



Dear Parents,

As summer approaches, we wanted to take a moment to highlight the steps we are taking to ensure a safe, happy, and memorable experience for all of our camp families.

We have several safeguards in place to protect against ticks and tick-borne diseases. As you may know, tick populations have been on the rise throughout Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. While their numbers are not significantly higher here at NBS than in other areas throughout New England, we want you to be safe no matter where you go. The following guidelines will apply to all staff and campers while at the Sanctuary, but we also suggest that you use these tips as you travel throughout parks, neighborhood yards, and the rest of the great outdoors this summer.

- **Wear appropriate clothing when hiking outdoors.** Wear long sleeves, pants, and socks; light colored clothing helps to make the ticks easier to spot. At NBS, we encourage campers to roll up long socks or tuck pants into their socks to prevent them from reaching the skin (Try turning this step into a fun fashion contest – i.e., who in your family has the most colorful socks?) Since ticks don't jump or fly, they are most commonly picked up on your shoes and socks.
- **Stay on the trails.** Deer ticks like to live in cool, moist woodlands, preferring the forest and the edges of brush and shrubs, where leaf litter collects. Since they can't survive in hot and dry places, they tend to avoid mowed lawns and the center of trails. Campers and staff will not be allowed to venture off the trails this summer; we ask you and your family to set this same example when out for your own walks.
- **Stay off of the stone walls.** Despite their name, deer ticks can be found on many New England animals– including squirrels, some birds, and the mice that make their home in the region's stone walls. Climbing and sitting on the walls during our camp or school field trips is not allowed, and we strongly encourage you to enforce this rule with your family.
- **Tick checks, tick checks, tick checks!** We train our staff to integrate numerous tick checks into their daily teaching schedule. Whether on a school group or camp program, we always take frequent opportunities to look for ticks while on the trails. Additional checks are conducted after hikes, during lunch, and before heading home for the day. We also ask parents to check their children after camp and at bath time (a good opportunity to spot ticks in hard to reach areas).
- **Repel ticks.** Use insect repellent on areas of your body and clothing that may come in contact with grass or brush. For maximum protection, look for products with Permethrin, which kills ticks on contact. While you can't use Permethrin on skin, you can use it to treat your clothing. Permethrin-treated clothes are very effective and long-lasting against ticks. We recommend using a repellent with DEET on your skin (for mosquitoes) and one with Permethrin on clothing for ticks (you can stock up on these products in the NBS gift shop.)

- **Stay calm.** If you find a tick on your child, you should remove it as soon as possible with tweezers. Grasp the tick firmly (fine-tipped tweezers are preferable) and do not use alcohol, nail polish remover, matches, or Vaseline. If you are concerned, save the tick for testing and speak to your health care provider. Remember that infected ticks must generally be attached for at least 24 hours before they can transmit Lyme disease.
- **Attend a Camp Open House.** We will be holding monthly camp open houses to highlight new policies and procedures for our summer education programs. By learning the simple steps to prevent tick-borne illnesses, you can help to educate family and friends and feel more confident spending time in the natural world.
- **We want to be your “tick resource.”** Use the information in this letter or our fact sheets, or visit NBS for other tick-prevention guides and products. Also, please feel free to call anytime with questions, concerns, or ideas. You can contact me by phone at (401) 846-2577 ext. 15, or via e-mail, at arning@normanbirds sanctuary.org - or reach Jen Klein, our Environmental Education Coordinator, at ext. 32 and jklein@normanbirds sanctuary.org. Our staff is always here to answer any questions that you may have throughout the summer!

Finally, we want to assure you that the Norman Bird Sanctuary cares about the safety and well-being of all our visitors. We are actively collaborating with other nature centers and state agencies to address tick issues both at our property and throughout the state. Whether visiting the Sanctuary, your neighborhood playground, or a nearby state park, we hope that these guidelines will help you to make healthy, informed decisions for you and your family.

Best wishes for a safe and happy summer!

Catherine Arning
NBS Director of Education