

WILDLIFE PLAN FOR CAMPERS AND LEADERS



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Safety Around Animals at Camp

Longhorn Council owns and operates seven camps covering 4,500 acres, offering a wide range of exciting adventures including the opportunity to observe many types of birds, fish, and other wildlife. Throughout the camp properties you will see numerous animals, especially squirrels, deer, and common birds. Undoubtedly the chance to observe a raccoon, a turkey, a deer, or possibly an eagle, will provide lifelong memories.



Animals often will be an exciting part of your adventures. Seeing them in their natural habitat is always a pleasure, but it is wise to remember that they are the permanent residents of the camp, while you are a visitor. Treat them with respect, give them enough space so they'll not feel threatened by your presence, and they'll seldom present a threat to your safety. When an animal feels frightened, threatened, or trapped, it may fight for its life by attacking, scratching, and biting. If you are injured by an animal, seek treatment quickly. A doctor must determine whether rabies treatments will be necessary.

Each animal that lives and roams throughout Longhorn Council camps has its own characteristics and patterns of behavior. All wild animals, however, are drawn to food. If an animal doesn't find abundant food, it will move on. Most conflicts between people and wildlife are linked to careless handling of food or garbage. In a word, therefore, avoiding trouble with most wildlife comes down to *food* and how you safeguard it. Learn to live responsibly with wildlife.

Young wild animals sometimes stray from their parents and appear to be lost or abandoned. In most cases, however, the parents know where the youngster is. "Taking in" apparently lost or abandoned young usually does more harm than good. Wild animals are best left in the wild. If an animal is obviously sick or injured, notify the camp ranger.

General Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship

- Hike on designated trails only.
- Keep a clean campsite.
- Keep food and "smellables" out of your tent.
- Do not feed wild animals.
- Never approach or follow wild animals.
- Do not attempt to take photographs of wild animals unless you can do so without disturbing them or altering their behavior in any way. This is best accomplished by using a zoom or telephoto lens. (Causing an animal to move away from you is an example of altering their behavior.)
- Avoid aggressive behavior:
 - Direct eye contact, even through a camera
 - Walking directly toward an animal
 - Following an animal that has chosen to leave
 - Circling or standing around an animal
- Don't mistake passive behavior in an animal as a sign that you are safe around that animal.
- Never tease or attempt to pick up wildlife.
- Leave young animals alone; a protective mother is usually nearby.
- If a cougar, or other potentially dangerous animal is sighted, immediately notify the camp ranger or camp director.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE,
CONTACT YOUR CAMP DIRECTOR, OR A CAMP RANGER. YOUR SAFE CAMP
EXPERIENCE IS OUR COMMITMENT AND PRIORITY.**

Badgers

The badger, a member of the weasel family, has a flattened body with short, strong forelegs armed with claws adapted to burrowing. When burrowing for food (mostly rodents such as gophers, ground squirrels, and mice) badgers tear up large areas of earth. If threatened, a

badger can dig a hole and disappear to safety in as little as one minute.

Badgers live in dens or deep burrows and are mostly nocturnal, sleeping underground during the day. They do not hibernate, but will stay underground for extended periods if the weather is very cold. They are equipped with a belly gland that emits a musklike odor, similar to a skunk, when they are excited. Badgers are powerful fighters but have few nonhuman predators. Their thick fur and tough hide deter even bears, coyotes, and cougars.

The American badger's range extends from southern Canada to central Mexico, west to Washington, Oregon, and California (except the coastal areas), and east to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. Badgers usually live in open, dry areas such as plains, farmland, and prairies and sometimes near the edges of woodlands. Their fur is gray tipped with brown and the head is brown with a single white stripe extending from the nose and running back along the spine. The badger is readily identified by its striped facial markings or "badge."

Badgers are loners, leading solitary lives. Except during mating season, they generally avoid contact with each other. If one badger meets another, they often attack.



Precautions Around Badgers

Badgers will usually run away if confronted, and look for an escape route if cornered. But with their strong legs and long claws, they are more than capable of protecting themselves. Give them a wide berth.

