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HOW DOES THE PICTURE ABOVE RELATE TO THE STORY BELOW?

The answer is revealed at the end of the article

Oh, Deer. . .Fly!

by

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GRNA Naturalist



Summer is here. . .and so are the deer flies! This is a classic “good news /bad news” situation. At any rate, deer flies are a reality that all of us wetland lovers must deal with every year. Why are deer flies so troublesome?

. . . Basically, because they are flies. Deer flies are small flying insects that buzz through the air, driving us to distraction. Deer flies are attracted by our "appetizing" smell and the way our body tastes. On our skin, they find particles

of fat, skin, and salt. And yes, our bodies provide them with a tasty meal of blood.

Deer flies have only two wings (other types of flying insects have four). However, two wings are more than enough to carry them around looking for their next meal. Equipped with scissor-like mouthparts, deer flies can easily lacerate the skin of any human victim. Ouch! Plus, when a deer fly bites, it injects its anticoagulant saliva into the wound to keep your blood flowing. On top of that, the next thing that little blood banshee does is. . .suck up your blood. Yuck!

If it seems like I am presenting a rather negative view of deer flies here, I confess, I am guilty. I'm a naturalist, and I am supposed to love all wild things. Deer flies, however, creep me out. I know they play a valuable part in the grand ecological scheme of things. They are, after all, part of the food chain, but for Pete's sake, I wish those little critters would stop trying to make me their next meal.

Grass River's marvelous wetland is prime habitat for deer flies. Deer fly larvae are aquatic and thrive in GRNA's streams, swamps, marshes, ponds, and nearby lakes. Added to that, Grass River Natural Area has a great system of trails providing plenty of opportunities for human/deer fly contact.

What can we do on our wetland walks to keep this minor annoyance from becoming a "hike spoiler"? The following letters are samples of questions and responses that I have given to folks (Dear Abby style) who have asked me this same question.

"Deer" Annie,

I love my summer morning wetland walks, but I'm being attacked by swarms of deer flies. Every morning I hit the trail wearing my favorite blue long-sleeved sweatshirt. I greet the warm summer day by taking in a deep breath of the fresh air and letting it out. "Aaah, Nature!" But it seems that even before I take a step, those pesky flies have zeroed in on me. Help! What can I do to avoid being their #1 target?

Signed,

Easy Mark

"Deer" Easy,

I have two suggestions for you:

1. Lose the blue!
2. Stop breathing!

Even though that blue shirt may be your favorite (and by the way, long sleeves are a good idea), blue is the deer fly's favorite color. Dark colors also appeal to deer flies. So, wear light colors when you take a wetland walk.

Stop breathing? Really? Deer flies and horse flies are attracted to carbon dioxide. So when you let out that “Aaah, Nature!” deep breath of yours, you exhale a bunch of CO₂ that those little buggers just love.

Best of Luck,
Annie

“Deer” Annie,

When I came back from my hike today, I felt the top of my scalp, and it was full of bloody bites. Those crazy deer flies have been burrowing into my thick and bushy hair and biting the top of my head. I spent most of my hike swatting flies away from my face, ears, and neck as well. How annoying! Got any suggestions?

Yours,
Flustered by the Flies

“Deer” FBTF,

You may not win any awards for fashion, and your curls might come down with a major case of “cap compression” (hat head), but the best protection for your cranium is to wear a good old-fashioned **HAT**.



Wearing a hat will block those brutal bugs from biting the top of your head. And if your hat has a brim, you could “save face,” along with your ears and neck.

If revenge is your thing, you might consider making a sticky “deer fly trap hat.” Then you can walk around on your hike collecting hapless flies who get stuck on your hat and die (see photo). To order your own sticky tape google “Deer Fly Patches.”

Hope you don’t find my
suggestions too “tacky.”
Annie

“Deer” Annie,

I’m a runner. Part of my daily routine is running on the trails by the river and the creek. This time of year, I noticed that I have a horde of deer flies chasing my tail. I can’t seem to outrun them! Why can’t I shake them? Why are they following me?

