

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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1. Common Sense Precautions Key To Avoiding Lyme Disease
2. State Parks Set To Usher In Camping Kickoff Weekend
3. Outdoor Journey For Girls Gearing Up For Another Rewarding Run

[Electronic photos available upon request. Contact Alan Foster at alan.foster@dnr.iowa.gov]

COMMON SENSE PRECAUTIONS KEY TO AVOIDING LYME DISEASE

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa woodlands are turning green. For local outdoor enthusiasts, the time has arrived for such things as serious spring birding, matching wits with fan tailed gobblers and, of course, the perpetual quest for fresh morel mushrooms.

Unfortunately, the long awaited warm weather also marks the beginning of the annual tick season. And with those ticks comes an increasing threat of the diseases these parasites transmit---including the now infamous Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is a debilitating tick-borne illness that can rapidly transform your life into a living nightmare. Transmitted by the blacklegged (deer) tick, Lyme disease is on the increase across Iowa.

“Although at least 15 different species of ticks have been identified in Iowa, only three of those species --- dog ticks, lone star ticks and blacklegged ticks --- are known to attack humans or pets. And although all three species can transmit disease to humans, only the blacklegged tick can transmit the bacteria that causes Lyme disease,” says Jon Oliver, manager of Iowa State University’s Lyme Disease Surveillance Program.

“There’s no question that deer ticks are expanding their range across Iowa and that population densities are growing,” says Oliver. “In 1993, there were a total of eight diagnosed cases of Lyme disease across the entire state. Today, we’re seeing over 100 new cases each year and the number continues to grow. Given the fact that we’re seeing more deer ticks in more Iowa counties each year, it’s really no surprise that we’re also seeing an increase in disease.”

As Lyme disease horror stories become increasingly common, some nature enthusiasts are becoming reluctant to visit state woodlands. Although the newly found “Fear Factor” seems reasonable, Oliver cautions Iowans not to overreact to preconceived notions.

“I absolutely do not tell people to stay out of the woods,” says Oliver. “That would be ridiculous. What I do stress is precaution and prevention. What it really comes down to is just common sense stuff.”

“When returning from hunting mushrooms or hiking a trail, for example, everyone should very carefully check themselves for ticks. Lyme disease is not easily transmitted to humans and it takes at least 36 hours for an attached tick to transmit disease,” says Oliver. “Deer ticks are extremely small and the trick is that you must find them all. Children should be double checked. Most youngsters aren’t very good at checking themselves and ticks seem to love kids more than anything.”

“Of course, the best way to prevent disease is not to get bit in the first place,” notes Oliver. “I recommend using insect repellent and plenty of it. It doesn’t have to be something exotic, expensive, or hard to find. Anything containing DEET is effective. DEET will repel anything and is relatively safe to use.”

“I also tell people to wear long sleeved shirts and long pants. Ticks are more easily detected against light colored clothing and be sure to tuck pant legs into socks.”

“It really comes down to three basic things,” says Oliver. “Wear appropriate clothing. Use insect repellent. Perform routine tick inspections. It really is that simple.”

If precautions fail and you do discover an imbedded tick, Oliver says not to delay in getting the hitchhiker checked out. Although Lyme disease is dangerous and nothing to fool with, most cases can be completely cured with proper diagnosis and antibiotics. The earlier diagnosis and treatment occurs, the better the chances for a full recovery.

If you are exposed to a tick in Iowa, and would like more information on that tick, place the specimen in a plastic sandwich bag along with a single blade of grass and send it to: Lyme Disease Surveillance Program, Iowa State University, Science II - Room 436, Ames, Iowa 50011. Include your name and address, city or county where the tick was found, when it was found, and whether or not the tick was attached.

To learn more about ticks and tick-borne diseases, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/>

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STATE PARKS SET TO USHER IN CAMPING KICKOFF WEEKEND

State park campgrounds will be buzzing with activity as campers head to their favorite park for Camping Kickoff Weekend.

Campers in an Iowa State Park during May 1, 2 and 3 will receive a gift package that includes a camping coupon good for one night of camping at an electrical site, a free issue of *Iowa Outdoors* magazine, recipes, camping tips and more.

“If you believe in the law of averages, we should have good camping weather this year,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau.

Most Iowa parks are located near lakes and fishing for walleye, largemouth bass, channel catfish and crappie can be really good in early May. The timing of Camping Kickoff Weekend could be really good this year because another spring favorite has yet to make its appearance.

“Once campers are in our parks, take some time to walk the trails. You never know, the way this spring is going, morels could be popping up,” he said.

