Tuesday, May 19
TOPICS 30/40

Teacher: Ms. Leroux Contact: See contact sheet

I wish I had something exciting to write this week, but I've got nothing… It's the same old, same old over here in Pinawa. Still just hanging with my husband, son, and dog. We planted a new tree in our front yard and built another garden box (my husband loves to garden – I just eat). That's about as exciting as my life is at the moment. I'm glad that we are finally allowed to have small social gatherings though. We started having social distancing backyard fires with our neighbours. It's nice to be able to properly visit with people again!

What's New This Week?

This week we are looking at another environmental topic, but something very different. If you haven't heard of them yet, giant Asian wasps called "Murder Wasps" have recently been spotted in BC and Alberta. I have provided you with three articles, so you can learn more about these wasps. After you read the articles, you are going to create a "WANTED" poster (using information from the articles). Think of those old Wild West wanted posters, but with a little more information and a picture of a giant insect instead of a bad guy.

I hope you enjoy this week's artistic scientific assignment!

This Week's Assignments:

Wanted Poster	Use the paper I gave you to create an awesome, informative, colourful poster!

MURDER HORNETS – SHOULD WE WORRY?

Below you will find 3 separate articles on the newly discovered invasive Murder Wasps. An invasive species is any non-native species in an area that multiplies quickly and has the ability to take over natural habitats due to a lack of predators. Murder hornets are native to Asia but made their way to Canada recently.

'Murder hornet' risk and name overblown, says B.C.'s top bee expert

'They are very fierce but very few. They are not overrunning the landscape out here'

Yvette Brend · CBC News · Posted: May 04, 2020 5:10 PM PT | Last Updated: May 6

A large invasive hornet is waking up for spring, and experts say a few of the bee-eating predators may soon be buzzing around B.C.

Last fall, a beekeeper in the northwest corner of Washington state found hives decimated by what American media is dubbing the murder hornet.

But B.C. bee experts, while concerned, don't expect swarms of Asian giant hornets this summer and say the threat is minimal and no reason to stay inside.

Fierce but few

In August of 2019, the first ever hive of these hornets, which are actually named Vespa mandarinia, turned up in Nanaimo. In September, the nest was tracked to a spot in the ground in the Robin's Park area, and beekeepers used dry ice to clear it out and collect specimens to study.

The world's biggest hornet decapitates bees with jagged mandibles and devours them, leaving a pile of bodies. Worse yet, the hornet's powerful venom is responsible for dozens of human deaths in Asia every year.

Despite this, B.C.'s top bee experts say the nickname is sensationalistic, unless perhaps you are a bee.

"It's a very formidable character. They are very fierce but very few. They are not overrunning the landscape out here. That is simply not going to happen," said provincial apiculturist Paul van Westendorp.

He doesn't advocate panic and suggests people leave the hornets alone.

"These hornets are not interested in us, but they can cause quite a bit of problems if their nests are disturbed," he said.

The Nanaimo nest of about 200 hornets was destroyed. A single hornet showed up in White Rock last November. A few weeks later, two individual hornets were found in Blaine, Wash.

"That strongly suggested there was a nest," said van Westendorp.

He said scientists are working hard to make sure the hornet — or its royal sister, an impressive six-centimetre queen that showed up in a North Vancouver office last May — do not establish in B.C.

The hornets are considered apex predators, but their population is sparse, and scientists say none are alive in B.C. that we know of right now.

Gail Wallin is executive director of the Invasive Species Council of B.C. She said new anecdotal reports of the hornets south of the border are a concern.

"If they've over-wintered, then it's important that those nests be eradicated right away. These hornets certainly are a threat to the bee population," she said.

The hornet's sting has proven fatal in rare cases.

"They are a health concern because they have a powerful sting ... and they are not something you'd want to be bitten by more than once or twice," said Wallin.

In Asia, a few dozens deaths each year are attributed to the hornet, most often if a nest is disturbed, said van Westerndorp.

