

Field trip and outdoor activity information

**(Almost) the only thing we have to fear is fear itself ---
--- besides ignorance and/or carelessness in the presence of
natural hazards and nuisances**

When you go outdoors in Kansas in the summer, it is very unlikely to be fatal, but it can be uncomfortable if you don't pay attention and take a few precautions. For those on the field trips, we recommend that those on field trips take and use of sunscreen, and on the Fossil and Konza Prairie trips we also suggest insect repellent. For the non-urban trips, leaders will provide water and advice as needed.

Commonly encountered pests and hazards (be prepared):

Poison Ivy (plant)

Ticks, chiggers, and mosquitoes (2 arachnids and an insect)

Sun and heat

Less commonly encountered but possibly present (take reasonable precautions):

Venomous snakes (copperheads and rattlesnakes)

Venomous arachnids (brown recluse and black widow spiders; rarely scorpions)

Extreme weather (storms)

Summary Precautions:

1. Wear “appropriate clothing” and “suitable footgear” – In terms of everything but the heat, appropriate clothing has long pant legs and long sleeves, plus a hat. If you opt for less coverage in order to stay a bit cooler, pay even more attention to the chemical and behavioral protections listed below. Suitable footgear is the highest, most solid and best-traction shoe or boot you have along – it is NOT a sandal or anything open.
2. Think and look first, and then move slowly – you will learn more and suffer less. Do NOT put your hands and feet anywhere you haven't looked first, and do not casually handle (and to the extent possible, avoid indiscriminate physical contact with) any of the biota.
3. Remember that this is NOT a Disney movie. If wild animals, however cute or interesting, are not afraid of you, it means that you have good reason to be at least profoundly respectful, if not actually afraid, of them.
4. Chemical defenses – this is not the time or place to rely on natural defenses – remember, many of our coinhabitants on this planet regard YOU as yummy organic food. Use waterproof sunscreen with a high SPF value on any exposed skin. For insects, the magic word is DEET (n,n-diethyl meta toluamide), which should be at least 25% of the insect repellent you will put not only on your body, but also on your clothing near entry points (cuffs, beltlines, socks, etc). Sulfur is also an effective tick and chigger repellent.

When you get back from the field, wash thoroughly and carefully, and inspect body and clothes to make sure you have not returned with unwelcome hitch-hikers (ticks).