

Why do flies and mosquitoes buzz? Is it their wings? Seems like they would get away with more if they were more stealth-like.

Short answer: Yes, in both cases, it is their wings.

Flies and mosquitoes (most, if not all, insects I believe) have wings that are stiff (without joints like a bird wing). The common housefly (*Mustica domestica*) beats its wings at about 200 times each second. The average mosquito (there are several hundred species in the United States alone, about 3,000 world wide) beats its wings at about 1,000 beats per second. The buzzing sound is those tiny, stiff wings moving through the air very rapidly. I have been unable to find any information on whether or not flies and mosquitoes communicate by sound.

Fun Fly Facts:

- Houseflies fly at about 4 ½ miles per hour.
- Houseflies buzz in the key of F.
- Flies often take off backwards, aim behind them for more effective swatting.
- *Drosophila* (a type of fruit fly) are the most commonly used insects to study genetic traits and chromosome mapping.
- A female, once fertilized, may lay 30 to 50 eggs per day throughout her lifetime (two to three weeks)
- In 1927 Charles Townsend (an insect scientist) estimated the speed of the Deer Botfly (*Cephenemyia sp.*) at over 800 miles per hour! Don't worry, no insect can fly faster than the speed of sound; imagine all the tiny sonic booms made by flies. His math was later proved to be wrong; their true speed is about 25 miles per hour.

Mosquito fun facts:

- Only females drink blood (they need it provide nourishment to developing eggs before laying them)
- None of the 3,000 known species of mosquitoes has a male that drinks blood
- Female mosquitoes use clues like carbon dioxide, moisture and warmth to find food. Our heads have lots of moisture and carbon dioxide from exhaled breath and warmth from numerous blood vessels, which is why we often hear mosquitoes buzzing around our ears.
- Mosquitoes can not bite, they can't open their jaws; instead they use their proboscis to sip blood (much like we would use a straw to sip soda from a cup).