Combating the Perils of Summer Pests

It’s summer. We want to spend as much time as we can outside, but what is lurking out there and how can you protect yourself and your family?

**Mosquito Bites**

**The peril:** Mosquitoes are not only vexing; they can also harbor and transmit the microorganisms that cause diseases like West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis. The mosquito picks up these disease pathogens (often a virus) when it feeds on an infected host. The virus develops and multiplies inside the mosquito. The infected mosquito then transmits the virus through its saliva when it bites an uninfected host.

**The protection:** When you’re outside, especially at dawn and dusk, wear long sleeves, long pants, socks, and closed-toe shoes. Spray clothes and exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.

**Tips for Tick Removal:**

- Wear gloves if available.
- Don’t use your fingers.
- Grab the tick at the part that is stuck in your skin, not around its bloated belly.
- Gently pull the tick straight out until it lets go of your skin; do not twist and turn the tick.
- Do not crush the tick, because you are expelling its pathogens.
- Put the tick in a jar or sealed bag, and place it in a freezer for possible identification later.

**Bee Stings and Spider Bites**

**The peril:** Bee stings are uncomfortable for most people because of localized pain and swelling, but they can cause life-threatening reactions in people who are highly allergic. Spider bites can be severe, with ulceration and secondary infections, but they are rarely serious.

**The protection:** Stinging insects, including bees, yellow jackets, wasps and hornets, usually attack only when disturbed. Avoid swatting at them or approaching their nests or hives.

**Poison Ivy**

**The peril:** If you’ve ever had poison ivy, you know it is something you don’t want mixed into your summer fun. The leaves of poison ivy contain urushiol, a highly allergenic chemical that triggers an itchy, blisterly rash in most people. Even if you don’t touch the plants, you can get the rash from contact with smoke from burning their leaves or from touching something else that has come into contact with them, such as clothing or a pet.

**The protection:** Learn each plant’s identifying features. Poison ivy has leaves clustered in threes, with the longest stalk in the center. If you think you’ve been exposed to urushiol, wash the area with cool water and mild soap. Rinse clothes or other contaminated objects, and hose down pets that might have tramped through the plants. Sometimes it seems that new areas of poison ivy appear days after the initial rash. If that is the case, think back to everything you were wearing or using on the day of exposure. Gloves, clothing, shoes, and all other possible sources of the oil should be washed in hot water. If you slept before realizing you were exposed, wash your sleepwear, linens, and towels.

Cool compresses and over-the-counter anti-itch creams will work for most of us if we’ve been bitten by a tick or insect or have picked up poison ivy. However, if you develop symptoms that could indicate a mosquito—or tick-borne infection, including chills, a fever, a headache or body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, or a rash on your torso, get medical help.

Take precautions and have a safe and enjoyable time at the recreation areas this summer.
Tap Into Nature

2016 Recreation Photo Contest

There were some spectacular photos entered into this year’s photo contest. The judges (members of the Regional Water Authority’s two boards) had a hard time choosing the winners. Below are the winning photos. To see all the winning and finalist photos in color, go to the recreation page on our website, www.rwater.com.

General Scenes, Ron Guerrucci, Stratford

People Recreating, Ron Guerrucci, Stratford

Plants, Ron Guerrucci, Stratford

Water Scenes, Lois Main, East Haven

Wildlife, Ron Guerrucci, Stratford
Calender of Events

Botany Walk at Lake Saltonstall
Saturday, May 7, 9 to 11 a.m.
Join members of the Connecticut Botanical Society as they search for plants in the woods at Lake Saltonstall. The group will start in the lower area around the lake, but then climb up to the top of the ridge. Be prepared for steep slopes. The meeting place is the hiking parking lot at 400 Hosley Avenue in Branford. The lot is about ¼ mile west of the intersection of Hosley Avenue and Brushy Plains Road.

Free Fishing Day at the Maltby Lakes
Saturday, May 7, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Want to learn to fish, but don’t have the equipment or a fishing license? Here’s your chance during the state’s first free fishing day of the season. An RWA staff member will be at the Maltby Lakes on May 7th with fishing equipment, bait, and expertise to share as long as the bait lasts. This event is open to all ages; a recreation permit is not needed. An Opie Event

Deer and Invasive Plants – A Bus Tour Around Lake Gaillard
Thursday, May 12, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
We will use the RWA’s Project WATER bus to travel around Lake Gaillard, making stops along the way to hear about research on deer and invasive plants from the researchers from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Please call 203-401-2654 to reserve your spot on the bus. Space is limited. When you call to make a reservation, you will be told where to meet.

