



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

NORTHERN GIANT HORNET:

What Hikers and Outdoor Enthusiasts Need to Know

Since Dec. 2019, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) has confirmed the detection of several northern giant hornets in Whatcom County. Hornets have been reported by local residents, trapped, and found in nests. They can kill an entire beehive in a matter of hours.

Risk to hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts

Northern giant hornets do not generally bother people unless they feel threatened. When enjoying the outdoors, the greatest risk comes from disturbing an northern giant hornet nest. Northern giant hornets typically nest in the ground, in forested areas or in tree cavities and – more rarely – human structures. All four northern giant hornet nests found in Washington have been located inside decaying alder trees.

Stings: allergic reactions and more. Northern giant hornets do not generally bother people. However, they will sting if they feel threatened. They can sting repeatedly and their venom is more toxic than that of local bees and wasps. Stings can be serious and even life threatening if you are allergic or receive repeated stings. You could be at risk for stings if you:

- get too close to a nest
- swat at them
- accidentally disturb them when hiking outdoors

What outdoor enthusiasts can do

Stay on the trail! This is the easiest way to avoid accidentally stepping on a northern giant hornet nest.

When enjoying the outdoors, take antihistamines with you in case of an northern giant hornet sting. If you see northern giant hornets or their nest, calmly leave the area immediately. If you are stung, wash and apply ice to the area as soon as possible. If you are allergic to stings or are stung multiple times, seek immediate medical attention.

Report northern giant hornet sightings

WSDA is currently working to locate and eradicate populations of northern giant hornet in Washington. Learn about northern giant hornet and how to identify it. If you encounter a northern giant hornet, note the location, obtain a photograph if you can safely do so, and report it. You can report northern giant hornet using these methods:

- Visit agr.wa.gov/hornets
- Call 1-800-443-6684
- Email hornets@agr.wa.gov

Learn more about northern giant hornet at agr.wa.gov/hornets.



ABOVE: These northern giant hornets will leave piles of dead bees, most of them headless, outside their beehive, similar to that shown in the photo above. This photo is courtesy of Washington beekeeper Teddy McFall. (WSDA has not been able to confirm that this is definitely the result of an AGH attack.)