If a nest is disturbed, a colony will initially send out one hornet, then more, but only if the intruder remains there. A giant Asian hornet can sting repeatedly and the insect's venom is nasty. It can cause an allergic reaction in some people.

Stop calling it a murder hornet, says bee expert

There is a risk if a person is allergic, but the venom is not the same as a bee's venom.

Despite this, van Westendorp says that dubbing it the murder hornet is sensationalizing — unless you are a bee.

"Well, anybody who is naming it the "murder hornet," I mean for heaven sakes," he said.

But he is asking people, especially bee keepers, to be vigilant about odd-looking insects and hornets that may not be that large this time of year.

He says people who find unusual insects can report them and send a photograph, even though he laughs at some of the creatures he's seen from people fearing invasive intruders — including at one point, a harmless stink bug.

He urges people not to destroy the body of the insect, if possible, as it can reveal a lot, if he gets it intact.

He says any sighting of an Asian giant hornet should be reported to the Invasive Species Council of B.C. at 1-888-933-3722.

'Murder hornet': Asian invader is death on wings for bees in Canada, U.S.

BY JOSH K. ELLIOTT GLOBAL NEWS Updated May 6, 2020 2:45 pm

Nature is serving up another reason to stay indoors in 2020 with the arrival of the so-called Asian "murder hornet," an invasive species in the U.S. and Canada with a nickname that puts "Africanized killer bees" to shame.

The nickname comes from the way the giant insects can slaughter entire colonies of honeybees, though they've also been linked to a few dozen human deaths each year.

The Asian giant hornet, as it's officially known, is the biggest, meanest hornet in the world. It's a AA battery-sized juggernaut on wings, with a massive, toxic stinger, an armoured body and a penchant for biting the heads off bees. It also packs a nasty sting for humans, although it usually doesn't attack unless its nest is threatened.

The Asian giant hornet typically lives in countries like Japan and China, but several specimens were found in British Columbia and Washington state late last year. Wildlife officials are now

investigating fresh reports of the insects on both sides of the border, as the giant hornet queens come out of hibernation to venture out for food.

Asian giant hornets, or Vespa mandarinia, are basically the pirates of the insect world. A handful of hornets will show up at a honeybee hive and go into "slaughter mode," killing tens of thousands of bees before stealing their young and carrying them back to the hornet nest for food, leaving a pile of headless corpses in their wake.

"They're like something out of a monster cartoon with this huge yellow-orange face," Susan Cobey, a bee breeder at Washington State University, said in a recent story for the school's website.

A Japanese researcher described the insects as "murder hornets" in a recent story by the New York Times, and that nickname appears to have kicked off a flurry of interest online.

The New York Times story sparked concern and horror across the internet, especially as photos began to circulate of the oversized hornet.

"This continent simply isn't prepared for the horror that is the Asian giant hornet," one user wrote "Just when I think it's not the end of the World we get another sign ... now we have an invasion of giant murderous hornets."

"The term 'murder hornet' is not the true name of this pest," the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) said in a statement on its website over the weekend in response to the New York Times story. "It is most frequently called the Asian giant hornet."

Many insects, including bees and hornets, are named after the geographical region where they're found.

Experts worry that the Asian giant hornet could be disastrous for European honeybee species in North America, which are already on the decline due to pesticides and colony collapse disorder. The last thing the bees need is a supersized predator capable of killing a whole hive in an afternoon.

"This is our window to keep it from establishing," Chris Looney, an entomologist at the WSDA, told the New York Times. "If we can't do it in the next couple of years, it probably can't be done."

Several YouTube videos show the Japanese giant hornet, a coloured variant of the species, in action. One such video shows 30 hornets wiping out 30,000 honeybees with Terminator-like efficiency.

There are also fears that North American honeybees won't figure out how to fight back like the honeybees in Asia. Those bees have managed to kill Asian giant hornets through a tactic

called "heatballing." The bees basically swarm over the much larger hornet and start vibrating their little bodies, generating enough heat to effectively "cook" the hornet from the inside.