Bass Tournament at Lake Saltonstall
Sunday, May 15, 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Registration and payment will be at Lake Saltonstall the day of the tournament. There is a $25 entry fee (boat and motor are additional). First, second, and third place prizes will be awarded. Monetary prizes will depend on the number of participants. Boat rentals will be on a first-come, first-served basis. CASH only; no checks or credit cards can be accepted.

Kids’ Fishing Derby at the Maltby Lakes
Saturday, May 21, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Open to anglers under the age of 16, accompanied by an adult. There will be prizes awarded to children in each of four age categories for catching the largest fish. Come for fun and prizes! An Opie Event

Bluebirds and Tree Swallows at Lake Chamberlain
Sunday, May 22, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
For the last five years, members of the New Haven Bird Club have been maintaining about 50 bluebird tree swallow boxes at Lake Chamberlain. They will explain how they build and take care of the houses. They will also give you a sneak peek inside a couple of special viewing boxes to see what’s happening in the boxes without bothering the new families. This program is open to all, welcoming children and grandchildren as well as experienced birders. Meet at the Lake Chamberlain recreation parking lot. An Opie Event

National Trails Day Walk at Big Gulph
Saturday, June 4, 8 to 11 a.m.
In honor of National Trails Day, join us for a vigorous hike of about four miles over steep terrain including Totoket Mountain. The hike crosses some wet spots, so wear appropriate footwear. Meet at the Northford Playground parking lot on Route 17.

Combination Bass and Walleye Tournament at Lake Saltonstall
Sunday, June 26, 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Registration and payment will be at Lake Saltonstall the day of the tournament. There is a $25 entry fee (boat and motor are additional). First prizes will be awarded for each species. Monetary prizes will depend on the number of participants. Boat rentals will be on a first-come, first-served basis. CASH only; no checks or credit cards can be accepted.

Water Learning Lab Activities at the Eli Whitney Museum
Sunday, July 24, 1 to 3 p.m.
In the shadow of the dam that established the RWA’s first reservoir, the Eli Whitney Museum (915 Whitney Avenue, Hamden) still celebrates water and ingenuity. On Sunday, July 24, the Museum is offering permit holders and their families a special tour of its Water Learning Lab. Construct toy boats, pumps, and squirters. Immerse yourselves in learning. Dress to get wet. Projects are appropriate for children ages 5 and above.
Contact the museum to reserve a space: dc@eliwhitney.org. This program is limited to the first 50 families. An Opie Event

Any event marked “An Opie Event” means that it is suitable for children. In the case of inclement weather, check the Regional Water Authority Recreation Facebook page for event cancellation notice the day of the event.
Corn as Bait?

Over the years, our recreation staff has gotten questions about using corn as bait for trout. It was suggested that it was illegal and that trout cannot digest the corn and will die. We went in search of an answer and found a study done in 1992 by a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission fisheries biologist.

For the study, two groups of hatchery rainbow trout were held in separate tanks and tested for 54 days. In one tank, 20 rainbow trout (average size 8.3 inches) were fed a diet of whole kernel corn. In the second tank, 20 rainbow trout of the same size were fed a standard trout pellet diet.

There were no trout deaths during the 54-day study period in either study group. However, the trout fed with a corn diet did not digest the corn very well. Their growth rate was about half the growth rate of the trout that were fed the standard trout pellet diet.

The biologist concluded that there is little reason for concern about the short-term health hazards for rainbow trout when whole kernel corn is used for bait.

Who Can Catch the Biggest Fish?

The Big Fish contest is back! Compete for prizes given for the largest fish of each species caught at Lake Chamberlain, the Maltby Lakes, or Lake Saltonstall.

Entering is easy: fill out the fish catch form at Lake Saltonstall when staff are on duty or submit a photo of your fish to Jeff Yale (jyale@rwater.com). Be sure to include the date the fish was caught; which lake; your name, address and telephone number; the species of fish; its length, girth and weight; and what bait you used.

The tagged trout at the Maltby Lakes and fish caught during tournaments at Lake Saltonstall are not eligible.

Take Your Camera

If you want a picture of yours featured in our newsletter and on our website, take your camera when you go for a walk at one of the recreation areas. Enter your photo in next year's photo contest. You may be a winner!