

There are more than 3,000 mosquito species worldwide, and 47 species in California. They live nearly everywhere and need only standing or slow-moving water to breed.

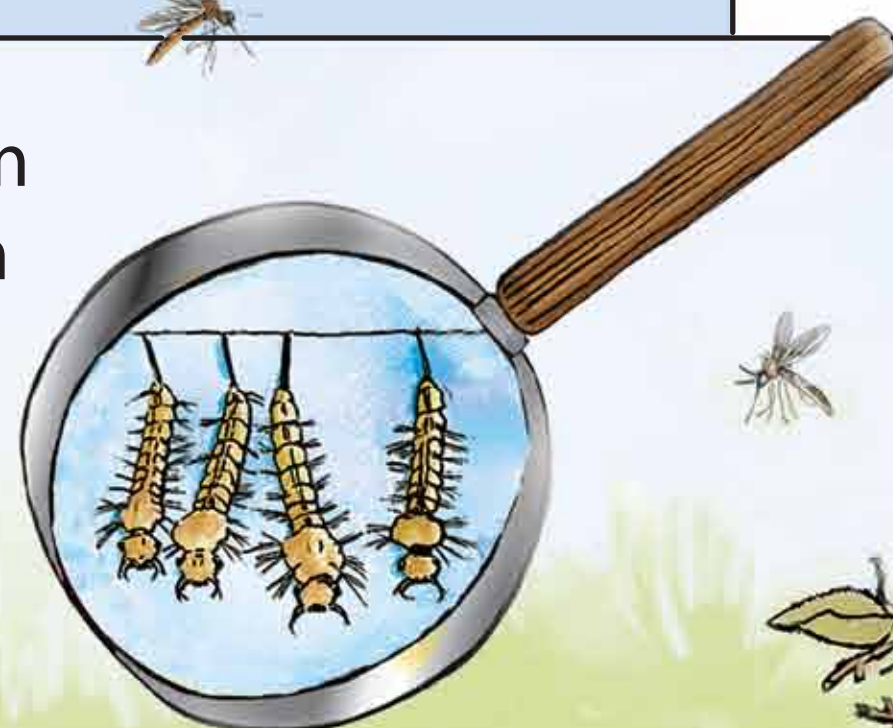


Mosquitoes, both adults and larvae, are an important food source for predators like fish, birds, bats and dragonflies.

