

Plants to Avoid

Visitors often ask what precautions they need to take when visiting the Wayne National Forest. They're often surprised when they're told the most common hazard that can spoil a visit to the Forest is not an encounter with bears or snakes, it is a "poison" plant. The rashes and discomfort can certainly ruin an otherwise pleasant visit to the Forest.

The Itch that Lasts

There are certain plants that cause skin rashes and irritations lasting a week or more. Most of the human population reacts to these plants, and sensitivity in individuals changes over time. People who have never had a reaction in the past should still avoid plants such as poison ivy, since toxins can build up in an immune system, and after a certain level cause a reaction.

These plants contain oils which cause irritations in humans. The oil is in the stems, leaves, and berries of the plants and can be transmitted by brushing against the plant, or from secondary contact with animals or clothing.

When building fires in the forest with downed wood, be careful not to use wood that has vines on it. Smoke from a poison ivy vine can cause serious respiratory problems in some individuals.

Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)

Found: along trails, roadsides and woodlands



Appearance: trailing, perennial vine. Can also

Continued on inside

Contact Us

The Wayne has three offices to serve visitors. Office hours are 8 - 4:30 Monday through Friday.

Athens Ranger District

13700 U.S. Hwy 33
Nelsonville, OH 45764
Phone: 740-753-0101

Marietta Unit Office
27515 State Route 7
Marietta, OH 45750
Phone: 740-373-9055

Ironton Ranger District

6518 State Route 93
Pedro, OH 45659
Phone: 740-534-6500

Federal relay system for the deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339

website: www.fs.fed.us/r9/wayne

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/waynenationalforest>

Wayne National Forest

Natural Hazards



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Forest Service

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Ticks and Lyme Disease

One of the “critters” that people fear most in the forests of Ohio, is the tick. Over the past 20-30 years the number of ticks on the Wayne NF has increased dramatically. Along with the increase in the numbers of ticks, is a growing problem with diseases associated with ticks.

For many people, finding a tick latched onto their leg is enough to ruin a trip to the woods. Like finding a roach in your bed sheets, it leaves you feeling unaccountably paranoid. With the threat of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses, people’s fears have intensified and some are afraid to visit the forest.



Tick Demographics

Weather conditions have the greatest effect on the density of ticks. After a mild winter tick populations are especially high. Ticks are worse in early spring when adults who have over-wintered start moving around looking to feed. Eggs from the previous year begin to hatch as well.

Ticks are not particularly choosy about their hosts. Any warm-blooded host will do. They climb up in brush and wait for a host to happen by. They attach themselves to the host and suck the host’s blood, feeding until they’re full (6-13 days), then drop off and lay eggs. Incredibly, some ticks can survive up to two years between feedings.

A female tick lays from 4,000-6,000 eggs. After the eggs hatch, the tiny larvae or seed ticks, find hosts and feed just as the adults do. The larvae of some types of ticks are almost invisible to the human eye, but literally hundreds can feed on one person, resulting in painful itching and in some people an allergic reaction. In most species, the larvae feed only on small mammals.

There are over 800 species of ticks. Different species carry different diseases. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease are two of the

better known diseases spread by ticks. Some diseases, such as Lyme Disease may affect pets and livestock as well as people.

Avoiding Ticks

Ticks are going to congregate where they have a high chance of finding a host or where they hatched out as larvae. Any high traffic area should be avoided, including cow paths in pastures and deer paths in the woods. It’s also good to avoid tall grass and thick brush. If your pets roam into areas where they are likely to pick up ticks, routinely check them for ticks and use baths, dips, and flea and tick collars to reduce the chances of your pets bringing ticks into your home and yard.

Several commercial insect repellents work quite well. Ensure the repellent has the ingredient DEET (for exposed skin) or PERMETHRIN (for clothing) to be most effective on ticks. In areas of high tick infestation, you’ll need to apply it every 2-3 hours. Another proven method of repelling ticks is to sprinkle sulphur on your socks, boots, and pant legs.

