

Giant Asian Hornets in Arkansas?

The arrival of the Asian Giant Hornet in North America made headlines in the spring of 2020, but Arkansas residents have little to worry about.

These insects are known properly to scientists as *Vespa mandarinia*, despite the more popular and headline-grabbing name repeated endlessly on both regular news outlets and social media: The Asian Giant Murder Hornets.

In late 2019, one of these non-native insects was sighted near Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada. It was eradicated as an invasive species. Later that year, two specimens were collected near Blaine, Washington (near the Canadian Border). Again, both were eradicated. To date, and despite extensive monitoring by both scientists and citizens alike, **there have been no other confirmed reports of *V. mandarinia* anywhere else in North America.**

Is it possible that these hornets could show up in Arkansas? Anything is possible, but it is **highly unlikely** Arkansas will see them any time soon. And there is practically no chance at all that the wasps and hornets you are seeing in Arkansas this spring are invasive Asian hornets. The area where they have been confirmed is near busy Pacific ports with lots of container ship traffic from Asia (which is the most likely way they hitched a ride). These hornets reportedly prefer low hills and forest habitat, and completely avoid high altitudes and open plains. There are both high mountain ranges and vast plains separating Arkansas from the Pacific Northwest, which pose significant natural barriers to their migration.

All hornet species can sting, but generally avoid conflict with humans unless provoked. Hornets and other wasps are all ecologically beneficial by providing biological control of other pest species, and many are also plant pollinators.

Vespa mandarinia

Asian Giant Hornet

A newly introduced species, confirmed by a only few sightings in Whatcom County, Washington. The world's largest hornet, they can be up to two inches long, with wide, distinct stripes on the abdomen; usually nesting in the ground. Intensive monitoring and eradication efforts are in place to prevent their establishment.



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Vespa crabro

European Hornet

A non-native hornet species introduced from Europe in the mid-1800s, and widely established in the U.S. Workers are about 1 inch long; queens can reach 1 ½ inches. Distinct but variable stripes are symmetrical, but irregular in shape. They generally construct papery nests in hollow trees or other dark, sheltered locations.



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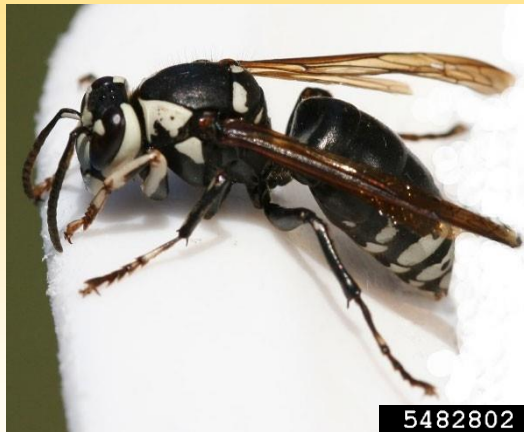


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Sphecius speciosus

Cicada Killer Wasp

A large native solitary wasp; can be up to 1 ½ inches long. They are commonly observed flying low across the ground, hunting for prey in the grass during summer and early fall. Males may act aggressively territorial but cannot sting. Females hunt large prey (such as cicadas, which they bury in the ground as food for their developing offspring.



Dolichovespula maculate

Baldfaced Hornets

Native to much of North America, these are actually a type of large yellowjacket, not a true hornet. They have distinguishing black and white markings and a white patch on the face, which gives them their common name. They are known to build large, round paper-like nests hanging in trees, containing 400-800 members. They will aggressively defend their nesting site from perceived invaders.



Vespula maculifrons

Eastern Yellowjacket

Approximately the size of a honey bee, but appear hairless and boldly striped. They nest in large colonies, with hundreds to thousands of individuals, usually underground or in other dark cavities. They may aggressively defend their nest site. Yellowjackets are often considered outdoor pests due to their attraction to sweet foods.



Think you found an Asian Giant Hornet?

Thank you for your vigilance! Eradication of any new invasive species requires quick action before it can spread and become established. This requires dedicated cooperation between scientists, government agencies and observant citizens. If you think you have killed or captured an Asian Giant Hornet, you can submit a specimen to your local County Extension Office for identification. Please do not bring in live specimens! Place it in a jar in the freezer overnight to preserve it. While an actual specimen is best, sometimes good, clear close-up photos may be enough. If you wish to submit a photo, include an object of known size in the picture for scale (a ruler is great, but a penny is exactly ¾" across and a quarter is just under 1" in diameter). Include photos from the top, bottom, sides and front for best identification.

Visit uaex.uada.edu/counties to contact your local Cooperative Extension office.