



What are yellowjackets?

"Yellowjacket" is the common name for several different species of wasps that naturally occur in California. Some species are considered pests and are often common in the parks, especially at picnic areas, garbage cans, and refreshment stands.

Where do they live?

Yellowjackets live in colonies (actually large families) housed in nests. Some species attach the nest to trees, shrubs, or buildings. Native pest species usually construct nests underground, often in old rodent burrows. A newly arrived immigrant species, the German yellowjacket, tends to nest inside buildings. Each colony is ruled by a single queen; there are no kings.

How do they build the nest?

Nests are constructed from paper. Yellowjackets make a pulp by gathering wood or plant fibers, chewing it up and mixing in some of their own saliva. When the pulp is spread out, it dries to form paper. The inner core of the nest is a series of horizontal combs which contain many six-sided cells used for rearing immatures. The core is surrounded by a spherical envelope of overlapping sheets of paper.



What do they eat?

Yellowjackets are attracted to and eat sweet foods: honey, candy, fruits, soft drinks, etc. For protein to feed their young, they hunt other insects and spiders. They also collect meat, fish, and pet food, the same foods that people often bring to eat in the parks. However, the adults of some species are beneficial because they prey on flies and other insects.



How do yellowjackets affect people?

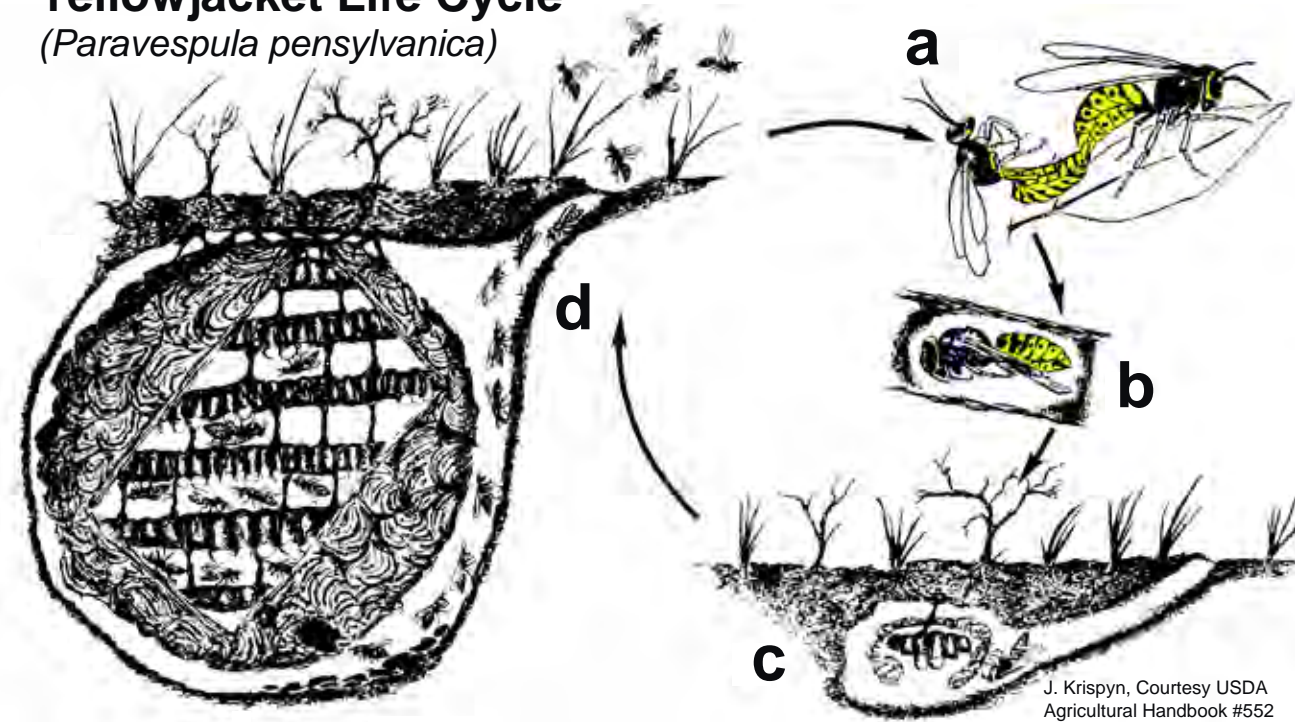
Yellowjackets can defend themselves by delivering multiple powerful stings, which cause pain, swelling and itching. People who are allergic can suffer medical complications from even a single sting. Yellowjackets often annoy people by hovering around and trying to gather food. The aerial species are



Why do they sting?