Resources: "American Badger," <http://www.nature.ca/notebooks/english/ambadger.htm>; "Selected Wildlife of Southern Oregon: American Badger,"

<http://www.sosc.edu/library/jim/wildlife/badger.htm>; and Encarta Online Deluxe

Bats at Camp

Youth camps of all types are usually located in areas that are prime habitat for bats and other wildlife. The type of construction in camp buildings is often conducive to roosting bats.

Bats are among the wide range of wildlife typically found at camps. Their presence does not necessarily create a dangerous situation, but they should be avoided. Many bats are infected with rabies and some have been known to carry the plague virus.

(See "Diseases Associated With Wildlife," on page 25.)

The buildings at Longhorn Council camps are regularly inspected for evidence of the presence of bats. Consistent with Department of Health recommendations, bat proofing takes place whenever needed. This includes sealing openings, screening windows and doors, etc. Camp personnel will take necessary steps to remove bats, using prescribed techniques of the Department of Health.

For questions about handling incidents, or to immediately report those that may require rabies treatment, immediately notify the camp ranger, camp medic, or camp director, so that they can take appropriate measures, including calling the local health department.



Managing Bat-Related Incidents

- Campers should never attempt to have contact with bats at any time. The presence of bats should be reported to adult leaders as soon as possible.
- In the unlikely event a camper comes into direct physical contact with a bat, especially if the camper is bitten, report it to the camp health officer immediately.
- All bat-related incidents should be reported to the health department by camp staff.

Protect Our Campsites *and* the Animals

1. Keep site *clean* and remove trash to dumpsters frequently.
2. Clean tables, fireplaces, grills, and areas around them; leave no scraps of food. Clean all cooking and eating utensils.
3. Do not leave food of any kind inside or outside your tent. Do not eat food in your tent.
4. Do not dump fat drippings or food scraps in your fireplace, on the ground, or in the woods.
5. Do not place food to attract raccoons, squirrels, or other wildlife.
6. Store all food properly as instructed.

Bee and Wasp Stings

Scrape away a bee or wasp stinger with the edge of a knife blade. Don't try to squeeze the stinger out of the skin. That will force more venom into the skin from the sac attached to the stinger. An ice pack may reduce pain and swelling.



“Killer Bees”

Africanized Honey Bees (AHB) -- also called "Africanized bees" or "killer bees" -- are descendants of southern African bees imported in 1956 by Brazilian scientists attempting to breed a honey bee better adapted to the South American tropics. In the past decade, AHB began invading North America.

Africanized bees acquired the name "killer bees" because they will viciously attack people and animals who unwittingly stray into their territory, often resulting in serious injury or death.

It is not necessary to disturb the hive itself to initiate an AHB attack. In fact, Africanized bees have been known to respond viciously to mundane occurrences, including noises or even vibrations from vehicles, equipment and pedestrians.

Though their venom is no more potent than native honey bees, Africanized bees attack in far greater numbers and pursue perceived enemies for greater distances. Once disturbed, colonies may remain agitated for 24 hours, attacking people and animals within a range of a quarter mile from the hive.

Africanized bees proliferate because they are less discriminating in their choice of nests than native bees, utilizing a variety of natural and man-made objects, including hollow trees, walls, porches, sheds, attics, utility boxes, garbage containers and abandoned vehicles. They also tend to swarm more often than other honey bees.

To date, more than 100 counties in Texas have reported Africanized honey bees. AHB continue the northward expansion of their territories by swarming, the process by which bee colonies replicate.

Bee Prepared

As the number of Africanized bee colonies increases in an area, so, too, does the likelihood of human and animal encounters with them. Serious human injury can be avoided if the habits of Africanized bees are learned and precautions taken.

- Wear light-colored clothing. Bees tend to attack dark things. Dark clothing, dark hair, anything dark in color could draw the animus of AHB.
- Bees are sensitive to odors, both pleasant and unpleasant. The smell of newly cut grass has been shown to disturb honey bees. Avoid wearing floral or citrus aftershaves or perfume.
- Check your house and yard at least once a month to see if there are any signs of bees taking up residence. If you do find a swarm or colony, leave it be and keep family and pets away. Find a pest control company or a local beekeeper to solve the problem.
- To help prevent honey bees from building a colony in your house or yard, fill all cracks and crevices in walls with steel wool and caulk. Remove piles of refuse, honey bees will nest in an old soda can or an overturned flower pot. Fill holes in the ground.