For many campers, Camping Kickoff Weekend will be the first outing of the year. Szcodronski said it is always a good idea to go through the equipment, to review the rules of the campground, and to be a good neighbor.

“Respect your neighbors. Keep you voices down during quiet hours and help us keep our parks in good shape by picking up after yourself,” he said. “We are also reminding campers to not bring in firewood from out of state. Get it locally.”

As the country continues to battle the major recession, Szcodronski said during hard times, state parks can offer a chance to get away from the day-to-day stress.

“Our parks are places of beautiful scenery and relaxing atmosphere, and we hope Iowans consider camping in our parks as an affordable mini vacation,” said Szcodronski. “We want people to come back and enjoy their natural areas.”

DNR staff will be visiting with campers and encouraging them to make wise use of energy and water resources in the park and to be good stewards of their campsite; to leave their site clear of trash and to recycle what items they can.

Green Valley, Preparation Canyon, George Wyth and Walnut Woods state parks will be closed for Camping Kickoff Weekend. Lake Geode State Park will not be accepting reservations for the 2009 camping season.

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OUTDOOR JOURNEY FOR GIRLS PROGRAM GEARING UP FOR ANOTHER REWARDING RUN

Naomi Streif said she was sold the minute Mr. Anderson left her school. Streif, from Bellevue, and some friends who heard Mr. Anderson talk about Outdoor Journey for Girls during a presentation to their class on the environment decided they would attend the three day camp together.

Iowa’s Outdoor Journey for Girls (OJ) camp introduces outdoor skills to 12 to 15 year old girls of all backgrounds and knowledge levels where they have an opportunity to try things hands-on under the watchful eye of the instructors.

The three day, two night workshop teaches a variety of outdoor skills, including canoeing, orienteering, fishing, archery, shooting rifles/shotguns, conservation, water safety, camping, game care, fur harvesting, fish identification and fish cleaning and cooking.

The second day is devoted to certifying the girls in Iowa’s hunter education program.

“It was so awesome I would do it again,” Streif said. She said her favorite part of OJ was the shotgun shooting and she was surprised by how much she enjoyed canoeing.

Streif said she would recommend attending OJ to all girls regardless of their outdoors experience. “My friend that went was a real ‘girly girl’ and she loved it,” Streif said.

The experiences at OJ can form a common bond between campers. Brandy Fiedler, 22, was a camper eight years ago. She said a number of the girls kept in touch for a few years after the camp.

“I was really nervous because I was going by myself, but my girls I stayed in the cabin with got along great,” she said. “We had a talent show one night. It was a good environment to meet and make friends.”

Streif and Fiedler felt the hunter education day at OJ was important and presented well.

“My brother said I needed my hunter safety before he would take me hunting,” said Streif. “I got it there (OJ) and I went deer hunting.”

Fiedler said she enjoyed the way hunter education was taught. “Personally, it was such a comfortable setting to take hunter safety there. I thought it was neat to learn with other girls your age,” she said.

Campers are encouraged to contact their local Pheasants Forever chapter to see if they have any scholarships available to pay for registration. Other organizations provide scholarships, as well. If not familiar with sponsors in the local area, participants may contact the OJ coordinator for assistance at OutdoorJourney@dnr.iowa.gov.

The 2009 camps are scheduled for June 10 to 12 at Springbrook Conservation Education Center, near Guthrie Center, July 14 to 16 at Black Hawk County’s Hickory Hills Park, and Aug. 5 to 7 at Springbrook. The July and August camps fill rather quickly so early registration is encouraged. More information is available on the Web at www.iowadnr.gov, then click on Camps and Workshops under Additional Information on navigation bar on the left side of the page. Then scroll down to OJ – Outdoor Journey for Girls.

Outdoor Journey for Girls began in 1993 with the purpose of offering girls a similar experience to outdoor camps already in place for boys, and so far, more than 2,000 girls have gone through the camp.

For information on the workshop, contact Donise Grygierczyk at 515-205-8709. In **southwest** Iowa, contact Shawnel Richter at 712-249-2844. In the **Dubuque** and **Bellevue** area, contact Stephanie Penniston at 563-340-4528. In **Waterloo**, contact Lori Eberhard at 319-269-6705. In **northwest** Iowa, contact Amy Johnson at 712-732-3096 or 712-225-1177, or Ginger Walker at 712-225-6709. In **southeast** Iowa, contact Andrea Evelsizer at 319-325-4222 or Jackie Gautsch at 319-205-8501.

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