed until all safety arrangements are in place and the designated session leader has indicated that it is safe to do so. No diving into the reservoir at any time. All entry and exit must be via the designated slip way. The concrete ramp of the slip-way can be very slippery: swimmers should use the mats provided and appropriate caution when getting in and out of the water.
- The safety team:** There must be a competent, certified lifesaver AND a qualified safety boat driver AND a designated observing BRAT club member present at all times. The designated safety boat must be in the water with its engine running, manned by the lifeguard and the safety boat driver. The lifeguard must be ready to enter the water with a torpedo buoy and accordingly must be dressed in a wet suit. The safety boat driver must wear a buoyancy aid at all times when on the water. Note: The Safety Boat Driver must hold a RYA Powerboat Certificate Level 2 or equivalent and the Lifeguard must hold a current Open Water Lifeguard Certificate.
- Wetsuits:** Wetsuits must be worn at all times by swimmers, unless the session leader gives permission and the water temperature is at least 16 degrees.
- Swim hats:** A bright coloured swim hat must be worn by all swimmers.
- Swim times:** No swimming can take place after dark, or before 6.00pm or after 8.00pm on the allotted Thursday evenings. Swimmers must start their last loop by 7.30pm.
- Swimmers swim** at their own risk and must listen, and abide by, the instructions of the safety team on-duty.

Levels of swimming ability - guidelines

1. *Level 3 ("Swimming Guide" – BRAT Red Hat)*. Strong swimmers who are able to adapt to emergency situations if and when they arise. They must be willing to guide open water novice swimmers. Strong swimmers must be experienced in open water swimming (i.e. they have completed at least 1500 metres of open water swimming in a wetsuit on at least 5 separate occasions) and also have completed either:
 - a. A full Ironman distance swim (3800 metres), or
 - b. An Olympic distance swim (1500 metres) in less than 25 minutes
2. *Level 2 ("Competent Swimmer" – BRAT Orange Hat)*. A swimmer who has shown their competence and confidence in open water swimming by having completed at least 1500 metres of open water swimming on at least 2 separate occasions without the need for close support from a "Swimming Guide".
3. *Level 1 ("Beginner" / Not confident in Open water- BRAT Yellow Hat)*. An open water beginner must have completed a continuous 1500 metre swim in a swimming pool before attempting open water swimming. An open water beginner must be accompanied around the reservoir by a "Swimming Guide" (red hat swimmer) at all times

Swimming in Upper Bittell Reservoir

1. Swimmers will use the defined course unless modified by the Barnt Green Sailing Club. Swimmers must not deviate off this course and should swim within 10m of this boundary.
2. Swimmers must not enter any other areas for swimming
3. Climbing out on banks or trying to hold onto water borne craft is only permitted in an emergency
4. It is recommended by both the Royal Life Saving Society and the British Triathlon Federation that there is no swimming in open water when the water temperature is below 12 degrees C.
5. In the case of emergency, raise an arm and shout for help from the rescue boat or those on the shore. They will then need to raise an alert to close swimmers and plan a course of action to bring the person to safety.

Additional rules to swimming in the Upper Bittell Reservoir

1. At each session a First Aid kit must be available
2. All swimmers must have paid an appropriate swimming fee on each occasion they swim
3. Before taking part in an open water training session swimmers must:
 - Provide the session leader with information about any medical issues
 - Provide their emergency contact details
 - Agree to the club's good practice guidelines for open water swimming
 - Swim within their own ability and adhere to any directions given by the designated session leader
 - Be of a Minimum age of 14.

The following insurance company (The Insurers for Barnt Green Waters Ltd.) warranties should be noted:

1. Warranted that swimming takes place during daylight hours only
2. Warranted that a manned safety boat is on the water at all times whilst swimming is in progress.
3. Warranted that sailing/boating exclusion zone is enforced in area of swimming event throughout use by the BRAT club

Anyone not adhering to the rules and guidelines is risking the loss of swimming at Upper Bittell Reservoir for all BRAT members and we will have no option but to withdraw their privilege of open water swimming at Upper Bittell Reservoir for the remainder of the season.