Bee Attack

Obviously, it is best to avoid contact with Africanized Honey Bees. But if contact becomes unavoidable, it is important to know what to do. Bees target the head, and nearly all those who suffer serious stinging incidents with Africanized Bees are overcome by stings to the head and face.

The best method of escaping a bee attack is to cover your head and run for shelter.

Any covering for your body, especially for your head and face, will help you escape. A small handkerchief or mosquito net device that fits over the head could easily be carried in a pocket.

If you do not have these, grab a blanket, coat, towel, anything that will give you momentary relief while you look for an avenue of escape. If you have nothing else, pull your shirt up over your face. The stings you may get on your chest and abdomen are far less serious than those to the facial area.

- Try to find shelter as soon as possible. Take refuge in a house, tent or a car with the windows and doors closed.

- DO NOT JUMP INTO WATER! Bees will wait for you to come up for air.
- Once you are away from the bees, evaluate the situation. If you have been stung more than 15 times, or if you are having any symptoms other than local pain and swelling, seek medical attention immediately.
- If you see someone else being stung or think others are in danger, call 911 immediately.
- Remove stingers as soon as possible to lessen the amount of venom entering the body. Scrape stingers the skin with a blunt instrument or plastic card. Do not remove bee stingers with fingers or tweezers – this only forces toxins into the victim's body.

Bee Safety

The best safety advice is to avoid an encounter with unfriendly Africanized Bees. Be alert for danger. Remember that AHB sting to defend their colony, so be on the look out for honey bee swarms and colonies.

- ~ Be alert for bees coming in and out of an opening such as a crack in a wall, or the hole in a utility box.
- ~ Listen for the hum of an active bee colony.
- ~ Look for bees in holes in the ground, holes in trees or cacti, and in sheds.
- ~ Be extra careful when moving junk that has been lying around.
- ~ Be alert for bees that are acting strangely. Quite often bees will display some preliminary defensive behavior before going into a full-fledged attack.
- ~ When you are outdoors, in a rural area, a park or wilderness reserve, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye out for bees the way you would watch out for snakes and other natural dangers.
- ~ Don't panic at the sight of a few bees foraging in the flowers. Bees are generally very docile as they go about their normal activities.

Coyotes

Coyotes inhabit the desert Southwest from low valley floors to the crests of the highest mountains, but are found especially on open plains, grasslands, and high mesas. The coyote's natural habitat is open grassland, but it will move wherever food is available. The coyote is a member of the dog family, similar in size and shape to a medium-sized collie. Desert coyotes are light gray or tan with a black tip on the tail. Coyotes in high elevations are larger and have fur that is darker, thicker, and longer.



Coyotes usually eat small mammals (such as rabbits, squirrels, and rodents), insects, reptiles, fruit, and carrion. Sometimes a lone coyote may join other coyotes to kill and eat larger animals such as deer, wild sheep, and domestic livestock. Coyotes hunt both by day and by night.

Coyotes have good senses of smell, vision, and hearing, which enable them to survive both in the wild and occasionally in the suburban areas of large cities. They are common in most rural areas, but because of their secretive nature, few are seen.

The coyote is one of the few wild animals whose vocalizations are commonly heard. At night coyotes howl and emit a series of short, high-pitched yips.

Alone, in pairs, or in packs, coyotes maintain their territories by marking them with urine.

The coyote can run at almost 40 miles per hour.

Coyotes can breed with domestic dogs and wolves. A dog-coyote mix is called a "coydog."

How Does the Coyote Compare With the Gray Wolf?

- The gray wolf (see *Wolves*) is the coyote's primary predator. Reduction in the gray wolf population has led to an expansion in the coyote population.
- The gray wolf is usually larger and darker than the coyote.
- Coyotes carry their tails differently than wolves do. A coyote's tail is normally held down, although not between the legs. A wolf carries its tail rather horizontally.

Precautions Around Coyotes

Most of the time coyotes go out of their way to avoid humans, but they are discovering that humans are a good source for food.

