FRIENDS of Sax-ZimBog

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY

—from Head Naturalist Clinton

Mosquitoes

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This week, we feature an often-maligned group of insects, which are crucially important to the nesting success of many boreal bird species. Some may know them as the state bird of Minnesota, some a vector of disease, and still others as an amazing group of flying insects. Today's Bogdiversity Thursday post features mosquitoes!

Mosquitoes are a surprisingly diverse (and occasionally beautiful) with over 3000 species globally. Minnesota has 51 species of mosquito and these insects are incredibly important food sources at all of their life stages. Adult mosquitoes are eaten primarily by bats and birds, while larvae are eaten by fish, dragonfly, and damselfly larvae.

Only adult female mosquitoes feed on blood! Male mosquitoes feed on nectar or plant fluids and are occasionally successful pollinators! They may not be successful pollinators on every plant, but mosquitoes in the genus *Aedes* are successful pollinators of Blunt-leaved Orchid! They feed on the nectar of the orchid and

the large, sticky pollen grains get moved from plant to plant by the mosquitoes when feeding.

Mosquitoes breed in a wide variety of water bodies, from small ponds to holes that hold water on big trees. They do not lay their eggs in moving water or large open bodies of water. Some mosquitoes don't even lay their eggs in water, preferring to lay their eggs in the soil of locations that might flood.

More information included with the photos below.

(Photos of the mosquitoes below by Head Naturalist Clinton)

Mosquitoes in the genus *Aedes* are very common and very difficult to ID! Sometimes, you need to look as closely as the tiny claws on their front legs to get a accurate identification. The species pictured above is *Aedes provocans*.

A striking mosquito, Cattail Mosquito is unique as it is the only representative of its genus in the United States! Most of the members of the genus *Coquillettidia* are found in East Asia and Australia, as well as the southern parts of Africa. This species is also a primary vector for West Nile Virus.

To the untrained eye, many mosquitos look the same. However, once you start to notice some variation, the plain mosquitoes, like *Culiseta impatiens* above, get exciting!

It is important to note that not all mosquitoes need to bite to survive. In fact, no male mosquitoes need to feed on blood to survive and prefer nectar or plant sugars. Male mosquitoes, like the one above in the genus *Aedes*, have very fluffy palps and look very odd compared to the females.