



Grand Valley Trails Association

P. O. Box 40068, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2J 4V1

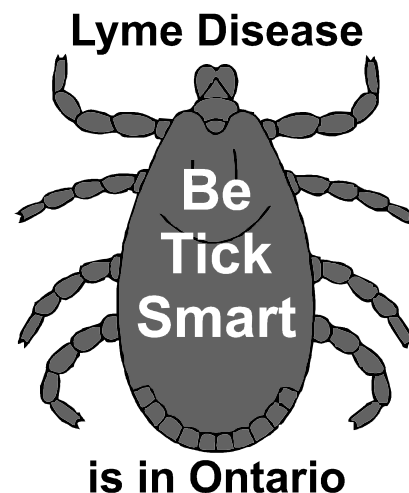
Voicemail: (519) 576-6156 ♦ Email: gvta@golden.net ♦ Website: www.gvta.on.ca

Tick Troubles

Global warming has encouraged ticks to expand their range northward from their traditional habitat in the more southerly parts of the United States. Just a few years ago they crossed into Ontario.

I've worked on trail maintenance since 1991, but had my first tick encounter four years ago. After that there were a few more encounters and in one instance the tick was on me long enough to begin having lunch.

In the early spring of 2012, Rob Carleton and I spent several hours exploring a new trail route. Afterward we stopped for coffee and that's when we noticed the ticks ... they literally poured off us. Needless to say, coffee was cut short and we rushed home for a shower. We disagreed on the actual number between us; suffice to say it was 17 or possibly a few more. That's not a typo – seventeen ticks. More recently, working on the new trail mentioned elsewhere in this publication, I came home with three.



Ticks, related to the spider family, are quite small and you can easily miss seeing one. Unlike other insects, ticks have a very hard body - you can't kill them by swatting them like a mosquito. In fact you can't crush them on a table with your finger. A tick bite is painless and easy to miss. Removing the one that bit me was quite easy, but this may not be the case if you don't spot it early enough.

The danger of a tick bite is that some ticks – not all – may be carrying Lyme disease (a bacterial infection), whose symptoms range from nuisance to nasty and may develop quickly or sneak up on you a month later. If you have been bitten, see your doctor. If possible, take the offending tick with you. Apparently it's easier to detect Lyme disease on the tick than it is in a blood sample. (I've taken to carrying a small medicine bottle on my forays).

Some other observations and recommendations

- I can't recall picking up ticks while on a cleared trail. Ticks were contacted when exploring off-trail forested sections and during trail maintenance. It would seem they drop down on you from overhanging vegetation. Lesson – stay on the trail: find an open area for that pit stop.
- Check for ticks after your outings, particularly if you've stepped off the beaten path.
- With only one exception, the ticks were found above the waistline. A significant number were in our hair. Lesson – Wear a hat. Run a comb through your hair after a hike.
- Wear light coloured clothing so you can easily detect them on your clothes.
- Insect repellent is effective.

W. Soroka

>>> *Check www.gvta.on.ca/ticks.html for more information.*