- Do not encourage coyote-human contact. If coyotes become accustomed to people, they will become bolder in approaching people.
- Do not feed coyotes. Do not encourage them to visit your campsite. If coyotes are hungry and unafraid of people, they can get aggressive in approaching people.
- Remember that a coyote is not a domestic dog. Coyotes are not to be messed with. They are smart, learn quickly, and can be dangerous.
- Keep pets safe. Coyotes will eat cats and small dogs.
- Be aware that a coyote uses its tail in threat displays. The tail becomes bushy and is held horizontally during displays of aggression.
- If a coyote bites you, report the injury to camp staff. They will notify a hospital, which will notify the state department of health. You will have to get a series of rabies shots, which are expensive and painful.

Resource: DesertUSA, <http://www.desertusa.com>

Diseases Associated With Wildlife

Wild animals are susceptible to various infectious and parasitic organisms capable of causing disease. Human health may be harmed by direct contact with the animals or organisms.



General Precautions

- Do not feed wild animals or in any way encourage them to visit your campsite.
- Keep a clean campsite.
- Do not approach *any* wild animal.
- Do not approach or handle any wild animal that appears sick or is acting in an abnormal manner, even if it shows no fear of your approach.
- Stay away from dead animals.
- If you have come into direct contact with a wild animal, wash your hands thoroughly before eating, drinking, or touching the hands of another person.
- Do not touch animal scat.
- If you become sick shortly after being in contact with a wild animal, notify your Scout leader and/or camp physician; if you have returned home, tell your parents and ask to see your doctor.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Rocky Mountain spotted fever most frequently strikes spring and summer campers and hikers who are exposed to certain species of hard ticks. Early symptoms include headache, chills, and fever. A rash appears on the extremities about the third day, initially localized on the wrists, hands, and ankles, then spreading to most of the rest of the body.

Although it was first recognized in the Rocky Mountain region, the disease is now found in nearly all states. Virginia accounts for a large percentage of reported cases.

If the disease is diagnosed early, Rocky Mountain spotted fever can be treated effectively. A vaccine is available but is not ideal for campers and hikers exposed for only several days.

Lyme Disease

The deer ticks responsible for the spread of Lyme disease are very small, no larger than a sesame seed. They are most active in the summer months. The first symptom is a bull's-eye rash around the bite location. This rash or spot expands over the next several days. The rash is followed by flulike symptoms of fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, plus fatigue. If the tick is removed from the body within 24 hours, the chance of the tick transmitting Lyme disease is reduced.

The best way to avoid Lyme disease is to avoid tick-infested areas, especially in the summer. Deer ticks are most often found in wooded areas and nearby shady grasslands.

- Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks on clothes can easily be seen.
- Tuck pants legs into socks or boots.
- Tuck shirt into pants.
- Walk in the center of trails to avoid grass and brush.
- Inspect your body often and thoroughly.

Tularemia

Tularemia can be contracted from direct contact with an infected animal, from handling or eating insufficiently cooked meat (usually rabbit), through the bite of an infected tick or fly, or from drinking contaminated water. It is most commonly transmitted to humans from infected rabbits, primarily cottontails and jackrabbits. Rabbits with tularemia behave oddly, run slowly, are unable to raise their heads, and

usually can be captured easily. Rodents, such as beavers, muskrats, and voles, are also susceptible to tularemia. Ticks account for most of the transmissions of the disease to hikers and campers. Symptoms appear between two and 10 days after exposure. Symptoms include an open ulcer at the bite site, swollen glands, and, if the bacteria were ingested, throat infection.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system. It occurs in all warm-blooded animals with the possible exception of opossums. Wild animals including skunks, foxes, bats, and raccoons are the main carriers of rabies. The skunk has the highest rate of infection. Rabid animals are the source of infection for other animals and people. Rabies is usually transmitted by infected saliva on broken skin or abrasions. The signs that an animal is rabid vary depending on the animal and the stage of the disease. Suspect rabies if a skunk is wandering around without fear of dogs or humans. Be especially careful if the skunk chases dogs, cats, or humans or is near buildings during daylight hours. Bats show little sign of the disease. Of farm animals, cattle are most often infected with rabies. When infected, cattle may wobble, bellow, yawn, or drool. Dogs may become affectionate and crave attention or try to hide in a dark secluded area. Dogs may resist restraint and attack any object in their path. Both dogs and cows may appear to have foreign objects in their throats.

