

9-27-13 September's Song

For parents, September starts with a surprising rush of activities, even though everyone knows we can't halt time or change that calendar.

In nature, a calendar, of sorts, marches on, also. While it does, it sings a quiet song while so much is going on. August sang a noisy chorus with tree frogs, crickets, and birds beginning to migrate. It was quite the opera, actually. Now, nature is quietly humming as she goes about her business, with the exception of one house wren in my yard, still claiming its territory, as the leaves fall and the ferns turn yellow and the pumpkins begin to appear in the fields where they grew fat all summer long, invisible under the large leaves.

So much happens right on time, such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) appearing in August and continuing into September. For a while there, we had the mosquito's favorite weather: hot, humid and dry. That's right; dry. There was already enough water in the swamps where EEE begins and mosquitoes love thick, gucky stagnant water, considering it "nutrient rich" for their babies; those cute, tiny, shrimp-like, wriggling larvae. The mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus (WNV) always prefer that stagnant water and that is why they seek out small containers, such as tire and tarps. We've had lots of WNV this year but most people don't give it much heed, it seems to me, because it is not known to kill children. It is people over 55 who are at risk for serious illness or death from WNV. EEE goes for everybody, with the young and old at highest risk for this deadly or dire disease. The recent horse case in Middleborough and three other horse cases in Belchertown and Tyngsborough could have been a person. It could have been you or me or your child. Middleborough is now considered at Critical Risk and neighboring towns, such as Plympton, are bumped up to High Risk.

The towns at high and critical risk have instituted closures and cancellations of outdoor activities near or after dusk. Check with your town, as each handles it differently. Some "bans" or "curfews" are for town owned property and/or town sponsored events. Other towns say "No outdoor activities after dusk." Their intentions are good and for your good. Is this really the time to challenge this and risk your life to make a point about freedom?

Please, please, please take this matter seriously. Please don't let the recent cool nights fool you. All the more ravenous those mosquitoes are after a cool night because they were hunkered down, trying to keep warm, instead of flying about looking for a bird or a horse or your family. Once the air warms, as it certainly has lately, out they are, hungrier than ever. Also, keep in mind the mosquitoes we see at this time of year are the long lived adults. The diseases have had more time to build up in them, as it amplifies between bird and mosquitoes and mammals and mosquitoes. Some species are not choosy at all, biting whatever is handy.

Please use repellent; avoid outdoor activities at dusk and also on cloudy, humid days (as the mosquitoes dislike the sun and wind but love the protection of over-casting clouds) and wear protective clothing when you do have to be out.

Questions about spraying for mosquitoes was a frequent topic while at Halifax's TRIAD health fair last Saturday. (TRIAD is the three-pronged organization of law enforcement, older adults and community groups working together to promote safety and reduce crime and victimization among older adults.) While many people want spraying, others are opposed to the use of pesticides. Our world is already filled with so many chemicals: in our homes, our garage, our food, the stores, our schools, the air we breathe and even the clothing and bedding we buy. Cancer is already so prevalent. There's a reason why we use caution with pesticides and wait until emergencies require it to save lives. The State waits until those indications are there.

That is why we can never discard our personal responsibilities to protect ourselves and to improve our environment. There will never be that perfect solution from somewhere out there. Our individual and group actions are part of the solution, when it comes to protecting and saving lives. How we raise our children is part of the solution, too.

To my surprise, no one at the TRIAD fair asked about the algae in our Monponsett Ponds. I hope they know and are reassured by so many people working so diligently to solve not only the algae problem, but the bigger picture of natural flow through our ponds and rivers. That is the quiet song we are singing now, (Let it flow, let it flow, let it flow...) while striving for Sustainable Water Management, but the volume is building. You will hear more from us on that very soon. It will be happy song of solutions.

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