

Learning English podcasts ... from the
Hellenic American Union©

Level: Lower Intermediate

Lesson: 6

Title: "Mosquitoes"

Summary:

Vanessa and Michael talk about some interesting facts about mosquitoes.

Vanessa and Michael are in the middle of a live show in a radio studio. Listen to their conversation and answer the question that follows about the main idea.

Dialogue:

Vanessa: I'm sure we've all been in a situation where a mosquito's driven us crazy. In today's program Michael will tell us more about these little monsters and their annoying habits.

Michael: Hi Vanessa.

Vanessa: Nice to have you here, Michael. So, what brings mosquitoes to our homes?



Michael: Well, firstly I should tell you that there are over 2500 different species of mosquitoes throughout the world.

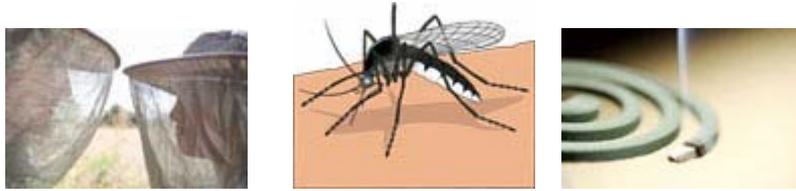
Vanessa: **No wonder** we can't get away from them in the summer.

Michael: Too true! Now, the mosquitoes we find in the cities are the northern house variety.



Vanessa: A 'northern house mosquito'?!

Michael: Yes; they prefer to attack after dark and they usually live only a few weeks during the warm summer months.



Vanessa: So... what? They find food and warmth in our houses?

Michael: Not only that! It's also a place for them to lay their eggs.

Vanessa: How many eggs are we talking about?

Michael: A single female can lay over 200 eggs at a time.

Vanessa: Yuch!



Michael: . . . and they can survive for five years. **Mind you** – it's only the females that bite.

Vanessa: **In other words**, the female mosquitoes are the blood suckers!?



Michael: Right!

Vanessa: **So how can we tell male mosquitoes from female ones?**



Michael: Research shows that females have smaller and less sensitive antennae than males but **you certainly can't tell the difference with the naked eye.**



Vanessa: Is their buzz different **at all**?

Michael: Not that I know of; but it plays an important role in mating.

Vanessa: What do you mean?

Michael: **In a nutshell**, their eyesight is so poor that it's the only way they can find each other. A female mosquito listens out for the buzz of a male and vice-versa.

Vanessa: So that annoying noise is the sound of mosquitoes flirting!



Michael: That's it. And they continue until their buzzes are in harmony.

Vanessa: Amazing! Michael, thank you so much for being here!



Now answer the following question . . .

What are Vanessa and Michael talking about?

They're talking about the characteristics of northern house mosquito and the differences between male and female mosquito.

Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on the details...

Part 1

Vanessa: I'm sure we've all been in a situation where a mosquito's driven us crazy. In today's program Michael will tell us more about these little monsters and their annoying habits.

Michael: Hi Vanessa.

Vanessa: Nice to have you here, Michael. So, what brings mosquitoes to our homes?

Michael: Well, firstly I should tell you that there are over 2500 different species of mosquitoes throughout the world.

Vanessa: **No wonder** we can't get away from them in the summer.

Michael: Too true! Now, the mosquitoes we find in the cities are the northern house variety.

Vanessa: A northern house mosquito?!

Michael: Yes; they prefer to attack after dark and they usually live only a few weeks during the warm summer months.

Vanessa: So, what? They find food and warmth in our houses?

Michael: Not only that! It's also a place for them to lay their eggs.

Vanessa: How many eggs are we talking about?

Michael: A single female can lay over 200 eggs at a time.

Vanessa: Yuch!

Michael: . . . and they can survive for five years. **Mind you** – it's only the females that bite.

Vanessa: **In other words**, the female mosquitoes are the blood suckers!?

Michael: Right!

Now answer some questions . . .

1. Vanessa says: "**No wonder** we can't get away from them in the summer". What does 'no wonder' mean?

'No wonder' means 'it is not surprising'. Vanessa emphasizes that there are so many mosquitoes that it's not surprising we can't escape from them in the summer.

2. Michael says: ". . . and they can survive for five years. **Mind you** – it's only the females that bite." Why does Michael say 'mind you'?

Michael wants to emphasize the point he adds about female mosquitoes. We use 'mind you' in spoken English to add something that makes the previous point less strong.

3. Vanessa says: "**In other words**, the female mosquitoes are the blood suckers!?" Why does Vanessa use 'in other words'?

Vanessa uses 'in other words' to give an explanation to the point made by Michael. We use 'in other words' in spoken and written English to introduce an explanation of something.

Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on some details...

Part 2

Vanessa: So how can we tell male mosquitoes from female ones?