All animal bites should be immediately and thoroughly cleansed and checked by a physician. The incubation period for rabies varies from two weeks to several months depending on the size and location of the wound. Head and neck wounds may have a shorter incubation period than wounds on other extremities. In addition to animal vaccines, a human vaccine is available but mostly recommended for high-risk individuals such as veterinarians.

If you are bitten at camp, get a good description of the animal and notify the camp ranger as soon as possible after taking care of your medical needs. Wash the wound with soap and water, detergent and water, 43 percent to 70 percent ethanol, quaternary ammonia, or tincture of iodine. Contact the camp physician immediately.

Plague

Plague is a highly infectious disease transmitted by the bite of an infected flea, exhaled droplets or sputum from infected people, or direct contact with an infected rodent (prairie dog, squirrel, chipmunk, mouse, rat, marmot, vole). Plague is normally transmitted to humans by a flea that has earlier fed upon an infected animal. Symptoms include shaking, chills, weakness, fever, headache, anorexia (loss of appetite), myalgia (muscle aches), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, confusion, rapid pulse, and accelerated respiration. There has been no serious outbreak in the United States since 1924. Even though the risk of plague is small, the danger remains. Awareness, coupled with caution, is good risk management.

- Do not handle wild rodents.
- Do not keep prairie dogs or other rodents as pets.

Hantavirus

See "Rodents."

West Nile Virus

See "Mosquitoes at Camp."

Resource: Wildlife Diseases and Man, by F. Robert Henderson, Extension State Leader, Wildlife Damage Control, Kansas State University; published by Great Plains Agriculture Council, Wildlife Resources Committee and the Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Foxes

The fox, the smallest member of the dog family, is a highly adaptable species that inhabits mostly forest, chaparral, and desert regions but can be found in nearly all habitats. Foxes feed on mice, voles, rabbits, birds' eggs, fruit, large insects, and carrion.

Foxes are more solitary in their habits than are others in the dog family.

They are territorial and can be aggressive, especially during the breeding season. Their once-a-year breeding season corresponds with the availability of food. Both the red fox and the gray fox mate in February or March, bearing young in April or May.

Foxes move around mostly at night, but are sometimes seen foraging during the day. An indication of a well-used trail is fox scat, which has a distinctive skunklike odor (as foxes do themselves). **Do not touch fox scat.** Foxes carry intestinal parasites that lay their eggs in the fox's intestines. These eggs are excreted in the scat and they can infect humans.

Red foxes, known for their cleverness, have the largest range in North America. They are born underground, where they stay for the first few weeks of their lives. An adult has reddish-orange fur, is the size of a small dog, and has a thick bushy tail in winter.

The *gray fox*, a little smaller than the red fox, is the only member of the dog family known to climb trees. If not using a hollow tree, the female, like the red fox, may dig her den into soil or enlarge the burrow of a rabbit.



Precautions

Even though they are in the dog family, foxes are wild animals and NOT pets. Foxes are at risk to carry rabies. Campers must, therefore, observe these precautions:

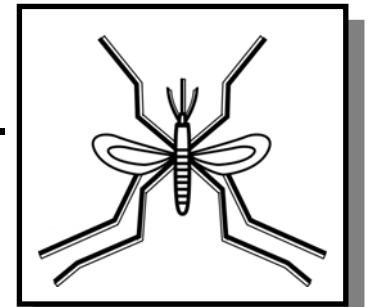
- Do not approach a wild fox. Observe the animal from a distance.
- Do not hand-feed or attract foxes to the campsite by leaving food scraps.
- Do not touch fox scat.
- In urban areas, cubs are often born under garden sheds. Do not go near the den.

Resources: Foxes.org, <http://www.foxes.org>; <http://www.foxbox.org/fact>; DesertUSA, <http://www.desertusa.com>; MSN Encarta, <http://encarta.msn.com>

Mosquitoes at Camp

There are many different types of mosquitoes. The *Culex pipiens* mosquito (the common house mosquito of the U.S.) has been identified as the carrier of West Nile virus. This particular mosquito feeds on infected birds and then bites humans. The symptoms of infection often include rapid onset of headache, high fever, disorientation, tremors, and convulsions. In only the most severe and rare cases is paralysis or death a result.

The most common breeding environment for this type of mosquito is stagnant water found in old tires and metal drums or containers. All Longhorn Council camps have been inspected for such conditions and they have been removed. Additionally, screened windows and doors of buildings have been repaired as necessary.