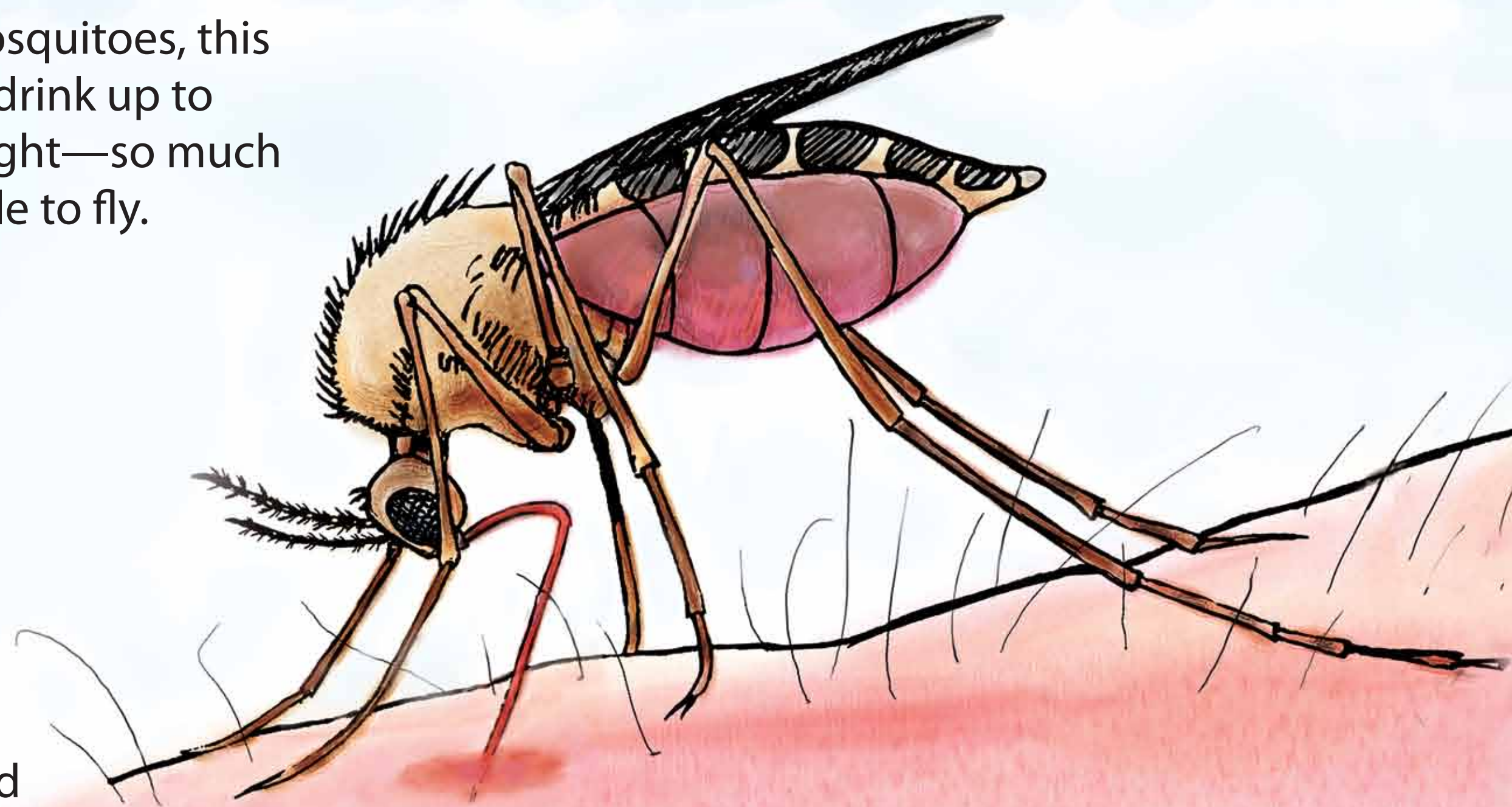


Because they reproduce so rapidly, mosquitoes quickly adapt to changing environmental conditions. As a result, in California the common house mosquito has developed a resistance to most chemical pesticides.

Mosquitoes can grow from eggs to breeding adults in less than a week. After a few days, eggs hatch into legless larvae, commonly called "wigglers."



Like all blood-sucking mosquitoes, this one is a female. She may drink up to three times her body weight—so much that she will hardly be able to fly.



As she probes for a blood vessel, the mosquito injects numbing, blood-thinning saliva under the skin. The itchy bump that forms is your body's immune response.

