

Africanized Honey Bees: What You Should Know

John D. Hopkins
Associate Professor
and Extension
Entomologist - Urban

Glenn E. Studebaker
Associate Professor and
Extension Entomologist

Mark Stoll
Apiary Section Manager



What You Need to Know About Honey Bees

There are some new honey bees in Arkansas that may be more easily aroused to defend their “homes” than bees we are used to. So you need to be aware of what to do about them.

If I find honey bees feeding in my yard, what should I do?

Honey bees live in large groups (up to 60,000 bees). Single worker bees can fly as far as six miles to collect pollen and nectar from flowers to feed themselves and their offspring. Sometimes they visit hummingbird feeders for sugar water. They also collect water from birdbaths, swimming pools or pet watering dishes. Bees gathering food will sting only if they are trapped in clothing, stepped on or otherwise threatened. Single foraging bees should be left alone.

What if I see a large number of bees?

If you regularly see many bees, you should be alert to the possibility there may be a wild honey bee colony nearby. Look for numerous bees flying in and out of an opening such as a crack in a wall, hole in the ground or in the cover of a water valve box.

If you do find a swarm or an established bee colony in your neighborhood, keep everyone away from the bees. Contact your local

Cooperative Extension Office or the Arkansas State Plant Board directly (501-225-1598) for instructions.

Do not try to remove colonies yourself! NEVER shoot, throw rocks at, pour gasoline on, burn, treat with pesticides or otherwise threaten established honey bee colonies.

Do not ignore bee colonies around your home, even if they don't seem to be a problem. Small colonies that have recently set up housekeeping may be docile at first but can become more defensive with age. **You should have wild honey bee swarms or colonies removed immediately by a trained professional.**

What should you do if you accidentally disturb a colony and are attacked?

RUN away as fast as you can. Get to the shelter of a house or car as quickly as possible. Because the bees target the head and eyes, try to cover your head as much as you can, without slowing your progress. Do not flail or attempt to swat the bees, just get away fast. Entering water is not recommended. The bees may wait for you to come up for air.

If you see someone being attacked by bees, encourage them to run away or seek shelter. Do not attempt to rescue them yourself unless you have a bee suit and proper training. **Call 911 for emergency help.**

Once you are away from the bees, examine yourself for stingers. When a honey bee stings, it leaves its stinger and venom sac behind in the skin, which kills the bee.

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Do not compress the stinger by trying to pull it out with tweezers or your fingers, as this will only squeeze more venom into the wound. Scrape the stingers out using your fingernail, the edge of a credit card or with a dull knife. If you are feeling ill, if you have any reason to believe you may be allergic to bee stings or if you have been stung more than 15 times, seek medical attention immediately.

Should all bees be killed?

NO. Beekeepers are being encouraged to maintain their managed colonies because honey bees pollinate many vegetables, fruits and nuts, as well as produce honey. In fact, about one-third of our daily diet comes from crops pollinated by honey bees.



Bees are robust, hairy insects. Besides honey bees, some common bees in Arkansas are carpenter bees and bumble bees. Female carpenter bees are entirely black bees approximately one inch long. The males are similar in size but are blonde-colored and are seen less often. Carpenter bees visit flowers to collect pollen and nectar in the same manner as honey bees but do not live in large colonies. They are not at all aggressive, but the females can sting if provoked.

Bumble bees are also large bees but are more brightly colored, with alternating bands of yellow and black. Bumble bees often nest in the ground. They live in groups but do not have as many workers as a honey bee colony.



mud dauber wasp



paper wasp

Some Other Bees and Wasps



carpenter bee



bumble bee

Wasps are more slender than bees, with a relatively thin waist. Their brightly colored “skin” is smooth and somewhat shiny, often with sharply contrasting yellow-and-black patterns. Their hind legs are narrow and cylindrical. All wasps have four wings, and the females can sting many times. Wasps are predators and feed on many different insects and spiders as well as sweets.

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DR. JOHN D. HOPKINS and **DR. GLENN E. STUDEBAKER** are associate professors and Extension entomologists with the Department of Entomology, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, in Little Rock and the Northeast Research and Extension Center at Keiser, respectively. **MARK STOLL** is apiary section manager with the Plant Industry Division, Arkansas State Plant Board, Little Rock.

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