

Spring 2026

BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

The Oklahoma Chapter Newsletter



Making Fishing Fun Again

BY BROCK STUBER

Nothing beats firsts. First kiss, first place, first fish just to name a few. It's the thing that oftentimes keeps us coming back for me. With some things, the further you get away from that first, the more we expect. I've fished my whole life. The adrenaline from having a fish on my line is still there but it's nowhere near what it was when it was my first fish. The more fish a person catches the more they hope and dream of that lunker or personal record that can be shown off to peers and friends. In the pursuit of the "big one" it's easy to lose sight of those feelings that attracted us to fishing in the first place; the thrill of the catch, no matter how big or how small.

Introducing something to someone who has never experienced that thing can be a daunting task. You want them to have those same feelings you once felt and develop a love for the things you love. I felt this overwhelming feeling as I approached a small runoff pond with my two year old daughter riding on my shoulders. Her pink fishing rod equipped with a simple bobber and hook, she was ready to catch her first fish. Ever more so, I wanted her to catch her first fish and feel that rush that I felt when I first started fishing. The kind of rush that turns into love for a certain thing. I opened a styrofoam box of night crawlers and let her pick out which one she wanted. She plucked one from the top and said "This one!"

Upcoming Events

**OK Controlled
Hunts Draw Results**
Available in June

Spavinaw WMA Workday
June 6th - 8 AM

SHOT The 3D Experience
Sequoyah State Park
Hulbert, OK
June 5 - 7

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I rigged up her hook and cast the bobber and worm out into the middle of the pond. I explained to her that we needed to watch the bobber and if it started moving that meant a fish was nibbling on the worm. Within seconds, the bobber started dancing and bouncing in the water. My wife screamed, "Oh look! Oh look!" Once the bobber submerged beneath the waters surface, I set the hook and felt the pull of a fish on the other end. I handed the pole to my daughter and told her she caught one and to reel in! A rush of excitement raced through my stomach. This was it! The moment I had been hyping up to my two year old for weeks now. She reeled and reeled all while smiling from ear to ear! The fish pulled against the tension of the line.

My daughter reeled faster gaining ground on the fish. The fish was now just feet away from the bank. "Keep reeling!" I shouted. "You almost got 'em!" My daughters smile turned to laughter. In that moment, I saw it. I saw the love growing. She was experiencing what I always hoped. That same feeling I once felt. The best part is I was feeling those same feelings again.

At last, she pulled the fish to the bank screaming, "I caught one!" There, on the shale bank, lay a small palm sized bluegill. She held her rod up high staring at the fish. We hooped and hollered as a family celebrating her first catch. Her face gleamed with pride. I took the little bluegill off the hook and my little girl tossed it back into the water saying, "Bye-bye fishy." Then she looked at me saying, "Let's catch another one, Daddy." And that we did.

It's easy to lose sight of why we do the things we do. Why we love what we love. I hadn't had this much fun fishing in a very long time. I put aside all the things that don't matter and remembered why I fell in love with fishing in the first place. It's not about the size of the fish, but rather the joy in being outdoors interacting with the wild world that's out there. It's about relationships and memories that will last a lifetime. It's about making it fun again. I needed this reminder and I thank my new fishing partner for that.



HANDS ON HABITAT WORKDAY



SPAVINAW WMA

JUNE 6th



Come make a difference on public land!

Is Your Tick System Dialed?

BY BROCK STUBER

I never thought I'd strike up an interest in ticks. To put it simply, I hate the little buggers and can't understand why the good Lord created such a vile creature. However, a little over a year ago I was diagnosed with Lyme disease and since then, I've never thought more about those little eight-legged bloodsuckers. The mystery of excruciating muscle cramps, unbreakable fevers, and crippling fatigue were finally solved with an arachnid the size of a freckle being the culprit.

Lyme disease, among other tick-borne illnesses, have made me think twice about my time in the outdoors. Being a father now, I often question if I'm putting my family in danger by getting them into the natural world, especially in the spring when the ticks can be thick. I think the rewards of exposure to the outdoors far outweigh the risks, but it's always best to proceed with caution, especially with known hazards. With that, I decided it was time to dial up my tick prevention system.

To understand a solid tick prevention system, I think it's important to understand what we are trying to prevent. Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Alpha-Gal are just a few tick-borne illnesses that can make life miserable and potentially fatal. Believe me!

