

# Safety Reminders: Well Being Retreat Center

Well Being Retreat Center is located within a very rural corner of Northeast Tennessee. The property is wooded, and terrain varied. Nature is fully present. During your stay here, as you explore the property, please be aware of, and responsible for, your own safety. The following is a list of common potential hazards.

**Off Limits During the Retreat:** We keep egg-laying chickens in a portable coop within the fenced one-acre vegetable garden to keep them safe from predators. Everyone loves chicken (raccoons, o'possums, weasels, owls, hawks, coyotes, etc.) so the fence is electrified. Please stay away from the electrified fence to avoid a shocking experience.

**Food and Animals:** Do not leave any kind of food outside, especially after dark. Raccoons, opossums, and other animals will certainly find it and make a mess. For the same reason, do not leave windows or doors open unless there is a screen in place. Also, please do not feed any wild animals so that we don't turn wild animals into pests. Allow them their wildness.

**Gravel Roads:** All of the roads on the property are gravel roads. Because of the hilly site, some of these roads have a slope. All types of vehicles can drive to the Conference Building from any of the cabins. Where roads are one lane, please be courteous and be willing to back up if needed. Please stay on the gravel and don't pull off into the weeds or into the roadside ditch. When walking on the roadways, wear sturdy shoes or boots with treads rather than flip-flops or slick street shoes.

**Roadside Ditches:** Most of the roads have a drainage ditch along the uphill side of the road. At times the ditch may be filled with leaves and may not be visible. Be careful when walking or driving.

**Steep and Uneven Ground:** Because this is a naturally steep and heavily vegetated site, please be aware that the ground is bound to be uneven, steep and/or slippery in places. We recommend hiking boots rather than tennis shoes for hiking especially in areas off the graveled roads and maintained pathways. Note that wet leaves can be especially slippery. We recommend that you stay on paths or on pasture areas and use common sense if you decide to explore "the road less travelled".

**Construction Sites and Equipment:** Some part of Well Being Retreat Center is almost always in some degree of construction. On 160 acres, this still leaves a lot of room for peace and serenity. However, if you approach a construction site, be especially aware of your surroundings. If equipment is operating, the operator may not notice that you are approaching. Make sure the operator sees you before you get within range of the equipment. Please don't get on or operate any of the machinery or tools or climb on any stored construction material.

**River:** The Powell River is a beautiful place to swim in or paddle on. Many sections are calm, but there is fast water and rapids around some portions of the property. When paddling, keep the boat pointed downstream – do not allow the boat to get sideways in fast water. Watch for rocks in shallow sections of the river. You won't hurt the boats, but a rock can flip the boat over if you hit it crossways to the current. It's important to wear river shoes or a pair of old sneakers if you try to walk in the fast shallow water or if you go paddling. The river rocks are slippery – you can easily stub your toes or worse without good footwear. Do not try to swim in the shallow fast water – the river flow can be powerful. Always wear a life jacket when paddling.

**Fencing:** There are a few remnant sections of barbed wire on the property. Try to avoid climbing over it. If you must cross it, move very slowly. Any one barb will hook your clothing or worse. There may be some remnant fencing along portions of the riverbank. There is a short electric fence around the outside of the vegetable garden. Do NOT try to see what it feels like or presume that it is not on. You may know what 120 household volts feel like, but you cannot imagine what 8,000 volts feels like. Just pay any electric fence its due respects, give it room, and move on.

**Bees:** There are lots of varieties of bees and wasps, so if you are allergic, be sure to bring and carry Benadryl, an Epi-Pen or other medicine as recommended by your physician.

**Poisonous Things and other Nasties:** There is very little poison ivy around on the land, but there is some. It has three pointed leaves on each stem, sometimes shiny and a bit reddish. It tends to be found along the edge between field and woods or growing as a vine up trees by the river. There are copperhead snakes in the area. In over ten years here, the full-time on-site managers of Well Being Foundation have not seen one, but other people have seen them twice. Avoid climbing around rocky ledges in warmer weather; be aware of your

surroundings and where you put your hands and feet; wear boots when hiking off the roads or off mowed pastures. Of course, there are ticks here in the warmer weather. The ones we've seen have all been Dog Ticks and Lone Star Ticks, not Deer Ticks. Deer Ticks are reported to be the primary carrier for the Lyme's spirochete. Dog Ticks are larger – about ¼ inch – much easier to see, and reportedly less likely to bite a person. Nevertheless, it's a good idea, if you've been walking in taller grass or sitting/lying on the ground to check yourself when you get back to your cabin. Claiborne County and surrounding counties are listed as “Low Risk” for Lyme's, but it's still wise to be observant.

**Snapping Turtles:** There are snapping turtles in the Powell River. They have a long neck and look like they are too big for their shell. Their shell has pyramid shaped lumps on it. In the water they swim very well and feel safe and will make every effort to avoid you. On land it's a different story. Do not try to pick up a snapping turtle on land. In three years on the property, the on-site managers have only seen a snapping turtle on land a couple of times, but they do come on shore to lay their eggs.

**Stormy Weather:** If it's very windy, branches can fall. A big branch from a high tree can be dangerous. Thunderstorms can approach rapidly. If you hear thunder nearby or see lightning, do not remain out in the open, especially on higher ground, avoid being under the tallest tree around, and get out of the water if you are swimming.

In summary, Well Being Retreat Center is located out in real Nature. Nature is to be enjoyed but also demands our respect. The best advice is to be aware of your surroundings and act prudently.