

Beneficial Species Profile



Photo credit: Rich Kelly, BugGuide.net

Common Name: Eastern Cicada Killer

Scientific Name: *Sphecius speciosus*

Order and Family: Hymenoptera, Crabronidae

Size and Appearance:

	Adult	Egg	Larva/Nymph	Pupae (if applicable)
Length (mm)	38 mm or more			
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Head and thorax are rust color (reddish and black). - Abdomen is black to reddish brown with yellow stripes. - Legs are yellowish and its wings are clear with an orange-red tint (transparent). - Females are larger than males. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female adults create cells for storing paralyzed cicadas. - Females lay one egg per cell (cell size about 20-30 mm). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Larva is grub-like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Larvae will create a silken case that eventually shrinks for overwintering.

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Chewing, both nymphs and adults.

Host/s/Prey: Cicada killers are predators; their main goal is to hunt for cicadas in the summertime.

Description of Benefits (predator, parasitoid, pollinator, etc.): Because cicada killers are predators, they are considered beneficial in stabilizing cicada populations and lowering the damage that cicadas can cause on trees and other plants. Females make burrows in sandy soils where they lay eggs and bring paralyzed cicadas in as food for their larvae. Females are very effective in hunting cicadas; once a female finds the prey, she will sting it and paralyze the insect. Then the wasp will carry the cicada, which may weigh three times her own weight, back to the burrow. She will put the cicada in one of the cells and lay an egg on it. The female wasp will continue hunting cicadas until she has filled the cells of her burrow. An egg may be laid on each captured cicada. When the egg hatches, it will take about 2 weeks for each larva to consume their cicada. Cicada killers may be considered damaging when they burrow through soil in order to raise their young. Usually, there is not enough damage to signal that control measures need to be considered.

References:

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