Lyme Disease

A tick-borne disease caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria. It is typically transmitted from the bite of a deer tick. Early symptoms include flu like symptoms such as fever, body aches, fatigue, etc. Lyme disease is also commonly associated with a bulls eye rash but this does not always occur. Long term symptoms associated with Lyme can be chronic fatigue, nervous system issues like numbness and tingling of the hands and feet, severe joint pain, and psychiatric conditions.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

A tick-borne disease caused *Rickettsia rickettsii* bacteria. It is typically transmitted from the bite of a dog tick. Early symptoms are similar to Lyme disease and usually occur within the first 14 days of infection. Approximately 50% of cases also report a spotty rash on the hands and feet. If left untreated, RMSF can be fatal.

Alpha-Gal Syndrome

A tick-borne condition that creates a red meat allergy. Primarily transmitted from the bite of a Lone Star Tick but can come from other ticks. Unlike other allergies, the symptoms may not be appear for 2-8 hours after consuming a red meat. Symptoms include hives, itching, gastrointestinal distress, swelling of the face, and anaphylaxis.

Likely Encountered Ticks Species in Oklahoma

- Black Legged Tick aka Deer Tick
- Lone Star Tick
- Winter Tick
- Brown Dog Tick
- Gulf Coast Tick

Source & More Information: <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/common-ticks-of-oklahoma-and-tick-borne-diseases>

The System

Hunters are all too familiar with “systems”. We obsess over them. Clothing systems, sleep systems, weapon systems, you name it. We all have systems. For me, I now have a “tick system”. My tick system involves a mix of gear and mental thought. Let’s break it down!

Gaiters

Gaiters are a common piece of gear used for hiking through deep snow or wet conditions. They provide the lower portion of with protection from the elements, be it snow, water, dirt/debris and in some uses; snake bites. With this in mind, I decided I’d give gaiters a try in hopes to also keep ticks out. A common route of entry for ticks onto a person is up the legs. Gaiters form a barrier around the pant leg making that route of entry harder to penetrate. I drench my gaiters in permethrin before heading out into the woods. I am a big fan of Stone Glacier’s Reflex Gaiter during spring turkey hunts and early archery deer hunts in the fall. Outdoor Research also makes a solid low-profile gaiter.

Link to gaiters I use: <https://www.stoneglacier.com/products/reflex-gaiters?srsId=AfmBOoo1XsFhONs6OUGIKsuJsrFRCWRe7tYAPsjGQ95b4qcsGgEDOV4r#Media25194644209769>

Tape

If you don’t want to invest in gaiters, tape can be a great cheap alternative. I like to reverse wrap Duct tape around pants above the boot line or around wrist cuffs. Imitating a gaiter with tape is also effective. Reverse wrapping the tape allows for the sticky side to face outwards and captures potential ticks trying to climb up your arms or legs. It’s a solid, affordable option. A piece of Duct tape is also an easy removal tool for ticks crawling on your clothes.

Permethrin/Essential Oils

There is a no miracle deterrent for ticks or other biting bugs but it is worth using these items as a preventative barrier. Permethrin is my go-to for my clothing and gear. I spray my outer layers, including gaiters, boots, and pack in permethrin the night before a hunt. Make sure to let the items you spray dry before putting them on. For deer hunts, you may be thinking about scent. Personally, I haven’t experienced scent issues during deer hunts so I’m a fan plus no ticks! I like to get a higher concentrated (10%) version and dilute it down myself. It is more cost effective that way and will last you years. Just be careful that your dosage is adequate to avoid irritation! I mix mine down to 0.5% permethrin.

Essential Oils have shown to be a useful deterrent for ticks. A blend of geranium, cedarwood, citronella, and lemongrass oils along with some water and apple cider vinegar is a great DIY solution to ticks. I carry this blend with me and apply it to my bare skin around my wrists, ankles, neck and waist to keep ticks at bay. The recipe is use is at the end of this article.

Trash Bag

This seems like an odd addition to the tick system but upon returning from a hunt where ticks were plentiful I will store my hunting clothes and gear in a large trash bag. This keeps my tick infested clothes and gear away from anything I don’t want to risk ticks crawling on such as my travel clothes or my vehicle in general. It’s just another barrier of protection.



