

Get to know the mosquito

Already in May, while the snow still remains, the first mosquitoes, which are called *tjälamygg* in Lapland, are seen. In July and August, the mosquito swarms are densest on marshes and in forests. Four hundred to five hundred wing beats per second with the two small wings produce the typical mosquito buzz.

Many relatives

There are three thousand species of mosquitoes on earth. One hundred and twenty species are known in Europe and forty-five in Sweden. Almost half of them are found in the mountain area, but they occur there in greater abundance. To the untrained eye, the species look similar. Many times, a magnifying glass is required to be able to distinguish different kinds of mosquitoes. Among the Swedish relatives of the stinging mosquitoes, five hundred species of midges and mosquitoes can be mentioned, which do not suck blood, as well as one hundred species of stinging gnats and thirty-five species of common gnats, which bite all the worse.

The bloodsucker

A man is a grateful victim for the mosquitoes because he is large, hairless, and slobbery. Only female mosquitoes suck blood. The female can suck up to five milligrams of blood and increase her own weight four times during such a meal. Your blood is enough to feed five million mosquitoes.

Only around the South Pole and on some arctic islands do you avoid biting mosquitoes completely. The very northernmost mosquito species can lay eggs without drinking blood. They live in areas where there is a shortage of light-tongued mammals, and the females get by on nectar and fruit juice, just like the males.

The reindeer herder's farmhand

Not everyone is hostile to the biting mosquitoes. Reindeer herders often say that mosquitoes and gnats are their best servants. Without the mosquito, the reindeer would remain

scattered among forests, bogs, and low mountains. To escape the mosquitoes, the reindeer walk high up in the mountains. There, it is easy to collect them and take them to the calf marking pens.

The mosquito lays eggs

After a number of blood dinners, the female can lay up to five hundred eggs. Some species lay their eggs on land, others in water. The eggs overwinter, and when spring comes, they hatch and turn into larvae. These become pupae, which eventually become mosquitoes.

Few enemies

The larvae live in stagnant bodies of water, and breathe air with their rear bodies in the water surface. Like larvae in ponds empty of fish, the mosquito has very few enemies. This may be one reason why the mosquitoes appear in such huge numbers. The wet Lapland infinity marshes are the best possible nursery for the mosquito.