Precautions

To reduce the risk of mosquito bites, health authorities recommend

1. Minimizing outdoor activities between dusk and dawn.

2. Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, whenever spending time in likely mosquito habitats such as woods or wetlands.
3. Using an insect repellent containing DEET, according to label instructions. In no case should DEET be sprayed directly onto children's skin.



Mountain Lions and Cougars

Mountain lions are also known as cougars or pumas. They are carnivores, powerful predators at the top of the food chain, and their actions are often unpredictable. Lions feeding on a kill are potentially dangerous and should never be approached. In defense of food, a lion can suddenly become aggressive. Lions cover unconsumed portions of their kills with soil and litter. These food caches should be avoided and reported to the camp ranger or camp director.

Mountain lions are most active at dusk and dawn, but you may see them traveling at any time of the day or night. The shape of a lion track is basically round, only slightly wider than it is long. The tracks have four, teardrop-shaped toes and three distinct lobes at the base of the heel pads.

Precautions

Most of you will camp without seeing a mountain lion, much less having a confrontation with one. Most lion-human confrontations begin with lions coming into contact with human foods, garbage, pet food, or small pets. Little research has been conducted to determine the best course of action if a human is confronted by a lion, but the following recommended responses will minimize the likelihood of attack or the chances of injury.

- Do not attract deer into your camping area. Lions are attracted to deer.
- Do not leave dogs or cats out where they might attract lions. Mountain lions eat pets and domestic animals.
- When you walk or hike in lion habitat, go in groups and make enough noise to avoid surprising a lion.
- **Never approach a mountain lion.**
- Do not run from a mountain lion or crouch down--either action may trigger an instinctive predatory attack. Slowly back away and make no sudden moves.
- Do not turn your back on the lion. Face the lion and remain upright.
- Do all that you can to enlarge your image. Do not crouch or try to hide.
- If a mountain lion behaves aggressively, arm yourself with a large stick, throw rocks, speak loudly and firmly. The object is to convince the lion that you are not prey.

Most Western states—from Texas to California, where cougars live—prohibit killing mountain lions except during hunting season or when they threaten livestock.

Resources: "Ready to Pounce," *Boys' Life*, January 1998; *Living with Montana Mountain Lions*, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620

Roadrunner

The Roadrunner is a large, black-and-white, mottled ground bird with a distinctive head crest. It has strong feet, a long, white-tipped tail and an oversized bill. The legendary Roadrunner is famous for its distinctive appearance, its ability to eat rattlesnakes and its preference for scooting across the American deserts, as popularized in Warner Bros. cartoons.

When the Roadrunner senses danger or is traveling downhill, it flies, revealing short, rounded wings with a white crescent. But it cannot keep its large body airborne for more than a few seconds, and so prefers walking or running (up to 17 miles per hour) usually with a clownish gait.

The Roadrunner inhabits open, flat or rolling terrain with scattered cover of dry brush, chaparral or other desert scrub. The Roadrunner feeds almost exclusively on other animals, including insects, scorpions, lizards, snakes, rodents and other birds. Up to 10 % of its winter diet may consist of plant material due to the scarcity of desert animals at that time of the year.

Because of its lightning quickness, the Roadrunner is one of the few animals that preys upon rattlesnakes. Using its wings like a matador's cape, it snaps up a coiled rattlesnake by the tail, cracks it like a whip and repeatedly slams its head against the ground till dead.

Rodents

Rodents are the primary carriers of *hantavirus*. It is believed that hantavirus as well as the agents of several other diseases are carried in the urine, feces, and saliva of deer mice, rabbits, beavers, and possibly other wild rodents. A person contracts hantavirus by coming into contact with rodent feces, urine, or saliva, or items that have been contaminated by them. Exposure frequently occurs when a person breathes dust from dried rodent feces and urine, especially when the dust is raised by sweeping. This illness is not suspected to be spread from one person to another.

Plague, a disease of rodents transmitted by fleas, is widespread in the western United States. Plague is sometimes detected in rock squirrels, prairie dogs, wood rats, marmots, and other species of ground squirrels and chipmunks. The incubation period is 2 to 6 days. Flulike symptoms include fever, chills, body aches, and trouble breathing. Consult the camp medic or a physician if sudden unexpected illness occurs within that period. Illness from plague can be treated successfully and cured if it is diagnosed early. (Also see "Diseases Associated With Wildlife," on page 25.)