Awareness

I believe the most important factor is preventing tick and bug bites is awareness. Ticks are parasitic creatures that sit and wait for their host to pass by. They cling on passerby's with their legs which have small microscopic spines covering them and allow them to cling on to anything passing through. Understanding how ticks function and habitat they are prevalent in creates awareness. I'm a big believer in solid color pants, even when turkey hunting, simply to better see ticks crawling up my legs. Camo doesn't kill animals so don't fret about not wearing camouflage. Do a tick check every hour at a minimum and remove any that may be crawling on you. If you're backpacking, in addition to hourly tick checks, do a solid tick check every evening before going to bed and every morning before heading out for the day. If you find a tick embedded in you, remove it slowly and carefully. Make sure to pull the tick straight out. Carry tweezers for more precise removal (I keep some in my first aid kit anyway). It's also not a terrible idea to place an embedded tick in a Ziploc after removal and store it in the freezer with the date the tick was removed in case you develop symptoms of a tick-borne illness. Awareness is key to prevention.

I can attest that Lyme disease is no fun. I wouldn't wish it upon anybody. However, ticks do not have to or need to be a reason to avoid the outdoors, but it is something that should be thought about and taken seriously. Have some awareness and implement some physical and chemical barriers. Before you head out into the woods, dial in your system and most importantly, don't forget to check for ticks!



DIY Essential Oil Tick Repellant

Items Needed:

- 4 oz spray bottle
- Apple cider vinegar
- Water (distilled or filtered is best)
- Geranium essential oil - 10 drops
- Cedarwood essential oil - 10 drops
- Citronella essential oil - 10 drops
- Lemongrass essential oil - 10 drops

Making the repellant

1. Add all essential oils to the bottle.
2. Fill $\frac{1}{3}$ of the bottle with apple cider vinegar.
3. Top off rest of the bottle with water.
4. Shake well before each use.

DISCLAIMER: I apply this to bareskin areas such as my wrists, ankles, neck and waist. Before use, test on a small area of the skin to ensure no irritation.

DO YOUR PART FOR PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS & WILDLIFE



Backcountry Hunters & Anglers seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands, waters, and wildlife.

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When you become an Individual Member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, you're not just joining an organization—you're joining a community dedicated to preserving North America's outdoor heritage.

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Whether you can dedicate 2 hours a year or 2 hours a week to BHA, we need your skills.

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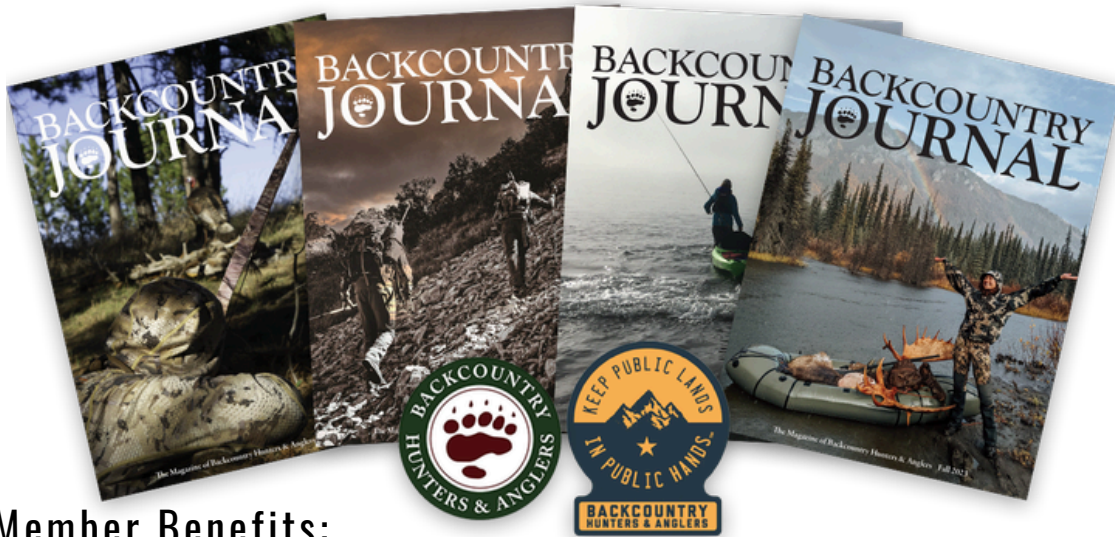
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Join other volunteers in partnering with state biologists on projects to help clean up or improve the habitat of public lands or waters.



Events

Join other volunteers & board members in hosting BHA events like habitat projects, social gatherings, fund raisers, hunt & fish camps, and more.



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Leadership

The state chapter offers various leadership opportunities, from event coordinators to board of directors, officers, and more.



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