

Nature Notes

The Mosquito!



For 30 million years, more than 3500 species of this blood sucking and disease carrying insect have inhabited temperate and tropical areas of the world! Hikers and bikers of the Kimberley Nature Park contend with their irritating bites every spring and summer but no disease associated with mosquito bites is known here!



It is only the female that sucks blood to obtain the protein that is required for egg production. To track their prey and obtain blood, mosquitos use various specialized senses. When humans breathe out carbon dioxide, it can be detected up to 100 feet away. Certain chemicals in sweat, colorful clothing, and body heat are also useful in finding a blood feed.

Mosquito feeding Photo: National Geographic

Adult female mosquitos lay their eggs in standing water, near the water's edge or attached to aquatic plants. The first three stages of life, egg, larva and pupa, are all completed in water and within two weeks, depending on ambient temperature, adults emerge. Then adult males will form swarms at dusk which females fly through for mating. Males will typically live for a week, feeding on nectar and other sugar sources. Females will rest for a few days after a blood feed as the eggs develop. Once the eggs are laid, the female resumes looking for another meal of blood. She can live for several weeks. Eggs can overwinter in the right conditions and continue their life cycle when the required conditions are again present.

The City of Kimberley has identified the *Aedes* mosquito as our most common type. The biological spray, VectoBac 200G, was used as a larval control product in 2011. Aerial spraying occurred May 30 and June 13 in stagnant water and slow-draining areas of the Nature Park and ground treatment at Eimer's Lake occurred May 5 and June 23.



Aedes vexans larva Photo:FMEL

Mosquitos are most likely to feed at dawn and dusk. Spring outings in the Nature Park can be more enjoyable if you wear neutral colored clothing that covers most of the body and use a repellent.

Visit www.kimberleynaturepark.ca for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.