Asian giant hornets are relatively easy to spot because they're four to five centimetres (1.5 to two inches) long, making them huge by North American standards. They don't normally attack humans or animals unless they feel like their nest in the ground is threatened. However, swarms have killed dozens of people each year in Asia.

The Asian giant hornet's stinger can pierce human clothing — including a beekeeper's outfit — and they can deliver multiple stings without dying. Their stinger is as long as a honeybee's entire body.

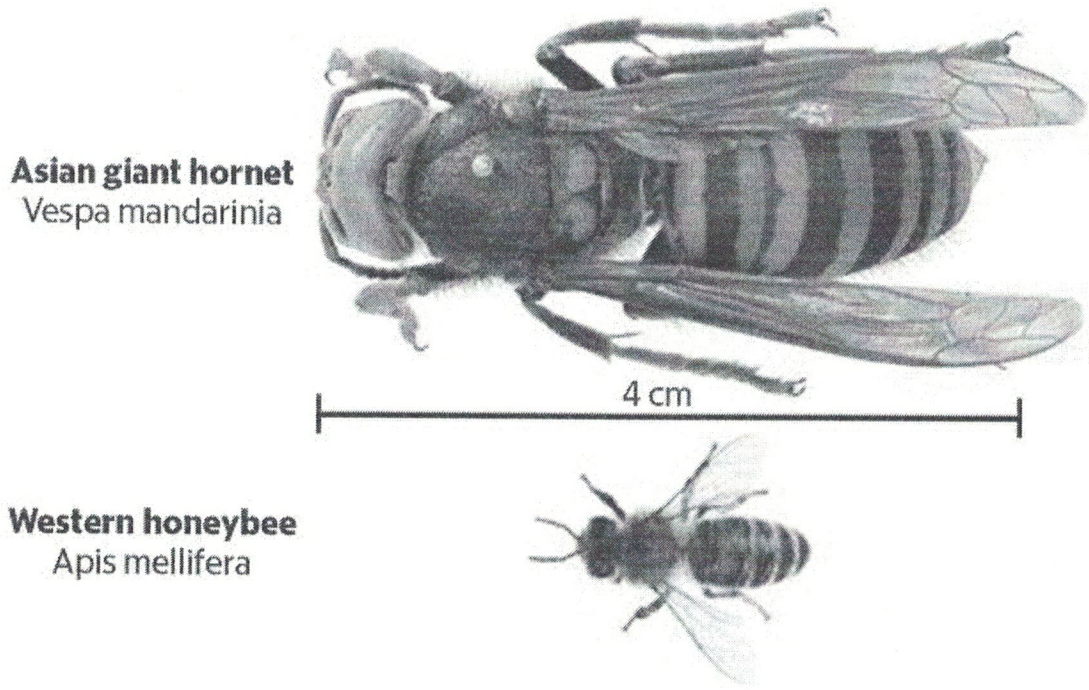
Beekeeper Conrad Bérubé told the Times that he was stung several times while wiping out a colony on Vancouver Island last year.

"It was like having red-hot thumbtacks being driven into my flesh," he said. Bérubé later felt intense aching in his legs where he'd been stung.

The WSDA recommends exercising extreme caution around Asian giant hornets and reporting any sightings to provincial or state authorities immediately.

There are many species of wasps and hornets in North America, but the Asian giant hornet ought to stand out to the layman because of its sheer size.

It has a completely yellow head, big, black eyes, a black body and a striped black-and-yellow abdomen. It's much bigger than the likes of a paper wasp, yellowjacket or bald-faced hornet, the WSDA say



Bug experts dismiss worry about U.S. 'murder hornets' as hype

Seth Borenstein

The Associated PressStaff Published Thursday, May 7, 2020 3:47PM EDT

Insect experts say people should calm down about the big bug with the nickname "murder hornet" -- unless you are a beekeeper or a honeybee.

