

Just for Kids

Mosquitoes

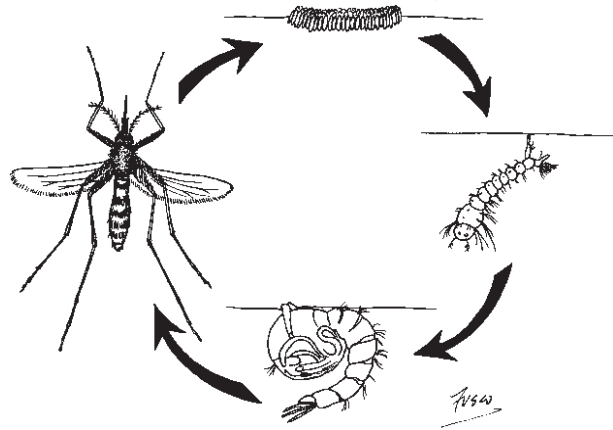


What good are mosquitoes?

- | Mosquitoes are members of the food chain and are eaten by many fish, birds and bats.
- | Mosquitoes are pollinators like bees and butterflies. While traveling to a flower for nectar, mosquitoes pick up pollen, which is then brought to the next flower that they visit.

True or False

- ___ Not all mosquitoes bite humans.
- ___ Only female mosquitoes draw blood.
- ___ Both male and female mosquitoes feed on the nectar of plants.
- ___ Male mosquitoes are attracted to sounds the females make with their wings.
- ___ Some mosquitoes have been found in water three times as salty as seawater.



Mosquitoes begin their life as eggs deposited in or near water. Eggs deposited near water hatch when flooded by rain or high tides. The eggs develop into larvae (wrigglers) and then into pupae (tumblers). Finally, the adults emerge and begin the cycle again.

Try this at home:

If you want to observe mosquitoes yourself, it's easy! Leave a coffee can outside during the summer and let it fill with rainwater. Mosquitoes will lay eggs in the water and you can watch them develop over the next several days.

(Of course, if you don't want any extra mosquitoes in your yard, be sure to throw away any trash that can collect water and serve as a temporary pool for mosquitoes!)

Mosquitoes and Disease

Some mosquitoes can carry germs that cause diseases in humans and other animals. The germ is passed to the animal through the mosquito's bite. Canine heartworm, which affects dogs and occasionally cats, is carried by mosquitoes, while malaria (most common in the tropics) Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) are diseases that affect humans. In summer, people in Connecticut become concerned about mosquitoes carrying EEE and WNV. Usually, these viruses are found in birds and bird-biting mosquitoes that live in or near wetland habitats. The chance of people getting one of these viruses is very small.

Mosquitoes everywhere!

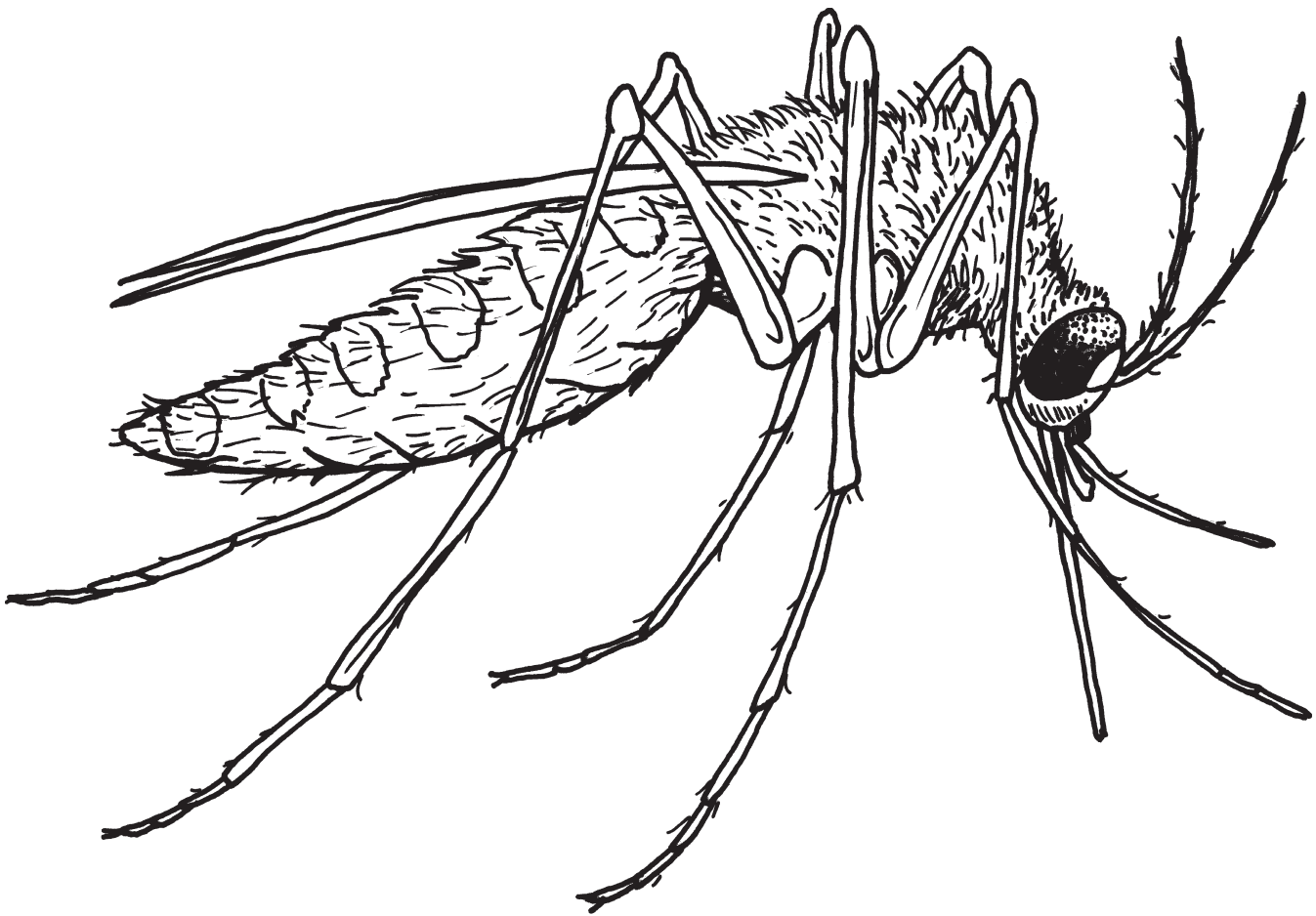
Worldwide, there are about 3,450 different kinds (species) of mosquitoes. Several new species are identified by scientists each year. In the United States, there are 170 species and, in Connecticut, 48. The tropics have the greatest number of different species (at least 2,500) and the Arctic has the greatest concentration.

Answers to True or False:

All are true.

Mosquitoes

Only female mosquitoes bite. Female mosquitoes need to feed on the blood of animals before they can lay eggs. Most people think of mosquitoes only as pests. But mosquitoes are an important source of food for many animals.



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