Yellowjackets sting only when they sense a threat to themselves or their colonies. Those flying about are looking for food, and will usually not sting unless swatted at or accidentally touched. Those near the nest will attack anything that disturbs the ground or passes close by.

Yellowjacket Life Cycle (*Paravespula pensylvanica*)



a. Mating; **b.** Fertilized queen sleeping during winter months; **c.** Queen nest beneath the soil surface; **d.** Nest at peak of colony development



Why are there so many yellowjackets?

Because yellowjackets feed on insects and some of the same types of food as humans, they are encouraged to grow and multiply when this food is easily available. Good sanitation, disposal of garbage, and proper use of pet food is essential in controlling yellowjacket populations.

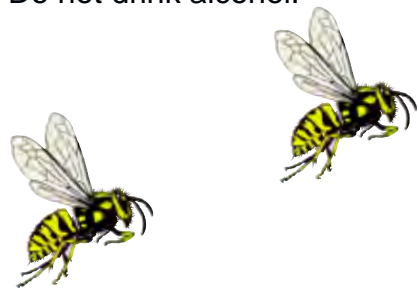


How to avoid getting stung

- Don't disturb the nest.
- Don't go barefoot.
- Don't swat with your hands.
- Use lids on soft drinks.
- Check food before you put it in your mouth.
- Avoid using things yellowjackets are attracted to: perfume and other scents, hair spray, suntan lotion, brightly colored clothes, sweets.
- Cover your face if attacked.
- Keep garbage away from eating areas.

If you are stung

- If the stinger remains in your skin, remove it by scraping from the side with your fingernail.
- Apply cold water or ice.
- Lie down.
- Lower the stung arm or leg.
- Do not drink alcohol.



Text by Parker Gambino



Allergy and anaphylactic shock



People who are highly allergic to yellowjacket venom may develop serious, immediate medical problems. If you have any of the following signs or symptoms **CALL 911** immediately to seek emergency medical response:

- Respiratory distress, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, tightness.
- Hives, itching, burning of the skin, swelling of the limbs.
- Swelling of the face, lips, tongue, airway.
- Dizziness, faintness, unconsciousness.
- Nausea, vomiting.
- Weak, rapid pulse.

For Local Help or Information

If you have an underground nest on your property or need more information contact:

Alameda County Vector Control Services District
Environmental Health Services
1131 Harbor Bay Parkway, Suite 166
Alameda, CA 94502
510-567-6800

Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District
155 Mason Circle
Concord, CA 94520
925-685-9301

Questions:

If you have any questions about yellowjackets or other wildlife in the East Bay, call a Park District Naturalist at one of the visitor centers listed below.

ARDENWOOD HISTORIC FARM
Fremont (510) 796-0663
ardnwood@ebparks.org

BLACK DIAMOND MINES
Antioch (925) 757-2620
bdvisit@ebparks.org

COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK
Fremont (510) 795-9385
chvisit@ebparks.org

CRAB COVE at CROWN BEACH
Alameda (510) 521-6887
ccove@ebparks.org

SUNOL REGIONAL WILDERNESS
Sunol (925) 862-2601
svisit@ebparks.org

TILDEN NATURE AREA/EEC
and LITTLE FARM
Berkeley (510) 525-2233
tnarea@ebparks.org

This brochure is provided as a public service by the Interpretive and Recreation Services Division of the East Bay Regional Park District. For more information, call one of the visitor centers listed above.



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Living With Yellowjackets



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