

News Article
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Three Super Yellow Jacket Nests Found in Coosa County

A few weeks ago, I ran an article describing an unusual phenomenon that we have seen this year related to Yellow Jackets. For some unexplained reason we have been finding large above ground nests, called "super nests". These nests are much larger than normal and may contain several queens. These nests contain thousands of workers and pose a serious danger to humans and animals. In fact many of the nests are so large that a homeowner would do well to hire a professional pest control company to treat them.

At the time of my last article on this subject, a total of sixteen "super nests" had been found. Now that number has grown to over fifty state-wide, including three nests found in Coosa County. I was first contacted by a homeowner in Goodwater who had found a large nest in the crawl space of their house. Then I got a call about a large nest in the wall of a lake house on Lake Mitchell. Then just last week, another call came in about a large nest built around the trunk of an oak tree in the Fishpond Community. I have visited all three sites and it is pretty amazing.

Extension entomologist, Dr. Charles Ray is studying this situation and has visited our county to collect samples. So far all the nests have been found in the southern half of the state, but he has documented finding nests as far north as Talladega County. Some of these nests have been fumigated and then dissected. One nest had a whopping 24 queens! The nests have been found in old bed mattresses, in houses, in old cars, on trees, and on top of the ground. Dr. Ray hopes to do some genetic testing to see if this is actually our native "southern yellow jacket" or something else. But so far, the collected specimens appear to be the same yellow jacket we have had for years and years. So why the sudden change in behavior is a mystery.

Typically, yellow jackets build a small nest in the ground with one entrance, one queen and around a thousand workers. These "super nests" are a puzzle. It will be interesting to see if we continue to get reports like this next year or was there just something usual about this particular year. Anyone who finds a "super nest" is encouraged to contact the County Extension Office at 377-4713.