Desperate for answers,
Rapid Runner

"Deer" Rapid,

Try as you may, you can't outrun those pesky pests. Deer flies are among the fastest flying of all insects. You can't run faster than they can fly! Plus, . . .deer flies are attracted to movement. You, as a speedy runner are attracting their attention big time. Try standing still. You might escape being noticed by them. It's worth a shot. . .well, maybe it's a risky shot. The flies may still notice you and devour you whole. If you insist on running you can take heart in knowing that deer flies are territorial. After you have gone 15 feet or so, you might leave a troublesome fly behind. Unfortunately, another fly might pick up where the first one left off.

Yours,
Annie

"Deer" Annie,

I enjoy walking the trails with my friends. Lately, I am the only one in our group who has been bothered by deer flies. Those flies seem to be buzzing around my head only. I am the tallest person in our group and I'm beginning to suspect that deer flies only bother tall people. Am I right? What should I do?

Signed,
The Not So Jolly Giant

"Deer" Jolly,

There is partial truth to what you suspect. In reality, deer flies bother everyone. The reason you might be bothered the most is that deer flies tend to swarm to the highest part of a moving object. You are their tallest target. Lucky you. I suggest you find some people who are taller than you are to walk with. The deer flies should leave you alone and flock to someone taller still. Or you could tie a bandana onto a stick and walk with the stick flag held high over your head.

This really works,
Annie

"Deer" Annie,

Do insect repellents work on deer flies?

From your friend,
Bug Off!

“Deer” Bug,

Maybe, but deer flies hunt mostly by sight and not scent. A repellent containing DEET might work (but that’s pretty strong stuff). Anecdotal evidence suggests that attaching dryer sheets to your clothing might work.

Keep ‘em off ya,
Annie

Photo of Deer Fly by Bruce Marlin

And the answer to the question posed in the headline. The picture in the newsletter header is of a Pitcher Plant in bloom. If a deer fly were to get into the pitcher of the plant, it would find itself struggling to fly out due to the downward pointing hairs on the slippery walls of the interior of the plant. The fly will eventually become exhausted and fall to the bottom of the pitcher where it will find itself in the plant’s digestive enzymes that will consume it. The end result is one less deer fly to annoy you! Oh, Deer...No Fly!

PLEASE WELCOME

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE GRNA STAFF

We generally add college interns to our staff in the summer to help with camp and other programming. But this summer, we also added another year-round naturalist as well. We hope you will make all of them feel welcome when you encounter them at the Grass River Center or at GRNA events around the region.



Angie Les, Naturalist

As the daughter of an avid gardener and a botanist, Angie was drawn to the natural world since she was a child. This interest in the outdoors eventually led her to pursue bachelor’s and master’s degrees in ecology. Her ecological work took her from the subtropics to study lizard behavior to the Alaskan wilderness researching aquatic plant classification. Now she is delighted to be working in a natural area closer to home. She looks

forward to continuously expanding her knowledge as a naturalist at Grass River.



Alyssa Foley, Environmental Education Intern

Alyssa grew up exploring the outdoors surrounded by nature lovers. Her passion for conservation led her to pursue Environmental Science and Policy at Smith College, where she just finished her second year. There, her ardor for the environment translated into action as she conducts research on campus sustainability and assists a professor in investigating the plausibility of assisted migration for rare plant species to preserve their biodiversity. She is ecstatic to be learning in and from the environment of GRNA amongst its incredibly dedicated staff. When not at GRNA in the summer, she loves playing games with friends and spending time on the water kayaking, boating, swimming, and enjoying all that Michigan's outdoors has to offer!



Olivia Zimmerman, Environmental Education Intern

Originally from North Carolina, Olivia is a student at University of Michigan studying Environmental Science and Political Science. She is interested in environmental conservation and protection, and in her free time enjoys painting, reading, and boating. She is excited to join GRNA and learn more about the local environment and community.

Next month we will introduce you to Grace Robinson and Anna Anger, two more interns working with us this summer.

PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON

Weekly through the summer

Blooms & Birds: Wildflower Walk

Every Tuesday this summer

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Donations appreciated. No pre-registration is necessary.

Go for a relaxing stroll on the trails with GRNA docents Julie Hurd and Phil Jarvi each week to find and identify the beautiful and unique wildflowers at Grass River. Along the way, we will listen and look for the birds that call Grass River home.



***Naturalist on the Trail
Every Friday this
summer***

10:30 am – 1:30 pm

Every Friday this summer a naturalist will be stationed outdoors on our

trail system, offering a new mobile mini-program each week.

Stop into the Center to find out where the naturalist is that day, or go find them on the trail! You can drop in any time during the 3-hour window of the program. For all ages! Donations welcome.

Programs Through the End of June and Beginning of July



June Mushroom Hunt

Saturday, June 25

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

\$10 per person

Morels aren't the only mushrooms at GRNA. Early summer mushrooms are beginning to emerge, like the oysters mushroom pictured here. You will learn about summer-fruiting fungi and then head out on a hike in search of mushrooms with a Grass River naturalist. [Click here to register.](#)



Kayak Grass River

Wednesday, June 29 is now SOLD OUT!

Thursday, June 30 (just added) and Monday, July 11

9:30 am - 12:00 pm

\$45 per person - includes tour, kayak, PFD, and paddle for each participant

There is no better way to experience Grass River than by paddling its calm waters and enjoying its unique wildlife! On these morning guided tours, visitors explore Grass River by kayak and find out about GRNA's conservation efforts, wetland plants, and wildlife. **Adults Only. Limited to small groups, must pre-register.** Call GRNA to register: 231-492-8793, or email james@grassriver.org. This program meets at the Grass River Center and then walks to the dock to launch kayaks. Kayaks and paddles are provided and ready for you at the dock.

Clay Modeling with Molly



Thursday, June 30

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

\$10 per person, must pre-register

Join us for a clay modeling workshop led by Molly Noland, an experienced area potter, for ages 10 – adult. She will guide you as you get your hands into the clay and form nature-themed pieces she will then take to her studio and fire for you. You will need to return to the Grass River Center to pick up your finished artwork. [Click here to register.](#)

Art on Thursdays continues on July 14 and August 11. Specific programs will be announced on the website.

Classes at GRNA through NMC are also available:

Friday, June 24, Sedges of Northern Michigan

[For more information and registration - click here.](#)

GRASS RIVER CENTER HOURS

10:00 am - 4:00 pm, 7 days per week

Trails open dawn to dusk

DOES YOUR T-SHIRT DRAWER NEED A REFRESH?

Purchase a shirt to brighten your look and GRNA benefits



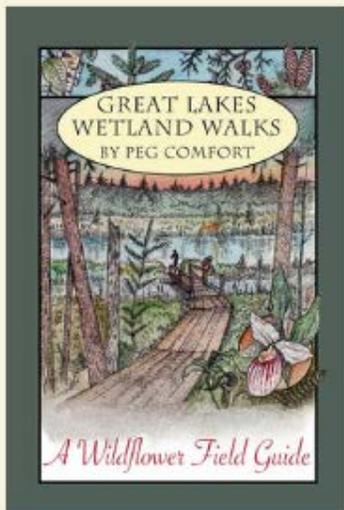
Choose from any of the logos above, printed on a variety of styles, colors, & sizes from youth to adult. Order online by clicking on this box. A portion of the sale comes back to GRNA as a donation.

**The 2nd Edition of
Grass River Natural Area's
FIELD GUIDE
to Northwest Michigan
is now available.**



This guide is written and compiled by GRNA Education Director James Dake. It features several new and expanded sections and a new Foreword by Executive Director Jenn Wright.
Cost is \$18.87 plus tax

Order online by clicking on this box or available at the
Grass River Center Gift Shop



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informative book
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nature enthusiasts.
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add to the book's appeal.**

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Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty-two years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation, and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come, please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

D O N A T E



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