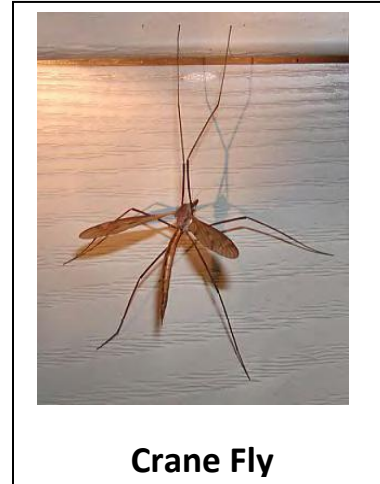


The Crane Fly vs. The Mosquito!

A Case of Mistaken Identity: A Crane Fly is not a Giant Mosquito!



It looks like a super-sized mosquito and it's flying around your living room. Fatally attracted to light, these huge insects may cause panic upon first sight. Despite appearances, however, this seemingly dangerous insect is most likely a harmless common crane fly and not a mosquito at all.

Common crane flies appear to be enlarged versions of many mosquito species, but there are several ways to tell them apart. The easiest way is by size. A mosquito is extremely small, measuring about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The common crane fly is between 1 – 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches by comparison. Some crane fly species can even reach up to three inches! Another difference is that the crane fly will have a slender, V-shaped abdomen with long legs. This body shape makes crane flies poor fliers, and they usually wobble in the air. Mosquitoes, on the other hand, are agile and move quickly when flying.

It is important to differentiate between these two bugs because mosquitoes transmit diseases like West Nile virus, encephalitis and Malaria, killing millions of people worldwide each year. Crane flies cannot bite and they do not carry diseases. As larvae, they may consume roots and vegetation while they are growing, but this is the extent of the damage they cause. In correctly called 'mosquito eaters' or 'mosquito hawks', crane flies actually feed on nectar or nothing at all in adult form. A crane fly's sole purpose as an adult is to mate and die.

Despite many misconceptions, crane flies neither hurt nor help humans. They can be a household pest, but they are not a cause for concern, especially when compared to their killer mosquito counterparts. To protect yourself from mosquito bites and the diseases they carry, remember to dump and drain stagnant water around your home because that's where mosquitoes breed. Wear long sleeve shirts and pants when outdoors, especially between dusk and dawn. Using CDC approved insect repellent containing DEET will also keep mosquitoes from biting you.