

Don't be bugged enjoying outdoors

One of the biggest annoyances anyone can face outdoors is that of Mosquitoes and Ticks. These creatures have wreaked havoc on camping trips and picnics and it seems there is no end to them so maybe we can help make living with them a little easier for you. Not only are they a nuisance but they both carry diseases such as



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Lyme, Spotted Fever, West Nile and others. Catching one of these sicknesses would certainly be best avoided, as they can be fatal.

Mosquitoes are at their worse during the early morning and early evening times. They seem to prefer dark clothing to light and hang out in the more shady areas, rather than in direct sunlight. It is best to wear long sleeve clothing and full-length pants rather than shorts. The less exposed skin the better.

Repellents containing DEET (chemical name, N,N-diethyl-metoluamide) in an amount of at least 20 percent, work the best. These include

Off, Cutters, Sawyer and Ultrathon to name a few. Studies have shown that DEET, when used properly, does not pose a health risk. These products work well to repel Ticks also. Be sure to give a spray around your collar, pants cuff, socks and sleeves.

For folks that prefer something else try products containing Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus (OLE). These include Off and Cutters. There are also available products that contain IR3535 which include Skin So Soft Bug Guard and Skinsmart. While these products all work I have found that nothing works as well as a good dose, every few hours, of a product containing a good dose of DEET.

Another option that works well on both Mosquitoes and Ticks is a product containing Permethrin. These products should not be used on skin directly. You treat the clothing you're going to wear as directed on the product. The treatment will even last for several washings if used according to the directions. I use this during early Hunting seasons when I don't want to be in the woods smelling like a bug bomb.

If a mosquito does bite you it is best to avoid scratching it as this usually makes it worse. Apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce itching. There are commercial treatments sold in stores and all work to a point. Once again prevention is the key.

Ticks are another story. Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors.

Check your entire body (under your arms, in and around your ears, in your belly button, behind your knees, between your legs, around your waist, and especially in your hair). Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, there's no need to panic. A plain set of fine-tipped tweezers will remove a tick easily. Here's how:

- Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.

- Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.

- After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.

- Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Avoid folklore remedies such as "painting" the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly, or using heat to make the tick detach from the skin. Your goal is to remove the tick as quickly as possible—not waiting for it to detach.

None of this will completely eliminate the insect problem we face outdoors but every little bit helps. Until next time, see you on the trail.

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There are many products that repel mosquitos and ticks. Everything works to some degree but some better than others. Courtesy photo



An assortment of bug repellents show a variety of options to keep the bugs away. (Courtesy photo)



Clouds pitch and roll through the sky as a squall blusters through the sky over Black Canyon. (Photo courtesy National Park Service)

Monsoonal storms and the power of sky watching

The sun rose about an hour ago. I'm standing at Cross Fissures Overlook at Black Canyon's South Rim.

The usual down-canyon breeze, common in the early morning, blows the oak brush. It's cool, but not chilly. The sky is colored that soft, light blue typical in summer. But I'm here to watch the wide swath of puffy white clouds riding the waves of air only hundreds of feet above the canyon.



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

Each cloud looks like a pillow mint, seemingly hooked together, drifting along to the east. The light beautiful scene belies

the change that is coming later in the day.

The "monsoon season" is upon us, meaning that humidity levels are up, and moisture from the southwest will bring storms later in the day. Yet the storms are almost emblematic of weather conditions in the Four Corners states and remind us of the energetic power of conditions critical to life in our neck of the woods.

The short-lived "monsoon" phenomenon is set up by early summer heating in the American Southwest. Heat rises, winds aloft shift and weather patterns change bringing breezes. The breezes become storms in western Colorado mountains and eventually over the valleys.

Storms become forceful, energized with electricity. Clouds can pitch lightning bolts right out of the sky.

Try this at home: walk along the carpet, dragging your feet as you go. Keep your feet flat on the floor as you scuffle along. The friction you generate develops static electricity that jumps from you to the door knob when you touch. Middle schoolers are very practiced at this – zapping siblings, parents, friends, dogs, cats. ...

As storms develop, winds become stronger. Electrons are ripped away from the droplets of water. The static electrical charge builds within the storm. This negative charge usually attracts an opposite positive charge. As intensity builds, the negative charge in the storm attracts positive charges on the ground.

Opposites attract; try it with magnets on your kitchen counter. Enhanced by objects that are elevated above ground (trees, antennae, swinging golf clubs), the positive charge from the ground unites with the negative charge in the storm.

The static electricity jumps from the storm to ground the same is it jumps from middle schooler to parent.

Storms explode across deserts and mountains with blasting winds, driving rains, and packing more than enough lightning power to drive fear into the hearts of most living things.

Such a situation occurred to a couple of us on Lake Powell at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

We were working on a plan to protect and provide education at Defiance House Ruin near Bullfrog Marina, and were making regular trips there in a flat-bottom river boat. It was the only craft available at the time, and was very adequate to our needs on most occasions.

Mike Stuckey, a seasonal ranger whose off-season job was teaching archeology at University of Utah, and I spent one August morning and early afternoon at the ruin in Forgotten Canyon at the upper end of the reservoir:



Light radiates through the clouds below the Big Dipper asterism as a tempest thunders over Black Canyon. (Photo courtesy National Park Service)

We had gathered enough information for the day. Defiance House is renowned for a rock art scene on the cliff above the structures showing an encounter between warriors, and is a popular place to learn more about the Ancestral Puebloan people who lived in the Glen Canyon river system.

As we returned to the boat, a couple hundred feet below the ruin's ledge, it was becoming evident that swollen clouds had gathered in the sky to our south. We boated down the side canyon to the main channel of the reservoir, and had a grand view of the gathering storm that was building a few miles away over Bullfrog Bay.

We weighed our options and decided to continue to the marina at Bullfrog, but when we rounded the bend to the waters in the open bay, the tempest intensified.

Angry clouds arched over the sky with swirling masses. Lightning energized gray and stormy cloud masses. We felt Zeus himself driving bolts of power into the sandstone of the nearby Waterpocket Fold.

Thunder crashed and echoed from nearby cliffs. Hurricane-like winds tossed our boat up and over the swells. Whirlwinds blew us about, and feeling close to capsizing, we landed at a nearby sandbar to ride out the tumult.

That storm, and others which have caught me in the wilds, reminded me of an important tenet. We tend to think that we are quite capable of controlling all of nature. But whether we consider storms, floods, blizzards, earthquakes, volcanoes (this list goes on) the power of nature is too big to be contained.

The monsoonal storms of July and August are central to summer life across the region, and they make those months among the wettest every year. And the thunder that rattles our windows during a storm is just a little reminder of the might which resides in the natural world.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

IF YOU GO:

Weather classes: National Weather Service has storm spotter classes listed on its website. The next one is in Delta, Sept. 16; visit www.weather.gov/gjt/spottertraining, or learn about storm safety at www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/summer_safety.html.

Thunderstorm watching: Most area visitor centers offer safe views: South Rim Visitor Center at Black Canyon, Ridgway State Park Visitor Center, Elk Creek Visitor Center at Curecanti National Recreation Area, Grand Mesa Visitor Center, and Colorado National Monument Visitor Center near Fruita.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area: Information to visit Lake Powell and Defiance House Ruin can be found at www.nps.gov/glca/playourvisit/index.htm.

NPS extends boat tour season

The boat tour season for Morrow Point Reservoir is being extended through Sept. 13 because of

continued nice weather and favorable water conditions, the National Park Service announces.

Reservations are available through the Elk Creek Visitor Center, 641-2337, ext. 205.

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