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Fox Valley mosquito season may be worst in years

By Jamie Stark
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Summertime means mosquitoes in northeastern Wisconsin.

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The pests not only put a damper on outdoor activities but also can spread diseases such as West Nile virus.

"Unfortunately, it's very difficult to predict how bad mosquitoes will be," said Joe Conlon, spokesman for the American Mosquito Control Association and a medical entomologist.

Phil Pellitteri, of the University of Wisconsin-Extension in Madison, predicts this year may be worse than the last few summers, during which the mosquito count was unusually low.

"It's normal to be chased into your house at dusk in June," Pellitteri said.

Current weather conditions and the heavy snowfall of the last two winters may lead to more mosquitoes than usual this summer.

Most mosquitoes in northeastern Wisconsin lay eggs in puddles, ditches and shallow bodies of standing water. Heavy winter snowfall that became water this spring gave mosquitoes additional real estate for laying eggs.

"The cool, wet beginning of our June has probably doomed us to a big crop of mosquitoes this year. The warm weather recently has probably speeded their development, but I doubt it's a big factor in how many there are," said Michael Draney, a biology professor at UW-Green Bay.

Mosquitoes tend to be active an hour before and after sunset and sunrise in this region, Conlon said.

The exception is the mosquito species that lives in wooded areas. Mosquitoes thrive in dark, humid spaces, making them active on hot summer nights and in dark, forested areas.

"Mosquitoes tend to be more active around a full moon," Conlon said.

The best hope for fewer mosquitoes is a dry summer.

"With heavy rains and flooding, you can set your watch that two weeks later there will be plenty of mosquitoes. The problem is, then they last four to five weeks," Pellitteri said.

Additional Facts