BEES, WASPS & HORNETS

These animals are protected by the Nature Protection Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. **It is forbidden to kill them without Host Nation Nature Protection Agency approval.** If you have questions or concerns regarding nests in or around your home, please contact the USAG Bavaria Environmental Division.

If you are stung by a bee, wasp, or hornet, be sure to clean and ice the affected area. *If allergic reaction symptoms, such as hives, dizziness or shortness of breath occur, seek medical attention immediately!*

Bees, wasps and hornets serve different purposes for the environment. Bees are important pollinators, helping plants to make fruit or seeds by moving flower pollen from one plant to another. Pollination is very important in the preservation of plants and crops. While hornets and wasps do pollinate plants while searching for insect prey, they are not as effective as bees. They consume garden pests, such as cutworms and aphids, helping to protect crops.

There are many species of bees, wasps and hornets in Germany. Here are the most common species in Bavaria:

Honey Bee
Credit: David Cappaert

Honey Bee or "Honigbiene"
Apis mellifera

Honey bees are incredibly beneficial for the environment, as they are primary pollinators for flowers and plants. They live in colonies of up to 80,000 individuals, including one queen, for which all of the bees in the hive work. Bees are hairy, making it easier to collect pollen. The yellow mass found on bees hind legs are called pollen baskets. Pollen is collected and brought to the hive to feed young bees.

For more information, please contact USAG Bavaria, Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Environmental Division, DSN 475-8222 (CIV 09641-83-8222)
www.bavaria.army.mil/environmental
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Sweat Bee or "Furchenbiene"
Lasioglossum spp., Halictus spp.

The sweat bee is one of many kinds of solitary bees, meaning it does not live in hives. Rather, it lays individual eggs in holes found in rotting wood, hollow reeds and other natural cavities (*see bee house*, page 3). Solitary bees are beneficial for the pollination of plants and crops, and their burrowing action assists in aerating the soil and providing more space for plants to breathe underground.

Sweat Bee
Credit: Munich Botanical Garden

Garden Bumble Bee or "Gartenhummel"
Bombus hortorum

Garden bumble bees are beneficial pollinators. They are slightly larger and have more fuzz than honey bees, and they form colonies. Unlike honey bees, their colonies only last for one season and the queen is the only individual that survives through the winter. Note the distinct white abdomen of the garden bumble bee.

Garden Bumble Bee
Credit: Munich Botanical Garden

European Wasp or "Deutsche Wespe"
Vespula germanica

Wasps are very common in summertime, and are often attracted to picnics, trash cans and other food sources. They eat insects, as well as nectar. Their colonies consists of one queen and up to 5,000 worker wasps. They nest using wood in gray, paper-like hive structures often attached to trees and buildings. Although they are beneficial to the environment, they are often misunderstood because of their aggressiveness and ability to defend their nest.

European Wasp
Credit: Richard Bartz

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European Hornet or " Hornisse"
Vespa crabro

European hornets are of one of the biggest in their family, ranging on average 5.5 cm long. Because of their size, they are often mistaken as being aggressive, but this is far from true for this gentle giant. Although they will defend their hive if threatened, European hornets are quite docile and will keep to themselves unless harassed. Their sting can be painful due to the size of their stinger, but their toxin is not stronger than that of other wasps. They often build their nests out of natural materials in dark, sheltered places.

European Hornet
Credit: Latoxan Inc.

Bee Hotel
Credit: Plant Theatre Ltd., U.K.

Interested in helping bees?

 Here are some ways you can help:

- Use bee-friendly herbicides and consider the type of pesticides used around your home or community.
- Erect bee hotels (see left) to enhance bee nesting habitat, the loss of which is a big reason why bees are declining.
- Plant native bee-friendly flowers in your garden and yard.

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