



A few common-sense precautions can keep you tick-free this summer season. (Contributed photo)

# Tick Season Is Here

Spring brings with it an unwanted guest to Colorado, the tick. Colorado is home to over 30 species of ticks. The Rocky Mountain Wood Tick and the American Dog Tick being the most common found here.

Tick season in Colorado starts in March and runs through June and sometimes later. Most ticks occur in elevations between 4,000 and 10,000 feet.

Ticks have large round bodies and small appendages. A tick can sense carbon dioxide exhalation from mammals, often waiting on top of vegetation to hop on a passerby. They are especially found in brushy areas, edges of fields and woodlands, or on trails through grassy areas.

A tick will jump on you and imbed itself into the skin. It will then gorge itself on blood and stay there until removed. The mouth is barbed so improper removal can cause the head to remain in the skin and cause an infection.

Ticks can become infected with a disease when they feed on a mammal that has a disease circulating in its bloodstream. Small rodents such as squirrels, chipmunks and mice, can carry a disease but larger mammals, such as deer can also be carriers. Once a tick becomes infected, it can pass the virus to humans.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, you cannot get Lyme disease from Colorado ticks. There are however, several diseases you can get from them.

Colorado Tick Fever is the most common tick borne disease in Colorado, with an estimated 10,000 cases annually in the United States. The Rocky Mountain Wood Tick spreads this disease. Many cases go unreported because they go unreported. It is a viral illness that can include symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea and abdominal pain. The symptoms usually last

four to five days, followed by an apparent recovery, then a relapse of symptoms for several more days. The disease is not life threatening and a complete recovery usually takes two to three weeks. The good news is that you will then have a lifelong immunity to the disease.

There are no medications to treat Colorado Tick Fever, but you should see your healthcare provider if you suspect you have it. Usually treatment is medications for symptomatic relief to reduce the pain and fever.

A far more serious disease transmitted by ticks is Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which is carried by the Rocky Mountain Wood Tick and the American Dog Tick. This disease is fairly rare in Colorado with only a couple cases reported annually.

The initial symptoms may seem flu-like. There may be high fever, headache, chills and muscle aches. A rash may appear a few days later and can spread rapidly over the entire body. This rash can even be seen on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.

Immediate medical attention is important because Rocky Mountain spotted fever can be fatal. Fortunately, the illness can be cured with antibiotics.

Prevention is the key for tick borne illnesses. Here are a few things that may help when you

are outdoors:

- \* Avoid tick-infested areas during the warmer months
- \* Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be spotted easily
- \* Wear long sleeves, a hat, and long pants with pant legs tucked into socks
- \* Walk in the center of trails, avoiding overhanging brush
- \* Use insect repellents containing DEET on skin
- \* Using permethrin on clothing can also help

A tick usually takes a couple hours to settle in once on your body. It is very important to check your clothing and entire body every few hours while outdoors and very thoroughly when you return home.

Ticks are most often found on the thigh, arms, underarms and legs. Pay special attention to anything that may appear to be a new "freckle." Ticks can be as small as a pinhead.

Ticks should be removed promptly when found. Wear protective gloves and use a fine pair of tweezers placed as close to the skin as possible. Remove with a steady but gentle traction, being careful not to crush the tick or leave its mouth parts in the skin. Once removed, wash your hands and the bite area very well with soap and water.

A match or a flame should never be used to remove a tick. This method can cause a tick to regurgitate, expelling any disease it might be carrying back into the bite wound.

Enjoy your time outdoors but perform a tick check every few hours. It is better to catch them before they get a bite on you. Until next time, see you on the trail.

*Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org*



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

# Ranger of the year named

Grand Junction Field Office BLM Ranger Frank Stepleton was recently named BLM Ranger of the year for 2015.

He was recognized for his efforts in building multi-agency working relationships, as well as enhancing the protection of public lands and visitor safety through proactive enforcement. Stepleton's work over the past year led to several key indictments for criminal activity on public lands including illegal hunting, illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands, and illegal dumping. Many of these law enforcement actions included close coordination with state and local law enforcement agencies. Stepleton joined the

BLM in 2009 as a student intern and was hired as a law enforcement ranger for the Grand Junction Field Office in 2012 after graduating from Colorado Mesa University with a degree in criminal justice.

Prior to joining the BLM, he was a sergeant in the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division. Stepleton completed Iraq combat tours in Al Anbar, 04-05, and Baghdad, 06-07. He was awarded the Purple Heart during his tour in Baghdad.

Stepleton comes from a family of law enforcement professionals. His mother serves as the chief of police in Fruita, and his cousin works with the Mesa County Sheriff's Office.



# Beginning birding class offered

The Black Canyon Chapter of the Audubon Society is offering a beginning birding class for anyone interested in improving skills in bird watching. The class will cover the use of binoculars, spotting scopes, bird guides, and the latest computer programs for identifying birds and their calls.

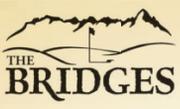
This class will help those interested to learn the basic skills that will allow them to better enjoy the outdoors of western Colorado. The program includes a two

hour lecture/discussion and a half-day field trip.

The lecture will be held at 7 p.m. May 26, the Montrose Regional Library. Participants are encouraged to bring any field guides and binoculars they may have.

The field trip will start at 8 a.m. May 28. This class is limited to 15 people and there is a charge of \$10 for society members and \$15 for non-members.

For more information and to register, call Geoff Tischbein at (970) 626-5002.



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