Michael: Research shows that females have smaller and less sensitive antennae than males but **you certainly can't tell the difference with the naked eye.**

Vanessa: Is their buzz different **at all**?

Michael: Not that I know of; but it plays an important role in mating.

Vanessa: What do you mean?

Michael: **In a nutshell**, their eyesight is so poor that it's the only way they can find each other. A female mosquito listens out for the buzz of a male and vice-versa.

Vanessa: So that annoying noise is the sound of mosquitoes flirting!

Michael: That's it. And they continue until their buzzes are in harmony.

Vanessa: Amazing! Michael, thank you so much for being here!

Now answer some questions . . .

1. Vanessa says: "**So Michael, how can we tell male mosquitoes from female ones?**" What does Vanessa want to know?

Vanessa wants to know how somebody can understand which mosquito is male and which female. The expression 'tell A from B' is used in spoken English and it means to be able to see the difference between two things or people.

2. Michael says: ". . . females have smaller and less sensitive antennae than males but **you certainly can't tell the difference with the naked eye**". What does 'you can't tell the difference with the naked eye' mean?

It means that you can't see the difference between two things without close examination. So, Michael makes it clear that we can't see that female mosquitoes have smaller antennae than male mosquitoes just by looking at them.

3. Vanessa says: "Is their buzz different **at all**?" What does 'at all' mean?

'At all' means in any way. So, Vanessa wants to know if the noise male and female mosquitoes make is different in any way.

4. Michael says: "**In a nutshell**, their eyesight is so poor that it's the only way they can find each other." What does 'In a nutshell' mean?

'In a nutshell' is used when we want to say something complicated in a few words so that it is easily understood.

Please visit our site at www.hau.gr to find the transcripts, explanations and activities.



GLOSSARY

Annoying (adjective): something that makes one angry
e.g. It's so annoying to see you wearing my favourite pair of jeans. Why didn't you ask first?

An annoying habit is a usual behaviour that makes someone angry
e.g. Biting your nails is a very annoying habit.

Attack (verb / noun): trying to kill or hurt somebody
e.g. A gang attacked one of my neighbours in the middle of the day; they stole her purse.

Get away from somebody (phrasal verb): escape from somebody
e.g. The police chased the thief but he managed to get away from them easily.

Lay (verb): to put in a specific position
e.g. She laid the books on the table and started the presentation.

Lay eggs: produce eggs. Used for birds, insects, fish etc
e.g. Thousands of turtles drag themselves onto the beach and lay their eggs in the sand.

Mate with something: used for animals; to have sex in order to produce young.
e.g. Mating a horse with a donkey produces a mule.

Monster (noun): an ugly and frightening creature. Also used metaphorically to indicate bad behaviour
e.g. Her children never listen to her; they are two little monsters that never stop causing trouble.

Play (an important role) (verb): to have an important effect
e.g. Her mother's opinion plays an important role in any decision she makes.

Species (noun): a group of plants or animals
e.g. The panda is among the species that are disappearing.

Survive (verb): to continue to live / exist
e.g. Of the four people injured only one survived.

Variety (noun): a type/kind of thing
e.g. varieties of English (e.g. American, British, Australian English)

Vice – versa (adverb): the opposite of what somebody says is also true;
e.g. He never liked his brother and vice-versa.

Activity 1

Practice using the words in the glossary. Choose the most appropriate word to fill in the blanks.

1. The media ____ in influencing our opinions.	A. annoying
2. Fortunately, everyone _____ the earthquake.	B. get away from
3. Employees gossip about their boss and _____.	C. laid
4. She just never stops asking personal questions; it is so _____.	D. plays an important role
5. Various ____ of animal are facing extinction.	E. species
6. She _____the baby on the bed as soon as it fell asleep.	F. survived
7. We walked to the next beach to _____ the crowds.	G. vice-versa

Activity 2

Choose the correct word to complete the sentences.

1. The documentary about the life under the sea was **interesting / interested**.
2. I am really **exciting / excited** about going to Rio next Easter.
3. We were all **surprised /surprising** that he passed the driving test.
4. The teacher's explanation was **confusing / confused**.
5. Why do you look so **bored / boring**? I thought you wanted to be here.
6. Tom is a very **interested / interesting** person; he has travelled a lot, so he has a lot to say.
7. I didn't enjoy the party. It wasn't **amusing / amused** at all.
8. It was such a long walk; we all felt **exhausting / exhausted**.
9. They were a little **disappointed / disappointing** with the election results.
10. I'm **fascinated / fascinating** to learn how the game went. Did our team win?

KEY TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1. 1. d. 2. f. 3. g. 4. a. 5. e. 6. c. 7. b.

Activity 2. 1. interesting 2. excited 3. surprised 4. confusing 5. bored 6. interesting
7. amusing 8. exhausted 9. disappointed 10. fascinated