

North Country National Scenic Trail
“TAILGATE SAFETY SERIES”



INSECT, SNAKE, and ANIMAL SAFETY

Hikers and trail workers may encounter a variety of creatures which pose safety hazards ranging from minor inconveniences to potentially life-threatening situations. Common sense and a general awareness of your surroundings are your best defenses.

INSECTS

- Avoid sitting on rotten logs or stumps. Spiders and ants often use them for homes
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts, socks, and long pants will help guard against many stinging insects
- “Bee” aware that not all stinging insects nest in trees. Some bees and other stinging insects nest underground and will become disturbed by earth-moving activities
- Many stinging insects become more aggressive in the Fall
- Insect repellents containing DEET or Picaridin may help protect against biting or stinging insects
- If you know you are allergic to insect bites and stings, take the proper medication with you on the trail, and seek proper medical attention immediately if you are stung or bitten

SNAKES

- Wearing sturdy leather gloves and boots at least 10 inches high are good precautions when hiking or working in snake country
- Do not put your hands or feet into areas you cannot see, such as brush piles or rock crevices
- All snake bites, whether venomous or not, should receive immediate medical attention
- Rattlesnakes and Copperheads have “hemotoxin” venom, which attacks red blood cells and tissue of bite victims. Keep the victim as calm and quiet as possible, keep the wound site inactive and positioned below the level of the heart, and transport the victim to a hospital immediately

OTHER ANIMALS

- You may be sharing the trail with black bears. Make noise as you hike to give bears a chance to be forewarned of your approach and move away before a surprise confrontation occurs. If you encounter a bear, back away slowly. Do not turn your back to the bear or run, as this may trigger an aggressive response from the bear. Sows and cubs must be avoided at all times. Commercially available bear repellent (aerosol pepper spray) may be effective as a last resort

- Do not handle or approach wildlife. Young animals that appear to be abandoned should be left where they are. Resist the temptation to “rescue” young animals
- Some wildlife such as foxes, skunks, raccoons, and other mammals commonly contract diseases or illness such as rabies or mange, and may lose their natural fear of humans. Avoid any animal that is encountered, especially those which appear ill, agitated, or disoriented. Report such wildlife sightings to the appropriate local officials, such as Conservation or Wildlife Enforcement Officers

References:

OSHA Quick Card- Rodents, Snakes and Insects, http://www.osha.gov/Publications/rodents_snakes_insects.html

Safety Tips for Hiking the Trails of New Hampshire, <http://www.nhliving.com/hiking/tips.shtml>