The Asian giant hornets found in Washington state that grabbed headlines this week aren't big killers of humans, although it does happen on rare occasions. But the world's largest hornets do decapitate entire hives of honeybees, and that crucial food pollinator is already in big trouble.
Numerous bug experts told The Associated Press that what they call hornet "hype" reminds them of the 1970s public scare when Africanized honeybees, nicknamed "killer bees," started moving north from South America. While these more aggressive bees did make it up to Texas and the Southwest, they didn't live up to the horror-movie moniker. However, they also do kill people in rare situations. This time it's hornets with the homicidal nickname, which bug experts want to ditch.

"They are not `murder hornets.' They are just hornets," said Washington Agriculture Department entomologist Chris Looney, who is working on the state's search for these large hornets.

The facts are, experts said, two dead hornets were found in Washington last December, a lone Canadian live nest was found and wiped out last September and no live hornets have yet been seen this year.

Looney has a message for Americans: These hornets are not coming to get you. "The number of people who are stung and have to seek medical attention is incredibly small," he said in an interview.

While its nickname exaggerates the human health threat, experts said this hornet is especially big -- two inches long -- so it does carry more and stronger toxin.

"It's a really nasty sting for humans," said University of Georgia bee expert Keith Delaplane. "It's like the Africanized bee ... A dozen (stings) you are OK; 100 not so much."

University of Illinois entomologist May Berenbaum said of the worry: "People are afraid of the wrong thing. The scariest insect out there are mosquitoes. People don't think twice about them. If anyone's a murder insect, it would be a mosquito."

Mosquitoes are responsible for millions of yearly deaths worldwide from malaria, dengue fever and other diseases, according to the World Health Organization. Asian giant hornets at most kill a few dozen people a year and some experts said it's probably far less.

Hornet, wasp and bee stings kill on average 62 people a year in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Japan, Korea and China, "people have co-existed with this hornet for thousands of years," said Doug Yanega, senior scientist at the University of California Riverside Entomology Research Museum.

Yet bug experts across the country are getting worried calls from people who wrongly think they saw the Asian hornet.

"This is 99% media hype and frankly I'm getting tired of it," said University of Delaware entomologist Doug Tallamy. "Murder hornet? Please."

Retired University of Montana bee expert Jerry Bromenshenk said in an email, "One nest, one individual hornet, hopefully, does not make an invasion. ... Do we want this hornet -- surely not. But the media hype is turbo charged."

For bees and the people who rely on them for a living this could be yet another massive problem, but it is not one yet.

