the poisonous snakes, and know what to do if bitten. As a general rule, avoid all snakes in the outdoors.

**Poison ivy, poison oak, and nettles**
Obnoxious plants indeed. The best prevention is to learn to identify these plants, then avoid any contact. Should you touch one of these plants, do not scratch, and wash the area in cold water. Should you develop a rash, use a topical solution like calamine lotion.

**Chipmunks, raccoons, and skunks**
These creatures of the night are out to steal your food and cause general dismay at your campsite. Although they are cute to look at, they are still wild creatures. Observe them from a distance, and don't leave food out where they can get into it.

**Birds, crows, ravens, and guils**
Observe the same precautions for birds as you would for the small animals, and don't leave any food out at an unattended campsite. With a little knowledge and proper prevention, your next camping trip doesn't have to be disrupted by any pests.

**Packing up and Departing**
All good things sooner or later come to an end, and the same goes for camping. When it comes time to pack it up and head back to our other lives, consider these tips before departing:

**Stow your gear**
Use a whisk broom and/or rags to wipe off gear as you stow it. Try to pack your gear as you had it when you came to the campground. Also it's a good idea to separate dirty clothes so that they will be ready to be washed when you arrive home.

**Check the cooler**
Dispose of any food wastes, empty out excess water, and replenish the ice, as needed, for the trip home.

**Dowse the campfire**
Make sure the campfire is out. Dowse the area with the excess water from your cooler or another source.

**Gather all Trash**
To state it simply, "leave no trace!"

**Police the area**
A broom and a leaf rake come in handy for grooming the campsite and gathering up the last of
Knowledge of basic first aid is a necessity when enjoying outdoor activities that take you into areas or situations where there is no professional medical assistance.

Nothing will ruin a backpacking, hiking or camping trip faster than an injury, illness or emergency situation for which you are not prepared. Now, that's not to say that you must be an EMT, nurse or doctor before venturing into the great outdoors, but knowledge of basic first aid could mean the difference between a situation that can be recovered from and one which may not have such a positive outcome.

If you're a solitary hiker, camper or backpacker it is imperative that you have basic first aid knowledge because your well-being on the trail is entirely in your own hands. Most likely a hospital, clinic or first aid station will not be near enough to help you, so, as with your camping, hiking and backpacking skills, you will need to rely on your own first aid skills to treat an injury, illness or emergency situation. If you enjoy the above activities in groups then at least one person in the party (but preferably two or more) should be familiar with basic first responder skills.

The basic principles of first aid:

1. **Preserve life** - your own first, others second (A lot of people balk at this, but the bottom line is you can't help anyone if you yourself are incapacitated, unconscious or dead).
2. **Prevent deterioration** - stop the injury, illness or emergency situation from getting worse.
3. **Promote recovery** - help the injured or ill person(s) get better.

**Basics of First Aid**

**Be Prepared** - This begins when the hiking, backpacking or camping trip is being planned. Know where you are going, when you are going and what it is like ahead of time. If you're going to an area you've never hiked, backpacked or camped in before, research as much as you can about it prior to leaving. Books from the library or websites about a particular area, forest or park can provide a wealth of information. Contact local groups or rangers about any specific hazards such as poisonous snakes or plants you may come into contact with on the trail. Then, with this information in hand, prepare your first aid kit accordingly.

Being prepared also means having a basic knowledge of first aid aspects such as knowing CPR (courses are available from Red Cross organizations across the country), treating burns, breaks and other injuries.

**Assess the Situation** - Did something dangerous cause the situation? If so, has the danger passed? This could be anything from losing your footing on a slope to a dangerous animal. Whatever it is, you have to determine if the cause of the situation has stabilized or been