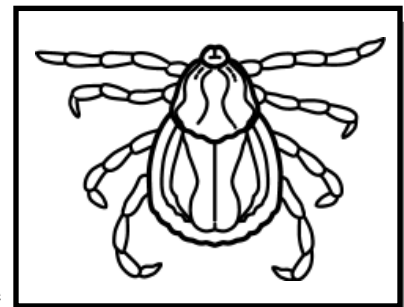
Precautions

- Do not feed or entice any rodent or rabbit species into your camp.
- Do not catch, play with, or attempt to hand-feed wild rodents.
- Avoid contact with all sick or dead rodents and rabbits.
- Report infested areas to the camp ranger or camp director.
- Before hiking, treat pants, socks, shoe tops, arms, and legs with insect repellents to guard against fleabites.
- Wet down areas to be cleaned before mopping or sweeping them.

Resources: "Facts About Plague," Colorado Department of Health, 4300 Cherry Creek Drive South, Denver, CO 80246-1523; *Passport to High Adventure*, No. 18-041, Boy Scouts of America

Ticks

Ticks are small, hard-shelled bloodsuckers that bury their heads in the skin of warm-blooded animals. Protect yourself whenever you are in tick-infested woodlands and fields by wearing long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Button your collar and tuck the cuffs of your pants into your boots or socks. Inspect yourself daily, especially the hairy parts of your body, and immediately remove any ticks you find. If a tick has attached itself, grasp it with tweezers close to the skin and gently pull until it comes loose. Don't squeeze, twist, or jerk the tick, as that could leave its mouthparts in the skin. Wash the wound with soap and water and apply antiseptic. After dealing with a tick,



thoroughly wash your hands. See a physician for any tick that has been attached to a human being for 48 hours or more.

Warning! Tick Season!

Please use the following precautions.

- Wear light-colored clothing tucked in.
- Stay on trails and not in areas of high brush..
- Spray a repellent containing 20 to 50 percent DEET around shirt and trouser cuffs.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts.
- Check yourself and fellow campers for ticks.

Venomous Snakes in Texas

Texas is home to around 115 species and subspecies of snakes. The 15 venomous snakes in Texas make up less than 15 percent of the total number of snakes in the state. They are separated into four categories: coral snakes, copperheads, cottonmouths (water moccasins) and rattlesnakes.



Coral Snakes

Only one species of coral snake is native to Texas. Shy and rarely seen, it has, in order, brilliant red, yellow and black colors. (Other, harmless snakes have similar colors in a different order. The rhyme "red and yellow kill a fellow" has helped many remember that the coral snake's red and yellow colors touch, but the harmless milk snake's red and yellow don't touch.) The coral snake has a small mouth, and is usually non-aggressive. Its bites are dangerous, but extremely rare.



Copperheads

With their bands of gray and/or brown, the four subspecies of Texas copperheads are colored to blend in with leaf-covered forest floors. It's possible to stare right at a copperhead without seeing it. Fortunately, copperheads are the least dangerous poisonous snake. Because they are so well camouflaged, most bites occur when a snake is accidentally picked up or sat or laid on. Always use care when picking up or flipping over logs, boards, old tin or other items where copperheads may be resting.



Cottonmouths

The cottonmouth, or water moccasin, rarely strays far from water and can be found in marshes, swamps, ponds, lakes, ditches, and canals in East and Central Texas and along the Gulf coast. It is a stubby, muscular snake and can grow to nearly six feet. Moccasins can bite underwater. These snakes can be very defensive and sometimes aggressive. Swimmers, bathers and anglers on river banks should always keep an eye open for these snakes.



Rattlesnakes

Ten kinds of rattlesnakes are found in Texas, including the Western Diamondback.

Rattlesnakes usually "rattle" before striking, but if they are totally surprised, they may strike before rattling.

Preventing Snake Bites

Watching where you step, put your hands, or sit down is one of the best ways to prevent snake bites. Poisonous snakes live on or near the ground and often like rocks, wood piles and other spots that offer both a place to sun and a place to hide. Snakes avoid your huge body, but will definitely bite if stepped on or otherwise trapped. Most bites occur in and around the ankle. About 99 percent of all bites occur below the knee, except when someone accidentally picks up or falls on the snake.