Tying or taping your pant legs tight around your ankles so the ticks can’t crawl up inside your pants and tucking in your shirt is also recommended. It won’t cut down on the number of ticks you might get, but it will make them easier to spot and remove. Another suggestion is to wear light colored clothing which make the ticks easier to spot. Be sure and promptly wash and dry all clothing at a high temperature to kill any ticks that might remain. Visitors might also want to stay on trails where the chance of picking up ticks is reduced.

Diseases Carried by Ticks

Removing a tick within 36 hours of when it becomes embedded will lessen the chance of disease transmission. You may wish to keep the tick for a few weeks in a vial labeled with the date and location of the bite. If medical attention is later sought, the type of tick has some bearing on the

disease it might be carrying. For instance, if it is the deer tick, it is usually associated with Lyme disease. Deer ticks are mahogany brown, oval shaped, and appear to have two separate plates on their backs. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is carried by the Lone Star tick, a round dark brown tick with a distinctive white mark on its back.

Two other diseases, ehrlichiosis and babesiosis have also been diagnosed, with symptoms very similar to Lyme Disease and are easily treated. If the bite looks suspicious, you should see your local physician.

Symptoms of Lyme Disease include:

- a red or pink rash, or a bump near the area bitten which expands in size and may become as large as 10-15 inches in diameter.
- fever, chills, headache, and fatigue
- enlarged lymph nodes
- stiff joints - usually the knees and neck

If these symptoms are present, a physician should be consulted immediately. The symptoms will likely occur 1 to 8 weeks after a person is bitten.

And then there are Chiggers!

Chiggers are parasitic arthropods that bite humans. These tiny creatures attach to the host, inject digestive enzymes into the bite wound, and then suck up the digested tissue. They do not burrow into the skin or suck blood. Itching from a chigger bite may not develop until 24-48 hours later, long after the chigger is gone.

Chiggers thrive in warm, rainy weather, from April through early autumn. Though they normally feed on small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, the larval stage may also feed on humans. Chiggers are usually found in tall grass and other vegetation.

Insect repellent deters chiggers. To reduce itching once you’re bitten, an application of any anti-itch medication will help.

Poison Ivy - continued

appear as a small bush or as a ground cover.

Things to Look For: Three leaflets which alternate up the stem. Young leaves have a reddish tint and may have either smooth or jagged edges. Old vines are very hairy. In late summer and fall it will have green to white berries on the vines. A verse learned by many children to help them remember poison ivy is: "Leaves of three, let it be; berries white, poison in sight." In the fall this vine turns brilliant red. A similar-looking common vine is Virginia Creeper, but Virginia Creeper has five fan-shaped leaflets.

Treatment if Exposed: Rinse area as soon as possible with lots of cool water and soap. Avoid hot water since it opens the skin's pores more. Do not scrub the area as this will also allow the toxin to get in the pores. Generally a rash appears 12-24 hours after exposure.

Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*)

Poison Oak is a mostly western U.S. species found in open sunny habitats. It is not found in the Wayne National Forest.

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

Found: This invasive plant is found mostly along roads but is invading many areas of the Forest.

Appearance: From sapling to tree.

Things to Look For: Smooth bark, clusters of seeds in late summer, purple hue to leaves in early summer.

Exposure: Use caution if cutting this tree for firewood. In some people, sap from this tree has entered through a cut in the skin and caused a heart attack.



Poison Sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*)

Found: Swamps or very wet areas. Usually in the shade.

Appearance: Shrub or small tree from 6.5 feet to 23 feet tall.

Things to Look For: Shrub with compound leaves and grayish-white berry clusters in swamps. Appears similar to the fragrant sumac found along roadsides which has fuzzy red berries.



Treatment if Exposed:

Rinse area as soon as possible with lots of cool water and soap. Skin rash and irritation will occur upon contact and can last a week or more.

Giant Hog Weed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Found: This is another invasive plant which is now found only in Athens County.

Appearance: Large white flowers, on stems with purple streaks.

Exposure: This is a phototoxic plant. Touching the plant's sap can cause severe blisters and even blindness.



