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YELLOW-LEGGED LEDGER

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • TYLER HARPER, COMMISSIONER

Issue 5: December 16, 2023 - April 17, 2024

Yellow-legged hornet activity in the Savannah area resumed in the month of April as overwintering queens have begun to emerge and establish embryo nests. The Georgia Department of Agriculture is significantly ramping up our efforts to eradicate this invasive pest, which threatens native pollinators and our state's #1 industry - agriculture. We continue to ask for the public's help in this fight and ask that all suspected sightings be reported to us.

Update by the Numbers:

Total traps deployed (August 2023 - April 2024): 224+
New traps deployed or removed: 54+ deployed | 0 removed
Hornets found (December 2023 - April 17, 2024): 12
Nests found (December 2023 - April 17, 2024): 2
Nests eradicated (December 2023 - April 17, 2024): 2
Total nests found & eradicated (August 2023 - April 2024):

- GDA: 6
- Homeowner: 1
- Total: 7

Updates:

The Georgia Department of Agriculture eradicated a yellow-legged hornet nest and queen on Monday, April 8, 2024. This was an embryo nest, reported by a citizen, located at a private residence in the Savannah Area.



(Pictured: A queen building an embryo nest. The queen was captured on April 8, 2024, and the nest and queen were eradicated.)

On Saturday, April 13, 2024, a homeowner in the Savannah area successfully located and eradicated a YLH embryo nest and queen. **If you come across a nest, take a photo and report it using the online [YLH reporting form](#) or email yellow.legged.hornet@agr.georgia.gov.** Remember, if you remove a YLH nest, it's crucial to ensure the queen has been eliminated to prevent her from establishing another nest elsewhere. If unsure about removing a nest, please contact GDA.



(Pictured: Nest 7 was found & eradicated by a Savannah resident on April 13, 2024.)

These are the 6th & 7th nests found in Georgia, and the 8th found in the US and destroyed since the hornets were discovered in August 2023. On April 2, 2024, a Beaufort County, South Carolina, resident found a yellow-legged hornet embryo nest affixed to his home. That nest was eradicated by SC state officials on April 4,

2024.

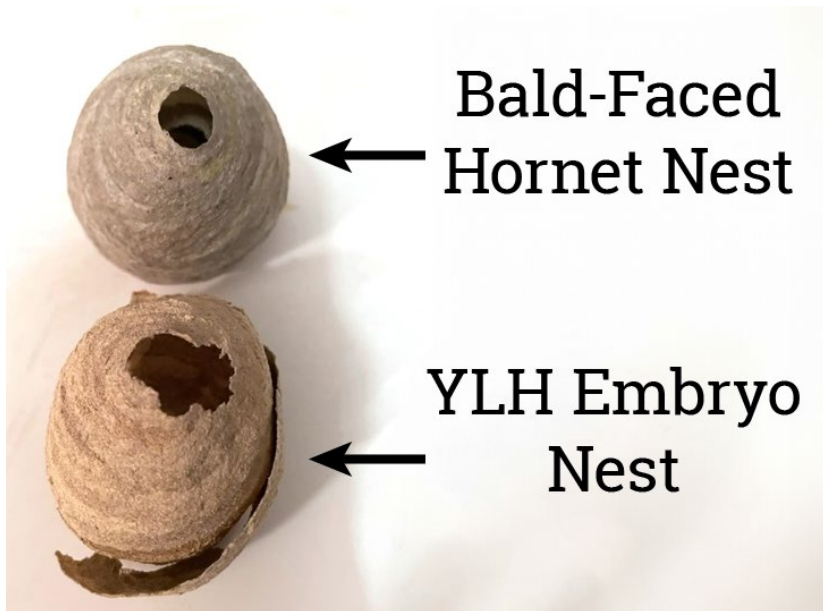
Notes on Embryo Nests

The mated queens will overwinter (similar to hibernation) and emerge in the spring to find a food source, establish an embryo nest, and begin producing workers. As the colony grows, it forms a larger secondary nest in the summer months. From what we've seen, these secondary nests tend to be positioned 80-100 feet up in trees. The five nests we discovered in 2023 were these larger secondary ones. In contrast, the nests we located and removed on April 8 and 13, 2024, were still in their early stages. These early nests, also called Stage 1 or embryo nests, range in size from a ping-pong to a tennis ball and are often found in sheltered spots like the eaves of buildings. The difference is noted in the photos below.



(Pictured: Left: Nest 6, an embryo nest, was discovered at a private residence on April 8, 2024. Right: Nests 3 & 4, broken up, were found on October 11 & 18, 2023, in a private neighborhood in Thunderbolt.)

Additionally, at this stage of the year, yellow-legged hornet embryo nests closely resemble bald-faced hornet nests in size and appearance, making them easy to confuse. It's advisable to report any small nest you come across rather than attempting identification independently, particularly without the queen present. If you find a nest like the ones pictured below, we ask that you contact us via our [YLH reporting form](#) or [email](#) so that our experts can accurately identify the nest.



(Pictured: A bald-faced hornet and embryo nest comparison.)

GDA Notices

The GDA is coordinating eradication efforts with our state and federal partners, including USDA-Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, the University of Georgia, UGA - Extension, Clemson University, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, and the University of Florida.

- With queen activity confirmed, we have deployed additional traps in the Savannah area.
 - In 2023, we had 170 traps. Our goal for 2024 is to have more than 1,000 traps.
- We are increasing the number of dedicated staff in Savannah who assist with monitoring and detection.
 - GDA and USDA staff are working together to monitor traps.

Implementing New Technology

RFID Trackers: These are used to track hornets back to their nests.

- These new trackers are lighter (.15 grams) than the previous trackers (.25 grams) used last year. The heavier trackers impacted the hornet's ability to fly, affecting our ability to track them.



(Pictured: An RFID Tracker on a Yellow-legged Hornet.)

Wing Frequency Sensors: These sensors are calibrated to recognize the unique frequency of the YLH's wingbeat and will alert our teams on the ground when they detect YLH activity.

Public Awareness Campaigns

We continue to ask for the public's help in our effort to eradicate the YLH from Georgia.

- Georgians who suspect they may have seen a YLH should report it to the GDA via our online [form](#) or yellow.legged.hornet@agr.georgia.gov.
- Our team spent the winter educating key stakeholders in the Savannah area—beekeepers, County Extension Agents, Pest Control Operators, and others—and will continue to do so throughout the spring, summer, and fall.
- The GDA has launched "[Georgia Hornet Watch](#)," a dedicated Facebook group for Yellow-legged Hornet information. Join us to share insights, stay updated on YLH developments, and collaborate on efforts toward eradicating this invasive species.
- As part of our trapping program, we've released a DIY [video](#) guide to help Georgians create an effective Yellow-legged Hornet trap using common household materials.

We appreciate your assistance in helping us eradicate this serious threat to Georgia's agriculture, our state's number one industry.