The fangs of venomous snakes, though long and sharp, are relatively fragile and easily deflected or broken. These fangs usually don't penetrate canvas tennis shoes and almost never penetrate leather shoes or boots. Watching where you step and wearing boots in tall grass can prevent most snake bites. Snakes are not something to be feared, but rather a creature to be respected as a fascinating member of the outdoors.

Turkey Vulture

The Turkey Vulture is one of North America's largest birds of prey. It reaches a length of 32 inches with a wing span of 6 feet. Its overall color is brown-black with a featherless, red head, white bill and yellow feet among mature adults. Immature birds have a darker face. Although usually silent, the bird will occasionally emit a soft hiss or groan.

In flight, the Turkey Vulture rocks from side to side, rarely flapping its wings which are held at a V-angle called a dihedral. Silver-gray flight feathers look lighter than the black lining feathers of the underwing. Its long tail extends beyond its legs and feet in flight.

Vultures are best known for their practice of feeding on dead animal carcasses, but will occasionally attack young and helpless animals as well.

Unlike most birds, vultures have a keen sense of smell. The Turkey Vulture's olfactory sense is estimated to be 3 times that of the smaller Black Vulture, which is also found in the North American Deserts. Vultures are sometimes mistakenly called buzzards, the British name for **buteos** -- hawks of the *Buteo* genus.

White-tailed Deer

"White-tailed Deer" refers to the white underside of the tail, which is held conspicuously erect like a flag when the animal is alarmed or running. The adult White-tailed Deer has a bright, reddish brown summer coat and a duller grayish brown winter coat. White fur is located in a band behind the nose, in circles around the eyes, inside the ears, over the chin and throat, on the upper insides of the legs and beneath the tail.



The young, called fawns, have reddish coats with white spots.

Adult males, called bucks, inhabiting Texas tend to be smaller than their eastern relatives, which can weigh 300 pounds. White-tailed bucks average about 200 pounds and stand about 3 1/2 feet high at the shoulders. As in most deer species, the females (does) are smaller, with an average weight of about 125 pounds.

White-tail deer are not especially vocal, although young fawns bleat on occasion. Injured deer utter a startlingly loud "blatt" or bawl. Whistles or snorts of disturbed White-tails are the most commonly heard sounds.

Behavior

Deer are extremely cautious animals with keen senses of smell and hearing. White-tailed deer can run as fast as 40 miles per hour and are good swimmers.

Except for the mating season, bucks and does remain apart. Bucks generally live alone or in small groups with other bucks, while does live alone or with their fawns and female yearlings.

Habitat

Deer generally prefer open woodland, but are often found on the fringes of urban areas and in farming country.

White-tail deer feed on a variety of vegetation, depending on what is available in their habitat. They are browsers feeding on twigs, leaves, bark, shrubs, the fruits and nuts of most vegetation, as well as lichens and other fungi. In desert areas, plants such as huajillo brush, yucca, prickly pear cactus, comal, ratama and various tough shrubs may be the main components of a White-tail's diet.

Conifers are often utilized in winter when other foods are scarce. White-tail deer feed mainly from before dawn until several hours after, and again from late afternoon until dusk.

Conservation

Life span in the wild is 10 years, but White-tail deer have lived up to 20 years in captivity . Adult deer have few predators except for humans, Mountain Lions and wolves, where they still exist. Coyote predation on fawns can be considerable, accounting for as much as 40% of fawn mortality in some areas.

State fish and game agencies regard deer as a renewable, harvestable resource for viewing and hunting.

An increase in food supplies has been accompanied by a decrease in the natural predator populations of Wolves, Coyotes, Mountain Lions and Bobcats, which have not survived urbanization. Game management measures have placed restrictions on hunting seasons, bag limits and available lands for public hunting, while establishing artificially protected habitats in state and national parks.

Cautions

White-tail deer are destructive to crops, vegetable gardens, fruit trees and the like where their ranges overlap with human habitation. When their numbers become too high, White-tail deer can cause serious damage to forest vegetation through overbrowsing. They are involved in accidents with cars, often resulting in serious injury to the human occupants of the vehicles.