

Susquehannock Trail Club News – 01-19-2023

By Bill Boyd

I'm sure it's not a matter of if, but when we get the snow. So, it's time to be getting prepared for it if you wish to give cross country skiing a try. As soon as there is sufficient snow, our team-mate Joe Allis will be out there grooming some trails, probably in the Patterson Park and Cherry Springs State Park areas. But even if it's just enough snow to cover the ground, and most of the debris, you can ski on it. It may even be a good time to do some practicing with snowshoes, but they are mainly for use in deeper snow. The last I knew, DCNR at Denton Hill had both skis and snowshoes to check out. Maybe even ski boots. Best to check with them to be sure.

Then, the next thing you know it will be Spring and time to be thinking about hiking, and ticks. They say they are active all year especially when it's around 30 degrees and higher, but for sure they will become more active by Spring. The two main insect repellents seem to be Permethrin, for the clothing and gear, and Pericaridin for the skin. Permethrin seems to be more available in the 24 oz. size, which will treat five complete outfits (shirt, pants and socks). It bonds to the fibers and will last about six weeks and/or through six washings. The directions will tell you all about application - just remember, Permethrin for CLOTHING ONLY. Some of us have taken to wearing chaps which reach nearly to the knee, and we treat those liberally also, even the shoes. It's supposed to actually kill the ticks - for a hiker a dead tick is a good thing.

For a long time we have been told that it takes 36-48 hours for a tick bite to transfer any bacteria which can cause Lyme disease. Now we are hearing that there is an even worse ailment we can get called Deer Tick Disease, or Powassan, and it comes from a virus which can infect us in 15 minutes. About 40-50% of ticks carry Lyme, and for the Powassan it's much less. But it's all-important to not get bitten in the first place, so we need to be ever vigilant. A few other measures one can take, is to tuck pants into socks (or wear chaps), long pants with shirts tucked in, try to avoid walking in tall grass and near bushes, and check frequently for ticks. Ticks are black, so they show up better on light-colored clothing.

As for the trail club, we try to keep the trails trimmed back and mowed whenever possible. But it's not always possible to keep up with the ferns, nettles and briars, so hikers should dress accordingly - or better yet grab a weedwhacker and come join us. It's still hiking, but with a mission.