

Aerial Spraying for Black Flies

By Brittney Waylan

EASTON -On Thursday, April 20, 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will conduct spraying for black flies (biting gnats) in Northampton County. This operation will begin at approximately 8:00 AM at Washington Crossing State Park.

The Delaware River will be treated from Trenton to Martins Creek in Bucks and Northampton Counties. The Lehigh River will be treated from the Delaware River in Northampton upstream to the Hamilton Street Bridge in Lehigh County.

The helicopter conducting the treatment will be a Bell OH58 and is white with blue and red stripes. DEP personnel will be on-site at all landing zones managing the operation.

Vectobac 12AS is manufactured by Valent Biosciences. The B.t.i. material is a naturally occurring bacteria (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*) that kills the immature (larval) form of the black fly when they feed on it in the waterways. It is a bacterial larvicide, not a chemical, and is the only product used in Pennsylvania's waterways for black fly suppression. B.t.i. is not toxic to fish or other macroinvertebrates found in the treated waterways, and it degrades quickly in the environment.

Black flies are considered a pest that can inundate people seeking outdoor recreation in the warmer months, especially around rivers and streams.

For more information on the Black Fly Program, please visit Black Fly (pa.gov)



Ask DCNR Staff

What is the benefit of planting native species in your garden and landscaping rather than non-native ones? -- Kevin S.

Today's question is answered by Chris Firestone, DCNR Bureau of Forestry Botanist: Do it for the birds, bees, and butterflies!

Planting native plants in your garden and landscaping instead of non-native plants will increase the diversity of insects to your garden.

A diversity of insects is good for the diversity of birds.

This time of year, birds are nesting and raising young. While bird feeders may still attract birds to your backyard, seed is not what birds feed to their nestlings.

They feed them insects -- and lots of them! It is estimated that a baby bird needs 350-750 caterpillars a day.

These caterpillars are more plentiful on native plants, trees, and shrubs.

It has been documented that bird declines are linked to the decline in insects.

In addition to helping birds, pollinators also prefer native plants when given a choice.

Many native plants are host plants to moths and butterflies -- meaning that moths and butterflies have a preference for the plant species where they lay eggs.

A common example is the monarch butterfly that chooses native milkweeds. These caterpillars will only eat milkweed to complete its metamorphosis to an adult.

Do you have a question about DCNR's work? Fill out this form to send it to us! We'll pick the best questions and DCNR's scientists, geologists, foresters, and more will answer them in future issues of resource.

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