

Deer Flies

(*Chrysops* spp.)



Deer Flies, also called Yellow or Pine flies, are members of the fly family Tabanidae. They are arrow shaped with banded and/ or spotted wings. They are sharp shooting marauders that feed on animals and people, inflicting a severely vicious bite. They usually make their appearance by the last week in May or early June, and this continues through the hot summer for about a month or so. The nature of this fly makes it impossible to eliminate through spraying programs and there are no chemical controls for deer fly larvae, which develop in mud around edges of ponds and smaller bodies of water which we have no shortage of here in Kings Point.

It is in these areas larvae develop into adults, resting until movement sets them into action. They are also attracted by carbon dioxide, and dark colors, rumor has it the color blue in particular. The female does the biting, as it needs a blood meal for reproduction, the males do not. They are *not* repelled by DEET containing sprays and citronella or Tiki torches, I can tell you that from experience. There are many items available for baiting this fly, and for providing personal protection. They do have natural predators being they are native to our state. Predators include wasps, dragonflies, birds and spiders.

Deer flies feed by cutting the bite area open quickly with their super sharp mouth. Once they have opened the skin, they release hemorrhagic saliva into the wound that keeps the blood from coagulating so they can feed easily (sounds like something out of a horror film.) It is the fly's saliva that may trigger some individuals to suffer severe allergic symptoms, such as dizziness and swelling at the bite site. These nasty little insects are also suspected to be carriers of Lyme and Tularemia, also known as "rabbit fever." Tularemia is a bacterial disease that can be acquired from contact with objects or infected animals, from the bites of ticks and, on occasion, from Deer flies.

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