

Fort Matanzas

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort Matanzas National Monument
St. Augustine, Florida



Mosquitoes and People: **A balancing relationship**

Mosquito Lifecycle After a female mosquito bites a host, it lays its eggs in standing water or at a site that will later be flooded. Depending on species, these sites can range from discarded cups to huge marshes. After the eggs are laid, it takes days or even months for them to hatch. Larvae breathe while hanging upside down, using tubes that extend to the water's surface. They feed on suspended microorganisms. After about 10 days, larvae emerge as adults. Female mosquitoes will then mate, seek a host, and lay eggs to continue the lifecycle. Male mosquitoes only feed on plant juices and nectar, find a female to mate with and die soon after.

Their Important Role in Nature Adult mosquitoes serve as food for dragonflies, damselflies, bats and birds. As larvae, they are a primary food source for other larger larvae, diving beetles and small fish. These small predators are later eaten by larger animals such as fish, which some people catch for food or to sell. While foraging for nectar, mosquitoes can potentially pollinate selected species of plants.

Conserving Our Natural Resources: Why don't we spray? Many animals, such as bees, are very sensitive to the pesticides used for mosquito control. In locations with sandy soil, such as coastal areas, pesticides can easily leak into vulnerable ground water systems used for drinking and cleaning. Marshes are also very valuable resources that support a great diversity of life and help protect us against storm damage. So, it is important to keep these ecosystems healthy and clean of potentially harmful chemicals.

Personal Protection Help prevent mosquitoes from artificially breeding by removing standing water around your home, such as in buckets and clogged gutters. When in areas with mosquitoes, use a repellent. Commercial repellents with DEET can be quite effective, as can some newer products and some natural repellents. When possible, wear long sleeve shirts and pants.

Interesting Facts:

- ◆ **A mosquito's wing beats about 300-600 times per second.**
- ◆ **Only female mosquitoes bite animals and humans for blood, which provides protein and fat to nourish their eggs.**
- ◆ **A mosquito's life span can be from 3 to 100 days.**
- ◆ **A female mosquito can lay 100 to 300 eggs at one time.**
- ◆ **Not all species of mosquitoes bite humans.**
- ◆ **Mosquitoes DO NOT transmit AIDS.**
- ◆ **Mosquitoes are attracted to warmth, odor, moisture and Carbon dioxide.**