

## Safety Alert - look out for swimmers

This is the time of year when people swim in open water in both organised and spontaneous events. This is becoming increasingly popular and we can soon expect a peak in activity.

The Outdoor Swimming Society (OSS) organises events and publishes a calendar on its website at <http://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com>. Experience at some rowing clubs shows that these events are well organised and safe. The OSS is not a small organisation; it has 25,000 members and 18,000 Facebook users. There is also useful information at <http://www.wildswimming.co.uk>.

Perhaps the spontaneous events are of more concern. These involve small groups of people, or perhaps only one person, deciding to go for a swim. The very nature of this activity is that it is adventurous and individualistic, it does not lend itself to organisation and control, or to pre-planning. Spontaneous Wild Swimmers may not consider their own safety and the potential effects other water users can have on them.

Clearly, there is a potential for boats, including rowing boats to collide with swimmers. The OSS website offers safety advice to swimmers. It recommends that swimmers always wear brightly coloured swimming caps but spontaneous swimmers may not always do so.

This is also an issue for sea rowers. Swimming in the sea close to beaches is to be expected but take care also to avoid those adventurous swimmers who venture far out from the beach.

So what can you do to reduce risk? How about:-

- Always keep a good lookout for swimmers both in the water and on the bank or beach.
- Avoid passing close to the swimmers that you have seen, there may be more nearby that you have not seen.
- Warn other boats about the presence of swimmers that you have seen.
- Invite local swimmers to visit the club for a chat.
- Take care when (or avoid) passing under bridges that people may jump from.
- Identify areas where people regularly swim and include this information on your circulation plan.
- Keep clear of areas where people regularly swim.

This is not just good advice for rowers and coxes, it also applies to coaches, onshore helpers and everyone else involved.

At least one rowing club has made contact with swimmers and invited them to use the facilities at the club after their swim. This provides an opportunity to chat and come to some arrangements that benefit both activities. Please consider doing this at your club.

**Take care to avoid swimmers, wherever you row.**

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