

Vector of the Month

Influx of Harmless ‘Mosquito Hawks’ Look Like Giant Mosquitoes



A crane fly perched on a person's fingers. Photo Credit: San Diego County News Center

If you have noticed what looks like giant mosquitoes or daddy-longlegs with wings, flying around like crazy and bouncing off walls, you are not alone. Crane flies can appear in droves throughout the region during rainy winters. Crane flies are nothing to be afraid of. They have many nicknames, including “mosquito hawks,” “skeeter-eaters,” and “daddy longlegs.” However, they are really just crane flies. Although they are pretty large for the average bug you see flying around in Orange County, they are completely harmless to people.

Their bodies sometimes reach an inch or more in length, but they can look even bigger because of their six, long, stilt-like legs. The easiest way to identify a crane fly is to see if it is bigger than a dime. If it is too large to be a mosquito, then it is most likely a crane fly. Bug experts sometimes call the crane flies “five-legged flies” because of their spindly, fragile legs. It is unusual to find one with all six of its legs intact.

There are a few myths and misconceptions that need to be debunked. First, they are related to mosquitoes, but crane flies are not mosquitoes. Most adult crane flies don't eat at all, but those that do will drink nectar. Since most adults do not consume, they are unable to bite, and therefore cannot transmit disease. That's the good news.

Unfortunately, crane flies do not eat mosquitoes. Crane flies have colorful but inaccurate nicknames such as “mosquito hawks” and “skeeter-eaters.” Also, adults only live ten days at the most, unless they're gobbled up by birds, lizards or other predators. Spring is the peak season for crane flies. Their populations are high following a rain event. These bugs are attracted to lights, often drawing them into houses through open doors and windows.

Crane fly or mosquito eater? Here are a few things you might not know about this common insect

Marcy Sousa 4/07/2022, RECORDNET



Jack Kelly Clark/ University of California

Crane flies, we've all seen them awkwardly bumping into walls, ceilings and windows, gathered around porch lights or stuck to your window screens. In our area, they commonly known as mosquito hawks or mosquito eaters, but did you know, they don't actually eat mosquitoes.

Adult crane flies spend their very short lives with only love on their tiny minds. The sole purpose of the adult crane fly is to mate and, for the females, to lay eggs for next spring's crop of flies. The adults don't really eat at all but, they are undoubtedly greatly appreciated by hungry birds at this time of year, as well as smaller mammals, fish, spiders and predatory insects. Crane flies are harmless to handle, so the next time one makes its way indoors, simply cup it gently to release outdoors.

Crane flies are found all around the globe, from the tropics to subpolar regions. These insects are true flies and there are over 15,000 species worldwide. The most common and most damaging crane fly in North America is the *Tipula paludosa* or European crane fly.

Crane flies belong to the family known as Tipulidae and are in the order Diptera. The term Diptera is derived from the Greek words "di" meaning two and "ptera" meaning wings, and refers to the fact that true flies have only a single pair of wings.

Adult crane flies emerge from the soil beneath turfgrass, pastures and other grassy areas in late summer and fall. Females mate and lay eggs in grass within 24 hours of emerging. Eggs hatch into small, brown, worm like larvae that have very tough skin and are commonly referred to as "leatherjackets." The leatherjackets feed on the roots and crowns of clover and grass plants during the fall. They spend the winter as larvae in the soil; when the weather warms in spring, they resume feeding. During the day larvae

mostly stay underground, but on damp, warm nights they come to the surface to feed on the aboveground parts of many plants.

When mature, the larvae are about about 1 to 1½ inch long. Female crane flies have extended abdomens, which house eggs and are capped with an ovipositor. Although these ovipositors appear similar to stingers, they are harmless and are only used for reproductive purposes.

Around mid-May they enter a nonfeeding pupal stage and remain just below the soil surface. In late summer and fall, adults emerge to start the cycle again. In California, crane flies have primarily been found at damaging levels in the Humboldt and Del Norte counties and do not appear to be a problem on turfgrass in warmer, inland areas.

