

MSU experts: no Asian hornets in Mississippi

By Susan M. Collins-Smith
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News reports of a new, invasive hornet spotted in the Northwest has heightened people’s awareness of flying insects recently.

The Asian giant hornet, also called a murder hornet, has been confirmed in the state of Washington.

Mississippians likely will not see the aggressive species for some time, if at all, said Mississippi State University Extension Service entomologist Blake Layton. However, some people believe they have already seen the Asian hornet here.

“I had a call on Monday morning from a lady in Alabama who was pretty sure they’d killed an Asian hornet at her house over the weekend,” Layton said. “They killed it after it lit on her daughter’s shoulder, and they sent me a photo. It turned out to be a periodic cicada.”



Southern yellowjacket queens can be mistaken for Asian giant hornets because of their size and coloring. They are much larger than worker yellowjackets and are seen mostly in the spring as they search for nesting sites.

(Photo by MSU Extension Service/Blake Layton)

Periodic cicadas are one of four insects found in Mississippi that can be confused with the Asian giant hornet, Layton said. European hornets, cicada killers and Southern yellowjacket queens also are similar in appearance to this pest.

Asian giant hornets can

be more than 2 inches long. They have large, orange heads with big mandibles used to kill their prey, which include honey bees. Their bodies are black with orange stripes, and they have large, clear wings. Their long stingers can inject potent venom that sometimes causes severe

data might be used, where it might be sent, and for how long it might be stored. These important guardrails would protect personal privacy while allowing tech companies to make new strides in fighting global outbreaks.

Maintaining Air Services

Our Senate committees are meeting in person again while observing public health guidelines, though some members choose to join remotely. The Commerce Committee, which I chair, held an important oversight hearing on how the pandemic continues to affect airlines and airports. These services have taken a severe hit from travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders that have kept millions of Americans from traveling.

I led the effort to provide financial support to airlines and airports in the CARES Act. This relief has prevented mass layoffs and a worsening of our economic crisis. At the same time, we required airlines receiving aid to keep workers on their payrolls and continue serving small and medium-sized airports across the country. At the hearing we discussed the state of aviation and ways Congress can continue to support the more than 700,000 workers in that industry, which plays such a vital role in connecting our nation.

Like so many other dedicated Americans whose work requires them to be present, even during a public health emergency, the Senate is carrying out its unique duties. We are taking necessary precautions and will continue making progress for the American people.

allergic reactions and possibly death in humans and large animals.

A few Asian hornets can wipe out a colony of bees in a matter of hours.

While periodic cicadas do not have the same body shape as Asian giant hornets, people can confuse them with the invasive pest. Both are large with orange and black bodies and large, clear wings, and they both make a buzzing sound in flight. There are several different broods, or species groups, of periodic cicadas that occur intermittently in the East and Midwest. Three broods appear occasionally in Mississippi.

“This is not an emergence year for any of the three broods that we have in Mississippi,” Layton said. “But occasionally, there is one that shows up for the party on the wrong year.”

Like Asian giant hornets, European hornets are true hornets and are non-native. Workers are about 1 inch long and queens are even larger. They are found mostly in north Mississippi. While they are uncommon, these hornets are spreading across the state. They also eat honey bees and can be minor pests in apiaries, Layton said.

They can be aggressive toward humans who get too close to their nests.

Cicada killers are actually wasps more closely related to mud daubers. But one could be mistaken for an Asian hornet because of its sheer size and similar coloring.

“A big, female killer is just as big as an Asian hornet,” Layton said. “These wasps can catch a cicada and fly off with it.”

Cicada killers occur statewide but usually go undetected because of their social habits. They nest alone and rarely sting because they are not aggressive and do not defend their nests.

Southern yellowjacket queens also look a lot like Asian giant hornets with their large, orange and black bodies. The queens are much larger than the workers and are sometimes spotted in the spring as they search for places to build their nests. They nest below ground in groups that can include hundreds to thousands of yellowjackets. They will aggressively defend the nest when disturbed.

Homeowners usually get stung when doing yardwork, such as mowing or trimming, that causes vibration of the nest.

Although these established species of hornets, wasps and bees can be nuisances to humans, they play important roles in the ecosystem. They feed on caterpillar larvae and

other insect pests, providing some natural control. Bees pollinate plants as they collect nectar.

Layton recommends using control methods only when nests are near areas where humans might get stung.

Asian giant hornets are not pests that Mississippi beekeepers or anyone in the Southeast should be overly concerned about right now, said Jeff Harris, MSU Extension bee specialist.

“There is no evidence that we have high numbers of this pest or that they have established colonies in the U.S.,” Harris said.

Harris said varroa mites are the primary threat to bee populations right now. However, he, his colleagues and beekeepers worldwide are always on the lookout for emerging threats.

“We’ll definitely keep an eye on what develops with the Asian giant hornet. If it becomes established in the U.S., it could be devastating to bee populations,” he said. “But I think there are other, more concerning emerging pests and viruses that need to be higher on our watch lists right now.”

For more information on bees, wasps and other insects and how to control them, refer to Extension Publication 2331, “Control of Insect Pests In and Around the Home Lawn.”

THE WICKER REPORT

By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



Wicker: Senate Continues to Work for the American People *Senate Resumes Legislative and Committee Business in Washington*

After several weeks spent working from home, the Senate has returned to Washington to continue our legislative and committee responsibilities. Managing our nation’s response to the coronavirus pandemic remains a top priority, but there is other work yet to do. This week we resumed our consideration of the President’s nominees, including several who will play pivotal roles in addressing the COVID-19 crisis, and made progress on other priorities for Mississippi and the nation.

Confirming President Trump’s Nominees

The Senate moved quickly to hold confirmation hearings for Brian Miller, the President’s pick to serve as special inspector general for pandemic recovery, and Congressman John Ratcliffe, who was nominated for director of national intelligence. I also had the opportunity to question Kenneth Braithwaite, the nominee to be the next Secretary of the Navy, at an Armed Services Committee hearing. And we advanced a Republican nominee to serve on the bipartisan board that oversees federal elections.

In addition to filling these posts, we have an opportunity to approve more conservative judges to lifetime positions on the federal bench. The President has already selected two highly quali-

fied Mississippians – Cory Wilson and Kristi Johnson – for openings on the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and the U.S. District Court, with another vacancy remaining. I hope we will confirm these judges swiftly as we continue to remake the federal judiciary.

Protecting Privacy During a Pandemic

Our return to the Capitol signaled a renewal of the legislative process. As co-chair of the Senate Nursing Caucus, I introduced a resolution to recognize National Nurses Week and the invaluable contributions of our frontline health-care workers. I also put forth a bill to address the data privacy concerns of Americans during efforts to fight the current pandemic. Technology can be useful in tracing infected individuals and those with whom they may have had contact. But some efforts to track personal movements through smartphone applications have raised concerns that personal information could be taken and used without permission.

The COVID-19 Consumer Data Protection Act would require companies to ensure that individuals opt in before having their data used and would allow them to opt out at any time. It would also mandate that companies tell consumers how their

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