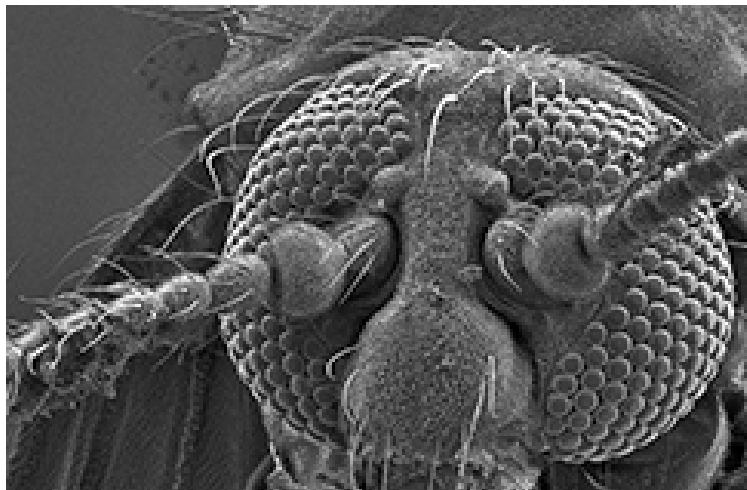


# KNOW YOUR ENEMY...

## Advisory information on midges



Midges are tiny, swarming insects that occur across large portions of the globe, including Buckden. In the right conditions, they can be active from June into September and their voracious appetite for blood can reduce a walk or even a whole holiday to skin-scratching misery. But armed with a bit of knowledge, and by taking a few simple precautions, you can keep the beast in check...

It is actually only the female midge that bites. It can only lay its eggs after it has had a blood meal. Midges are attracted by the carbon dioxide exhaled by all animals and are thought to be able to detect changes in concentration from 200 metres away. Other chemicals found in our breath and exuded in our sweat also draw in the insects. From a midge's point of view, the natural aroma of some people is more attractive than others. When biting, midges inject saliva and this causes an allergic reaction that can vary in intensity for different individuals. Midges also release a pheromone to inform others that a blood source is present.

### Midges like...


- ☺ Warm, damp conditions
- ☺ Sources of carbon dioxide, eg breathing animals
- ☺ Dawn and dusk, especially
- ☺ Still air and sheltered locations
- ☺ Undergrowth and woodland
- ☺ Dark coloured clothing and moving objects
- ☺ Lights switched on
- ☺ Sweat and warm skin
- ☺ Agitated people creating warmth, sweat and movement


### Midges dislike...


- ☹ Cold or dry conditions
- ☹ Strong sunlight
- ☹ The middle of the day
- ☹ Wind and exposed hillsides
- ☹ Light coloured clothing
- ☹ Chemical midge repellents
- ☹ Natural midge repellents based on eucalyptus, lemon grass or bog myrtle
- ☹ Aromatic foliage like walnut leaves and lavender
- ☹ Sweat tainted with the smell and taste of vinegar, garlic or vitamin B. Taking two dessert spoons of distilled vinegar a day is said by some to ward off biting insects (*not recommended by West Winds*)
- ☹ Pipe smoke (*not recommended by West Winds*)
- ☹ The Midge Eater, a device that emits carbon dioxide and animal aromas to attract the midges and then sucks them into a collecting bag


**Overleaf – How to outwit midges...**


## West Winds advice for outwitting midges!


 If you can bear it, keep external doors and windows shut from early afternoon onwards


 Midges that have settled on a surface like a ceiling in a room are less likely to bite you than those in the air, so avoid the temptation to disturb these sedentary ones, unless you are hoovering them up with a vacuum cleaner


 In the evening and at night, remember the golden rule: “Window open, light off. Light on, window shut”


 Make the most of the outdoors in the middle of the day; prepare to stay inside in the evening


 Dry, cool and breezy days are likely to be better for being outdoors than warm, damp and still ones. Head for the breezy hillsides rather than the still valley bottoms and definitely avoid damp ground and bogs

 Wear light clothing, keep as much skin covered up as possible and use a midge repellent, either chemical or natural

 Midges are attracted by movement but if you sense midges have homed in on you and are bringing in reinforcements, don't stand your ground – go somewhere else

 If you are under attack, the worst things to do are to get agitated, wave your arms around and rub your wounds. This leads to heavier sweating, creates movement, makes your skin surface hot and spreads around any blood from bites, advertising it to other midges. The best way of dealing with midges on your skin is to stab them individually with a finger

 If you think you get bitten more than others do, it means your natural aroma is particularly appealing to midges. Treat it as a compliment but wash a lot more than you would normally do

 If you react badly to bites, discuss with your pharmacist whether an anti-histamine might help

*“Kill one midge and a thousand will come to its funeral...”*