So what can you do to help manage the mosquito population in your yard since mosquito eaters aren't interested in eating mosquitoes? The most effective control methods are those targeted against the larval stage of the life cycle.

Did you know that many mosquitoes lay "egg rafts" and that each one can contain between 100 to 400 eggs? Recently an invasive mosquito, commonly called the Yellow Fever mosquito or *Aedes aegypti*, was discovered in San Joaquin County. It glues individual eggs on the sides of yard containers and they won't hatch for several years until water levels reach them. It only takes mosquitoes several days to go from egg to adult mosquito.

Here are some easy steps to help control mosquitoes around the home: Dump and drain standing water around your house weekly since it's where mosquitoes lay eggs, including tires, cans, flowerpots, clogged rain gutters, rain barrels, toys, puddles and even unused fountains. In addition, tip and toss unnecessary outdoor containers. Don't forget to change water in animal watering dishes and birdbaths often.

For gardening-related questions, call the UC Master Gardener office at (209) 953-6112, or visit our website at ucanr.edu/sjmg.

MONTHLY REPORT: Yorba Linda**March**

	Monthly	Year to Date (YTD)	County Monthly	County YTD
OPERATIONS				
Service Requests Completed:	2	6	132	318
Mosquitoes:	2	4	83	202
Rats:	0	1	21	67
Rifa:	0	1	27	48
Number of Swimming Pools Treated/Inspected:	31	118	625	1,806
Hours Spent Treating/Inspecting Gutters	0	0	0	0.0
Undergrounds Treated:	0	0	0	0
Acres of Flood Channels Treated:	0	0.00688	0	0.03458
Acres of RIFA Treated/Inspected:	0	163	2,493	6,965
Number of Inspection Treatments:	64	178	1,683	4,386
LABORATORY				
Adult Mosquitoes Collected:	0	0	444	1,357
Collected From Trustee Home:	0	0	0	0
Invasive Aedes	0	0	0	1
Mosquito Pools (Samples) Tested:	0	0	21	81
WNV Positive Samples:	0	0	0	0
WNV Positive Birds:	0	0	0	0
Number of Human Infections/Deaths:	0	0	0	0
Fleas, Ticks, and Others Tested:	-	-	-	47
COMMUNICATIONS				
Outreach Events Attended:	0	0	1	1
General Presentations:	0	0	4	8
Educational Program Presentations:	0	0	18	53
Calls Received	-	-	225	490

PROJECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH OCMVCD

None at this time

COUNTY RESPONSE LEVEL / AVERAGE RATING:

Normal Season (1.0 to 2.5)
 Elevated Risk (2.6 to 4.0)
 High Risk (4.1 to 5.0)

TOTAL

4

AVERAGE

1.33

Sound Fiscal Practices Reduce Debt by \$1.275 Billion

TCA plans for further reductions,
totaling \$3.1 billion by 2030



Recent bond refinancings, early paydowns, and open market buybacks have produced substantial interest savings and decreased outstanding principal for TCA, further enhancing the Agencies strong financial position.



Since July 2019, TCA has
reduced debt and **saved over**
\$1 billion
in interest



Since July 2022, early repayment
of bonds has **decreased**
outstanding principal by
\$275 million



Debt reduction of
\$1.275 billion

A step-by-step breakdown - How we reduced debt by \$1.275 billion

- ✓ Recent bond refundings replaced higher interest rate bonds with lower interest rate bonds for a **\$700 million savings – without extending bond maturity dates**
- ✓ Early paydown of \$125 million bond principal in July 2022 **saved \$180 million in interest**
- ✓ Early paydown of \$150 million in bond principal through Open Market Bond Buyback **saved \$150 million in interest**



By 2030, TCA plans to pay down another \$980 million of bonds early, saving an additional \$860 million in interest.

This future debt reduction, when combined with the current reductions of \$1.275 billion, will collectively reduce debt by \$3.1 billion by 2030.