

GUIDE TO THE OUTDOORS FROM THE SHERIFF'S POSSE: THE BUGS ARE OUT



A picture of the carnivorous mosquito courtesy of Wikipedia.org.



An old picture from Cape Coral, Florida showing the Mosquito planes spraying the neighborhoods to keep the bugs at bay. Photo courtesy of news press.com.

By Mark Rackay

Seems that nothing can ruin an outdoor activity faster than a pack of mosquitoes. These creatures have wreaked havoc on camping trips and picnics since the beginning of time. I have always questioned Noah's wisdom about bringing a breeding pair onto the ark.

Problem is that mosquitoes, while an annoying nuisance, can carry diseases such as Lyme, Spotted Fever, West Nile and others you are probably better off not knowing about. Catching one of these sicknesses would certainly be best avoided, as they can leave you in a permanent state of meditation.

I lived in South Florida for better than 20 years and learned a bit about skeeters. In Florida, the mosquito is the State Bird, or should be. Each county has a Mosquito Control District that maintains a squadron of airplanes and trucks that spray all areas of the county in an attempt to control the little buggers. The aircraft fly over residential areas at a low altitude dropping a fog of chemicals that kills anything in its path downward.

At one time, the chemical slurry of choice was Baytex and diesel oil. This stuff used to get in the mangrove waters and cause fish kills. It does provide relief from the mosquitoes for a while but I often wondered what it does to people. Most folks ran inside when the bomber planes flew over but the fumes reached inside the

house quickly.

Mosquitoes are at their worse during the early morning and early evening times. They seem to prefer dark clothing to light and hang out in the more shady areas, rather than in direct sunlight. It is best to wear long sleeve clothing and full-length pants rather than shorts, although this can cause other physical problems when it is so hot outside.

The old standby for keeping mosquitoes at bay is a good coating of an insect repellent. Repellants containing DEET, (chemical name, N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide for you chemical engineer types) in an amount of at least 20 percent, work the best and last the longest. These include Off, Cutters, Sawyer and Ultrathon, to just name a few.

Medical studies have shown that when you use DEET products properly, they do not cause any health risk. I know from experience that getting DEET on any type of Styrofoam cooler will cause the cooler to dissolve away. I try not to think about what it does to my skin but it is better than mosquito bites.

You will have to reapply the repellent every couple of hours. The skeeters will let you know when the last spraying is wearing off. It helps to give a good spray on your clothes, hat, pants cuff, socks and sleeves, where these critters like to sometimes infiltrate.

There are a number of DEET-free prod-

ucts available, some containing Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus and others with a base of IR3535, such as Skin-So-Soft Bug Guard or Skinsmart. All of these products work to a degree but if the mosquitoes are severe, stick with the DEET products if you can.

Some people can't stand the smell of DEET on their clothes or person. This would also include scent conscious hunters in the early hunting seasons. For you folks there is a product called Permethrin.

You do not apply Permethrin on your skin but treat your clothes with it. The treatment will last several washings if you follow the directions on the can. It works fairly well and keeps you from smelling like a bug bomb.

If a mosquito does bite you, avoid scratching it. Scratching and digging at the site of the bite will only make it worse. A small dose of a hydrocortisone cream or some calamine lotion will usually stop the itching.

We are going to spend our summer months in the outdoors, mosquitoes or not. Hopefully, some of these tips will help keep the nuisance bugs away from you and not spoil your fun.

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