



Stone fences aren't just fences, Sedgwick says; they're also row housing for chipmunks and snakes.

*Even spring's crop
of blackflies
doesn't dissuade
the stone fence
builder from his
self-appointed task*

from page 10

are odd-shaped, terribly irregular stones, and sometimes it is necessary for Sedgwick to hammer them into harmony. Slowly the stones ascend and eventually taper off to a height of about six feet. He fills in the middle with an abundance of smaller stones.

"I'm not just building stone fences," says Sedgwick. "I'm building row housing for chipmunks, squirrels and mice, and snakes, and woodchucks. It's row housing for all these little animals. They love it. It's the best homes they'll ever find. And I don't charge them any rent."

Sedgwick tells me the most brutal time to build fences is in the spring after he plants his crops, when the black flies and mosquitoes are at their most frenzied. He recounts that one day this past spring he came in with 90 odd bites down the left side of his face and neck, "every one of them big, and red, and ugly." But the next day he was back out on the fence.

"Blackflies are in this country to pollinate all the myriad of little blossoms in the wild. That's what their job is. And before a storm there is this swarming instinct. They

swarm into anything. They swarm into every little flower and pollinate them. But they also swarm into your eyes, your ears, and your mouth, and your nose. At that time they are just about unbearable. But if you didn't have any black flies, you wouldn't have any blueberries," says Sedgwick.

The tiny connections of existence are remarkably vivid for Sedgwick. The same thread that binds blackflies to blueberries somehow links his stone fence to the old barbed wire fence he used to repair with his father. And whereas he once ministered to souls he now tends to stones, finding purpose for everyone and everything.

"It's the whole mix of life. It's all bound up together in one way or another. The interdependence of life. It's there and it's absolutely fascinating. And if you got your eyes open, you learn a little more about it as you live."

His fence reads like a journal, an entire life documented in a medley of stones. The stone fence embodies not only the various segments of Sedgwick's life, but also the bigger life all creatures participate in. It's a legacy that will stretch for centuries, maybe even beyond.