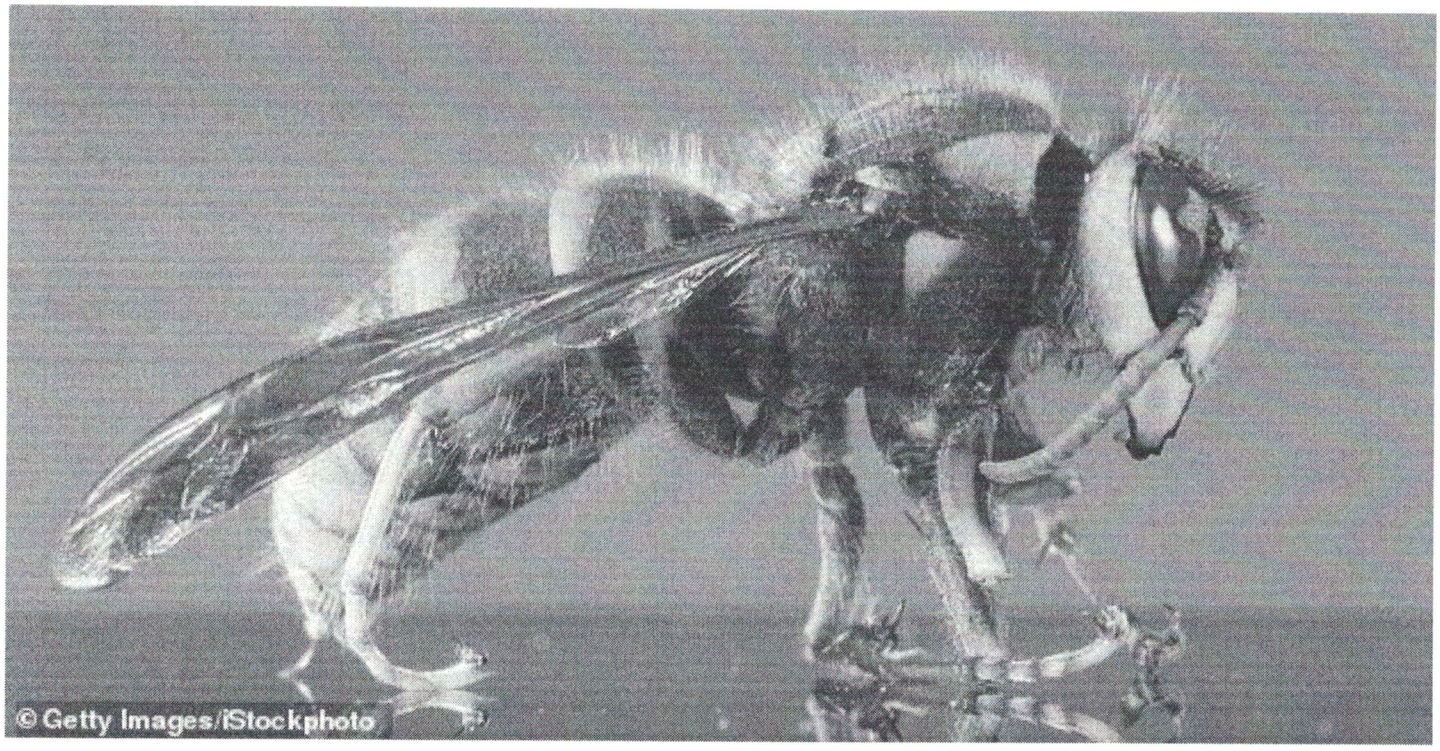
The number of U.S. honeybees has been dropping for years, with the winter of 2018-19 one of the worst on record. That's because of problems such as mites, diseases, pesticides and loss of food. The new hornets would be different. If they get into a hive, they tear the heads off worker bees and the hive pretty much dies. Asian honeybees have defences -- they start buzzing, raising the temperature and cook the invading hornet to death -- but honeybees in America don't.

The worry for beekeeping in Washington is based on a worst-case scenario that officials have to take seriously, Looney said.

Yet even for bees, the invasive hornets are far down on the list of real threats, not as big a worry as the parasitic "zombie fly" because more of those have been seen in several states, Berenbaum said.

For people, the hornets are scary because the world is already frightened by coronavirus and our innate fight-or-flight mechanisms are activated, putting people on edge, said risk expert David Ropeik, author of "How Risky Is It, Really?"

"This year is unbelievable in a horrible, horrible way. Why shouldn't there be murder hornets?" Berenbaum said.



TOPICS 30/40

Ms Leroux

Wanted Poster – Murder Wasps

(May 19 – May 25)

NAME (first and last): _____

ASSIGNMENT: MURDER WASP WANTED POSTER

Time to get artistic! Once you have read the three articles about the murder wasps, you will use that information to create a "WANTED" poster (like a criminal Wanted poster). I am attaching 3 pieces of paper for you just in case you make a mistake and need to start over or if you need more than one page to make your poster. You can use the pencil crayons I gave you to make your poster colourful!

INSTRUCTIONS:

Create a "WANTED POSTER" for the murder wasp. Your poster must include the following sections (these will be your titles with your information written underneath):

- NAME OF FUGITIVE= common name (Murder Wasp) and other names it goes by.
- CRIME= what damage it is causing?
- PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION = What does it look like? Point out defining features (ie: how someone can identify it)
- ARTIST SKETCH/MUG SHOT = picture or drawing of the wasp (this should be fairly large)
- LAST SEEN = describe the habitat where this species has been found in Canada
- WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU LOCATE THIS FUGITIVE = Information of how to report it and what you should do if you find one.