

Ticks and Lyme in the Applegate Watershed

BY JULIE WHEELER

By now most people have heard of Lyme disease—you might even know someone in your neighborhood who has it. It's not a new illness, but it is still nearly impossible to get an early diagnosis, and to get effective treatment in southern Oregon. Lyme is difficult to diagnose and is often referred to as "The Great Imitator" or "The Great Imposter" because its signs and symptoms mimic so many other illnesses. It has the potential to impact every organ of the human body including the brain, heart, nervous system, muscles and joints—it can be debilitating, or even fatal.

Lyme disease is an infection caused by a microscopic bacterial organism called a spirochete (spy-ro-keet) that people can get from the bite of an infected tick. In our area, the tick carrying the Lyme-causing

spirochete is the *Ixodes Pacificus*, otherwise known as the Western Black Legged Tick or deer tick.

Many southern Oregonians have been afflicted with chronic Lyme—the result of not being diagnosed and treated early in the disease. Most Lyme patients have been diagnosed with a minimum of five illnesses before they are correctly diagnosed with Lyme, and some have had ten to fifteen doctors. As the spirochete moves into different areas of the body, the symptoms change and different specialists are seen. Lyme is commonly misdiagnosed as: multiple sclerosis, lupus, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, arthritis, mental illness, chronic fatigue syndrome, attention deficit disorder, fibromyalgia, depression, and Lou Gehrig's. Lyme is often the cause of

autoimmune disorders.

Antibody testing remains the most commonly used test, but accuracy is difficult. Experienced doctors diagnose Lyme based on clinical symptoms as recommended by the Center for Disease Control. Living in an area with known Lyme-carrying ticks is a major risk factor. Another consideration is a bull's-eye rash, or erythema migrans. Once thought to be present in 80% of Lyme cases, the erythema migrans is now known to be present in only about 40% of Lyme cases. The most common tests measure the patient's antibody response to infection. When your body is invaded



Adult deer tick.

by the Lyme spirochetes, your immune system makes antibodies to fight the infection. Tests that measure antibody levels are indirect tests because they measure the body's response to infection

See TICKS, page 22

TRAIL

FROM PAGE 1

here (see authors' note at end of article).

This is just one spot on the ridge. A part of this trail system extends from the Enchanted Forest Trail along Slagle Creek up to a network of old trails long used by animals, trappers, immigrants and Indians. These trails and the newer logging roads traverse this ridge all the way to Bunny Meadows staging area on Forest Creek, a distance of about 12 miles.

The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) is our new group forming to preserve, restore, and maintain these wonderful historic pathways. We would like to open these trails to non-motorized use: hiking, equestrian and mountain biking. The Applegate Ridge Trail (ART) will primarily follow the ridge tops that separate drainages like Forest Creek from China Gulch and Humbug Creek, or Slagle and Caris Creeks from Foothills and Birdseye Creeks (on the Rogue side of the ridge).

Nearly all the trails or roads along the entire route from Jacksonville to Grants Pass already exist on mostly public lands. Since BLM manages most of the land, we are working with the Medford District Office. We are also including other recreational users, private landowners and community groups to assist in planning. Part of our trail lies on the southwestern boundary of BLM's proposed Johns Peak/Timber Mountain Recreation Area. ATA members are an

optimistic group. We look forward to working with the motorized users to create an improved trail system for all to enjoy.



Hikers on trail above Humbug Creek. Photo by Barbara Kostal-Calahan.

We have been inspired by the Siskiyou Uplands Trail Association (SUTA), which has been wildly successful in their first project, the reopening of the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail. The old ditch makes a fairly level 26-mile-long trail that runs above the hills of Sterling Creek and the Little Applegate. Ultimately, the plan is

to connect the Applegate Ridge Trail with SUTA's Jack-Ash Trail, a non-motorized upland trail between Jacksonville and

grant-writing, scouting and trail building/maintenance. And you need not live on these creeks to join us and participate in this effort.

Help ATA create something enduring, healthy and quiet in our community for all of us to enjoy. Please spread the word about our "muscle driven trail" in the Applegate. And thanks to all volunteers everywhere. We're excited! Come hike with us. Give us a holler if you're at all interested in helping out. Contact Tom Carstens (541-846-1025) or David Calahan dpcalahan@live.com (541- 899-1226) or visit our website at applegatetrails.org.

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Authors' Note: *This wonderful spot can be easily reached by driving up Forest Creek Road five miles, turning left at Oregon Belle Road (BLM road 38-3-5) and continuing up the blacktop two more miles to the saddle south of Mt. Isabelle. This flat area at the intersection of BLM road 30-3-8 is easy to find. Hike south around the gate and continue up the slope for four-tenths of a mile. No ticket or boarding pass required, no search or pat down, no lines or fees and you may leave your shoes on. Upon arrival, you'll be treated to one of the most gorgeous spectacles in southern Oregon.*

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