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DON'T PROVOKE SOUTH AFRICAN BEES

By: Gerald Crawford

Class : Insecta
Order : Hymenoptera
Family : Apidae
Scientific Name : *Apis Mellifera Scutellata*
English Name : African Honey Bee

The swarming season in South Africa lasts generally from September through to February. South African Beekeepers are available to remove all migratory swarms professionally and humanely.

Persons who keep bees or deal with bees in any way are required to be registered with a South African Beekeeping Association. Ensure that the person asked to remove your swarms is a Registered Beekeeper.

A number of Pest Control companies claim to be able to remove swarms but generally these swarms are destroyed with gas.

Not all swarms can be humanely removed and relocated. For example, a swarm which has been lodged in a chimney for a number of seasons and has been allowed to grow may be difficult if not impossible to remove. It is always advisable to remove swarms as early as possible before they have had an opportunity to settle and become protective of their comfortable home.

Please note that bee removals are generally done in the evening especially with settled (as opposed to migratory) swarms. During the day, a third of the bees are out foraging so it does not make sense to try and remove them during the day.

Also, it is potentially dangerous to do so as swarms are very protective and may become aggressive. Bee Removers who remove swarms during the day, other than migratory swarms, are generally acting without regard to the bees' interests and more than likely will destroy the hive as the bees will not be able to resetttle and their infrastructure as a working family may be irretrievably disrupted.

Most Beekeepers will remove swarms in the cool of the evening when it is possible to calm the

bees and move them into a catch box for later translocation into a proper bee hive.

Some experienced beekeepers do the removal during the day and leaves the bee box that he has transferred the brood into, in so doing, encouraging the bees to settle into their new home and then removes the box at night, all members of the community will be collected. This minimises the problem of disrupting the colony's integrity and the possibility of leaving a large number of homeless bees behind that could cause a problem.

Bee Stings:

Queen Bee and the female worker bees have the ability to sting, although the worker bees which are more ferocious in this activity given their fundamental instinct to protect.

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A single bee which stings does so to protect itself, if you try and swat it for instance. Bees invade fizzy drink cans to consume the sugary syrup as a substitute for nectar.

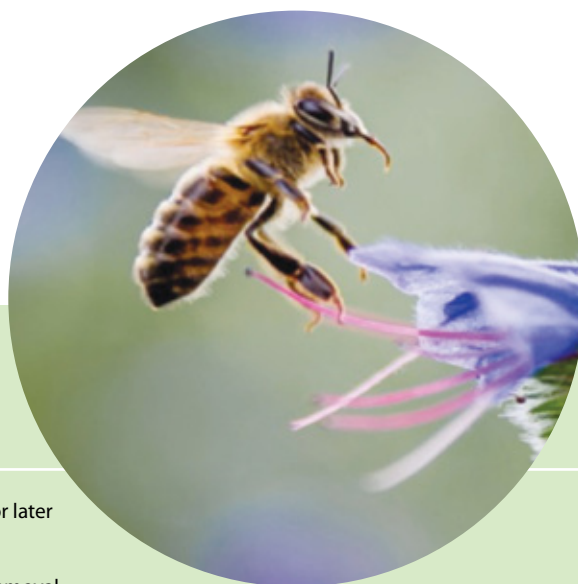
If you swallow a bee in a coke can, it will sting you to protect itself. Cover your fizzy drinks when you notice bees buzzing around them.

Bees will attack collectively and go on a stinging spree for a number of reasons. If they sense the hive is being robbed when it is vandalized or is knocked they will attack. They can attack in very hot weather, especially if their wax combs are melting and they fear their home will collapse.

If they run out of space to make new combs they become very irritable.

Never provoke a swarm of bees. Never try and destroy them or get rid of them by spraying them with an aerosol can of Insect Killer, for instance.

If you find yourself in a serious situation where bees are stinging, get yourself and everyone else and pets out of the way. Once bees start stinging something, the stings emit strong pheromones



which incense other bees to start stinging that victim.

If an animal is being stung, remove it to a place of safety and cover it with a blanket to protect it. If it has been badly stung take it to a vet.

Never jump into a swimming pool in the hope of avoiding the bees.

Bees love this game. You can't hold your breath for a longer period than the bees' disinterest. When you come up for air they will be waiting to zap you on the head and face.

When a bee stings a victim with a thick hide, like a human, the barbs on the end of the sting embed themselves in the victim's skin. When the bee tries to forcibly extract itself, or is brushed off, the poison sac is ripped from the bee's belly, maiming the bee to death.

When bees sting other insects, the barbs do not embed themselves.

The poison in a bee sting as in most stinging insects is a mix of proteins, peptides, amines and alkaloids which will cause pain and swelling and may also act as allergens in a very small percentage of individuals who will then become allergic.

To neutralize the stinging use an acid substance such as vinegar.

(Never grip the sting sac between your fingers to pull it out - you only squeeze more poison in. Use a sharp blade to scrape off the sting.) If stung immediately scrape the sting out using your fingernail as this minimizes the amount of poison that can be injected by the contracting sting sac muscles.

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