

## Mosquito — Mengquiluq

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Mengquilum kegkiinga.—The mosquito bit me.

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Photo: A mosquito bites an archaeologist! AM725

Mosquitoes are small flies of the Culicidae family. There are thirty-five species of these annoying insects found in impressive numbers across Alaska. Mosquitoes breed in slow moving or still water, from swamps and ponds to sloughs, creeks, and even a bucket of water. For this reason, they thrive in Kodiak's wet climate. Mosquitos begin appearing in May, and populations peak in the warm months of June and July. However, Kodiak's cool temperatures and windy days can provide some relief. Mosquitoes are not active in temperatures below fifty degrees Fahrenheit, and a breeze can keep them away.

The Alutiiq word for mosquito comes from the root *menquq-*, which means a sharp noise. This is an apt name for the whine of these irritating insects. Before DEET, head nets, and window screens, how did Alutiiq people manage mosquitos? Many Alaska Native people used smokey fires to keep the bugs away. This included placing wet moss over embers to create a smoldering fire. Others rubbed seal oil on their skin to ward off biting insects or wore heavy clothing for protection. Despite these efforts, skin irritations and infections caused by bug bites were a common problem.