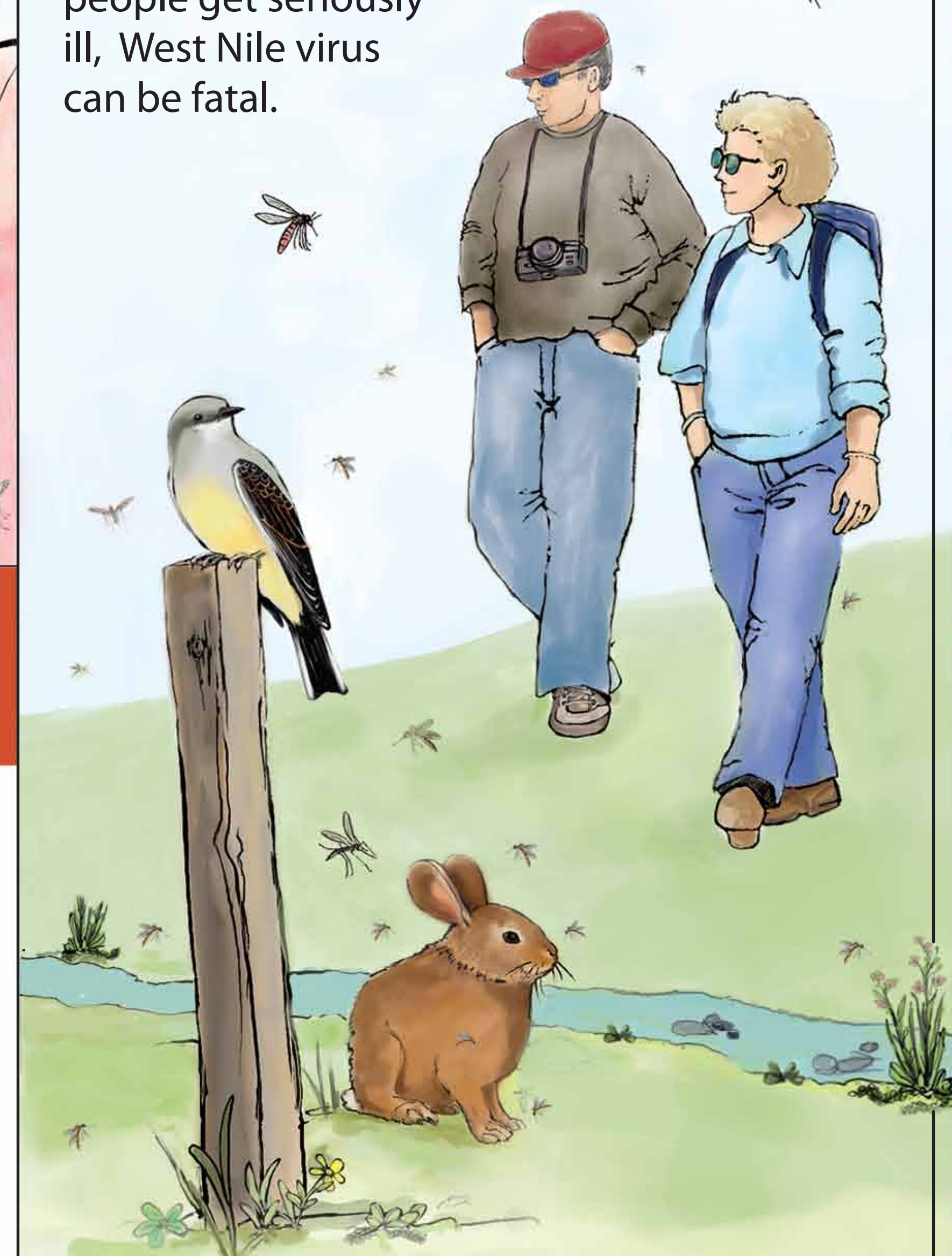
THE DEADLIEST CREATURE ON EARTH

Mosquitoes are responsible for more human deaths than all of history's wars combined. From the time our earliest ancestors walked the earth, these little bloodsuckers have whined in our ears and pestered us with their bites.

Mosquitoes also spread some of our deadliest diseases. Each time a female mosquito prepares to lay a batch of eggs, she goes in search of a protein-rich meal of blood. If she has fed on an animal with infected blood, she may carry that disease in her saliva, and, like a tiny, dirty needle, inject it into her next victim.

There are many mosquito-borne diseases, but the most devastating is malaria, which still infects half a billion people each year and kills over a million.

A vector is an organism that transmits disease. The common house mosquito is the main vector of West Nile virus in the U.S. It feeds on the blood of infected birds, and then passes the disease to humans. Although only about one percent of infected people get seriously ill, West Nile virus can be fatal.



In search of a blood meal, the mosquito locates her prey by movement and smell.

Most mosquitoes bite during the evening or early morning, so it's wise to cover up and use insect repellent if you're outdoors during these times.



Look around your home for puddles. Discourage mosquitoes by keeping rain gutters clear and emptying anything that holds water.

Except when breeding, mosquitoes feed on nectar. Males are strictly vegetarian.

