

8-23-19 Rediscover This Day

Do you use Google Photos? It is a great way to back up your photos, and I take a lot! They sometimes send you a notice, via email, called, “Rediscover This Day”. Now, for most people, that would be a great way to remember a walk, a family get-together, or a vacation. For a health agent, though, rediscovering the day is a crossover between hilarious and scary. Here’s an actual example:

The pictures taken on that particular day brought to my attention by Google Photos included mosquito larvae, dog poop, a sad dog, flowers, a hissing swan, a cormorant on a dock, rubbish, litter and blue-green algae. Yup, that sums it up pretty well; a-day-in-the-life-of kind of collage.

I am always on the lookout for mosquito larvae, tipping over containers and talking to people about the importance of removing standing water. (More on what you can do about mosquitoes in a bit.)

Dog feces, and other fecal matter, such as large amounts of geese droppings and the recent unfortunate cross connection between a water supply and a sewer pipe in Marshfield require awareness and both remedial and preventive actions.

The hissing swan was a bit worrisome, I must admit, as I had to walk by pretty close to him for my inspection. He stood his ground with his protruding hissing tongue and I stood mine, well, in passing, I stood my ground, on principal. I wondered if the goose understood my principals. I doubt it.

Ah, the cormorant. They are special, these diving birds. If you are ever fortunate enough to get close, really close to one, you will see their eyes are like jewels! Then back off, for they have a beak like a knife!

Oh, the rubbish; it piles up; it attracts animals, both wild and domestic and flies, of course, and it smells. Not pretty like the flowers I love, but I took a picture so that I could document it and send a letter to the owner. When the owner is a bank, well, the response varies. The town so very much appreciates it when they have a compliance team to get things done!

I will never understand litter. While a small amount is the result of the unintended wind-blown hat or the forgotten sock at a beach, almost all the litter I see is wanton and unrestrained abusive disrespect. Even some people who enjoy the ponds for fishing leave the bait containers and some are careless about their fishing lines, leaving it behind to strangle an animal. Budweiser has been the most

popular beer, according to my almost twenty years as a health agent observing litter. The containers have changed but not the heedless act of leaving them behind. Then there are the nips. They are everywhere. I am in favor of at least including them in the bottle bill or in banning them entirely. Just my opinion but I am not alone in my concerns about litter. And, those nips are small enough to get into our catch basins, clogging them and winding up in water bodies.

Blue green algae blooms are a world-wide problem. Halifax has worked diligently and spent a lot of money to tackle the problem. It has been great to have the West Monponsett Pond open these last two years. The application of alum to bind with the phosphorous is not a permanent solution though. It will be challenging and interesting to see what happens with this serious problem. We need seriously strong assistance with the politics of Brockton and our water supplies. Who will provide it?

Now, back to the mosquitoes because it is a year when Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) has once again reared its ugly head. We will soon have another aerial spraying, whether you like it or not, in order to save human lives. I do not yet know the date and will advertise it widely when I do. Please do keep in mind that while the aerial sprayings reduce the mosquito population, it does not eliminate them, or the risk of mosquito borne diseases such as EEE and West Nile virus (WNV). In addition to using EPA approved repellants, wearing long sleeves and pants, repairing screens and avoiding outdoor dusk to dawn activities, the use of fans is also helpful.

That's right; fans! You might soon become a huge fan of fans. Before dusk, if you want to enjoy the outdoors but are not fortunate enough to live near open water where the breezes help to keep the mosquitoes away, you can add fans to your outdoor space. An oscillating pedestal fan and any old window fan you might have, placed in the corners of your deck or patio, can act as an air curtain, making it difficult for flies and mosquitoes to battle their way past that breeze! Air curtains are sometimes used in food establishments for the same reason. They are stronger and more concentrated but serve as a reminder for the DIY at home.

Fans; one more tool for battling the mosquitoes, all in a day rediscovered; hopefully, in an easy breezy kind of way.

Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for Halifax, MA. She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or cathleen.drinan@halifax-ma.org

