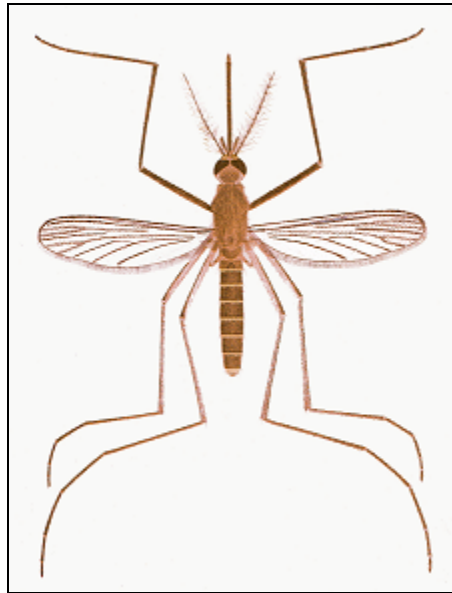


## VECTOR OF THE MONTH

### *The Tule Mosquito*



### *Culex erythrorhax* Dyar

*Culex erythrorhax* is commonly referred to as a “tule” mosquito, because the larvae are usually found associated with tule, cattails, or grasses. The adult tule mosquito is easily recognized by the distinctive reddish color of its’ body. It is medium size mosquito with very narrow white bands on the blunt-tipped abdomen. There are no bands on the legs or proboscis (beak).

#### **Distribution**

The species is known from as far north as southern Idaho in the Columbia River basin southward through most of the western states into valley of Mexico. It has been reported west of the southern high plains area in west Texas.

In California, the larvae are found in large shallow ponds containing heavy growths of vegetation. Sampling tule mosquito larvae is extremely difficult because they are bottom feeders and only occasionally come to the surface of the water.

In the Coachella Valley, larval production is continuous throughout the year in the Salton Sea marshes and constructed wetlands. Females usually remain close to the wetland habitat and feed mostly on birds and humans. The tule mosquito comes in large numbers and attacks viciously. Their bites are considered very painful, and the adults will attack during the day if disturbed.

### **Importance**

Locally *Cx. erythrothorax* can become a major pest to humans and other vertebrates that reside near tule/cattail habitats. Several arboviruses, such as WEE and SLE, were isolated from this species. Recent studies indicated that *Cx. erythrothorax* is highly susceptible to WNV infection, and it behaves as an opportunistic feeder, potentially bridging WNV transmission between birds and mammals.