



Wildlife Considerations

Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan and the wilderness parks visited by our High Adventure treks are in the Northwoods area. This area is populated with black bears, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, mosquitoes, sand flies, black flies, and ticks. This section will address how to camp comfortably with our animal neighbors.

Black Bears

When traveling, please remember that you are traveling through the home of the animals who live there.

- Travel in groups.
- Make noise. Normal chatter is sufficient because most bears will flee when they hear you coming (no need for "bear bells").
- Never corner a bear (keep this in mind when placing tents).

If sighted:

- Avoid eye contact.
- Make yourself look large.
- Move away slowly, still facing the bear.
- Deter bear by making noise, banging pot, etc.

If approached:

- Remain calm.
- Avoid abrupt movements.
- Back away slowly, still facing the bear. If this agitates the bear, stop.
- Speak to bear in a quiet, monotone voice.
- DO NOT RUN. Even if charged, it is better to stand your ground.

If attacked:

- Keep your pack on; it may protect you.
- Experts feel that it is better to try and fight off a black bear. Fight aggressively using any object at hand and make lots of noise. Make yourself look bigger than you are, holding your coat as wide as it will go, gathering in a group, anything that makes you look more massive to the bear.
- Do not play dead unless you are sure the bear is a mother defending her cubs

General practices:

- Always put any items that emit an odor into bear bags.
- Cook and dispose of wastewater downwind from camp.
- When possible, cook on a streambed or shoreline at least 100 feet from camp.
- Do not deposit food scraps into the water around your campsite.
- Place bear bag far from camp or store food following the recommendations of the specific Land Manager.



Wildlife Considerations

Bear Bag Information (Where Recommended)

- Hang bear bags between 12 and 17 feet from the ground and 6 to 11 feet from the trunk.
- Bear bags hung or counter-weighted over a branch should be a minimum of 5 feet below it.
- Suspend bear bags from a branch that is approximately 5 inches in diameter.
- A bag of sand, a stick, or a water bottle tied to the end of a rope make it easier to throw over a branch.
- As a general rule, hang bear bags 100 feet from your campsite.
- Put items that smell like food into bear bags, including food, garbage, used first aid supplies, scented toiletries, cookware, and film.
- Your bear bag may be too heavy to lift if all your dishes are inside. You may be better off leaving them on the ground 100 feet from your campsite.
- Some places have bear poles. Use poles with hooks to hoist a rope over the top of it, then raise your food.



Raccoons, Squirrels, and Chipmunks

Small animals are mainly a nuisance. The best practice is to keep food in sealed bags away from the ground and in sight of camp during the day. At night follow the same methods as for bear bagging. Never keep anything “smell-able” in your tent.

Mosquitoes, Sand Flies and Black Flies

- Do not bring aerosol cans of repellent.
- Black flies and sand flies are relatively harmless, and long clothing is the best protection.
- Dress in natural colored clothing.

Ticks

- There are two types of ticks in the Northwoods. The wood tick is large and brown (about the size of a pencil eraser). Deer ticks are less common and much smaller. They can be hard to see and are only about the size of a pinhead. Check yourself often. It is the only way to find them.
- Ticks like warm, hairy, moist areas like armpits and waistbands
- When traveling through the brush, tuck your pant legs into your socks.
- Deer ticks can cause Lyme disease. Generally, it takes 3 to 4 months after someone has contracted Lyme disease before they feel flu-like symptoms for an extended period — Sometimes, a “bulls-eye” rash will also occur.

If you experience any difficulty, see a doctor early—Lyme disease can be treated with standard antibiotics if diagnosed quickly.