Wood Nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) and Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

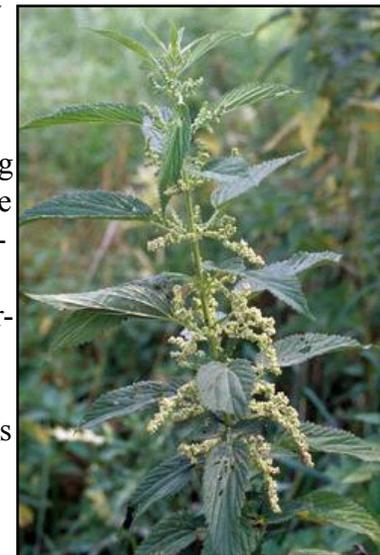
Found: Bottomlands and along streams in shady areas.

Appearance: Perennial herb up to two feet tall with stiff hairs on the stem.

Things to Look For: Each tiny hair on the stems and leaves is hollow with a jagged point at the end. A bump against the stiff hair squeezes an irritating chemical through the hair and onto a passing person's skin, much like a hypodermic needle.

Treatment if Exposed: Apply lotions with an anti-inflammatory and cooling effects (talc, calamine). Home remedies include rubbing the irritated area with juice of dock (*Rumex spp.*) or jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*).

Human Reaction: Rash and dermatitis with an intense burning sensation due to allergic reaction.



Other Hazards You Might Encounter

Falling Limbs and Trees - especially on windy days, trees and limbs can fall in the forest. Be alert. If you see a hazardous tree in a campground or across a trail, let us know.

Rabid Animals - Although extremely rare, you might encounter a rabid animal. These animals would act sick, and are easy to avoid. Again, you should report them to the DNR or to one of our offices.

BEARS?

Ohio has Black Bears?

Yes, bears have moved in from surrounding forests in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. It is important to learn now how to live with bears to minimize negative encounters.

Hiking and Camping in Bear Country

When you are hiking or camping keep in mind:

- Hike in a group.
- Make some noise as you hike. Talk, sing or clap your hands so you don't startle a bear. Some people wear bells to alert bears they are around.
- Use caution on windy days and in areas where a bear may not see or hear you coming. It is important to warn a bear of your presence.
- Keep children close. Children should stay with the group and always on the path.
- Pets should always be on a leash.
- Keep all "smellables" in sealed containers.

This includes food, garbage, toiletries, and any clothing you have cooked in. Hang these items in a tree at least 12 feet high and 10 feet from the trunk of the tree.

- Vehicles are NOT bear-proof. Keep food out of your car. A persistent bear will enter your car and cause damage to it.
- Sleep away from food storage or cooking areas. Pitch your tent up-wind of food. Do not sleep in clothes worn while cooking or eating.
- Dispose of waste in proper containers. This includes trash and wastewater. Dish water dumped in the fire ring can attract bears.



Spiders and Snakes

There are two species of venomous spiders and two venomous snakes on the Wayne National Forest. In both cases these animals will usually not bother you unless disturbed. If you're observant and don't corner them, you'll likely not have problems with any of these animals. If bitten or stung by any of them - seek medical attention.

Please note the timber rattlesnake is state endangered and no snake should be needlessly killed.

Black widow



Proper storage for food, toiletries, clothing, and trash when camping in bear populated areas.



Brown recluse spider



Bear Encounters

Black bear encounters in Ohio are rare. If you do encounter a bear while in the forest you should feel privileged, not afraid. However it is important to know how to react if you DO see a bear.

Learn to be A.W.A.R.E.

Act calm. Do not run. Bears, like dogs have a natural chase instinct.

Warn the bear you are there. Talk in a firm, but calm voice to let the bear know you are there and that you are human.

Allow space between you and the bear. If you are on a path step aside, hopefully the bear will keep on its way. Back away slowly.

Raise your hands above your head to appear larger. If the bear is still following you clap your hands, shout at the bear, or throw something like a stick towards it to scare it off.

Exit the area. Detour your path around the area of black bear activity.

In the rare case you are being attacked by a black bear **FIGHT BACK**. Use any means possible to fend off the bear.



Timber rattlesnake (left) and copperhead (below)

