

CICADA KILLER

HYMENOPTERA: CRABRONIDAE
Sphecius speciosus

Did you know? While these wasps may look fearsome, they're only dangerous if you're a cicada! Males cannot sting (although they do have a spine at the tip of their abdomen), and females aren't equipped to cause harm to vertebrates like humans.

Did you know? Cicada killers are solitary wasps! They don't live in shared hives or nests. Females dig burrows up to 20 inches deep and provision the chambers with paralyzed cicadas.

Did you know? Cicadas are food for the larvae of the wasp; the adults eat tree sap and flower nectar!

Did you know? These wasps superficially resemble the Asian giant hornet but can be easily told apart by looking at the pattern on the abdomen! Cicada killers have a zig-zag black and yellow pattern, while Asian giant hornets have regular yellow and black stripes.

Look and see!



Female wasps capture and sting cicadas, then drag them to the burrow.



Top: cicada killer
Bottom: Asian giant hornet
How many differences can you find?



Credits:

Photos: Ghostomelon (inaturalist.org/people/ghostomelon), wasp on tree; Ben Meredyk (inaturalist.org/people/benmeredyk), wasp with prey; Patrick Porter, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (extensionentomology.tamu.edu), Asian giant hornet comparison

Facts: Texas A&M Extension (extensionentomology.tamu.edu); Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station (njaes.rutgers.edu); Smithsonian Institute (www.si.edu); Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)

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