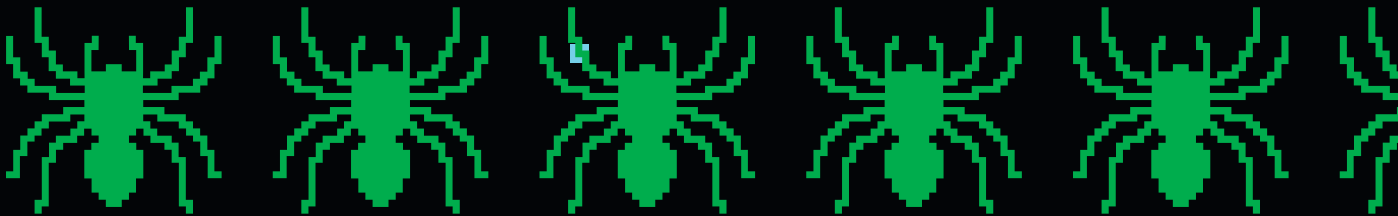
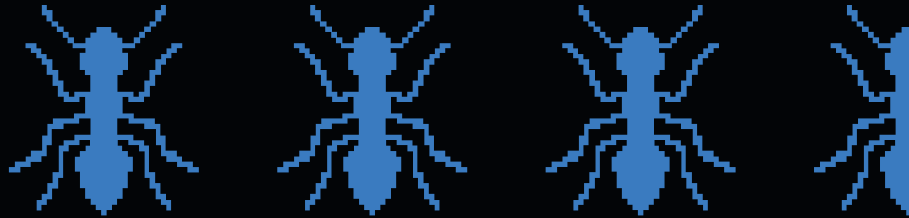


GAME

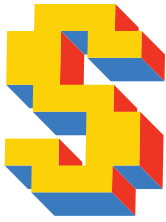


GET READY TO TAKE ON SPACE-INVADING INVASIVE SPECIES

By Heather Gooch | *PMP* Editor-in-Chief

GETTY IMAGES: SEAMARTINI, ROMAN PRYSIAZHNIUK,
MALACHY120, OLEH KUZMINSKYI / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

GAME ON



ome invasive species, like the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*, or SLF) from China, are relatively new to the U.S. Others, like the Asian needle ant (*Brachyponera chinensis*, see more coverage on p. 44), have been here for decades but have increased their distribution reach through factors like more favorable weather conditions, “hitchhiking” in furniture or other shipments, or even being more accurately identified from a native species.

Asian cockroaches (*Periplaneta japonica*) fall into that last category, notes Holly Sanefski, business manager for Perimetek Pest Management Corp., East Syracuse, N.Y. It’s important to note the differences between them and the more commonly encountered German cockroach (*Blattella germanica*).

“Asian cockroaches can fly, are attracted to light, and are

cold-tolerant — all aspects that set them apart from German cockroaches. Surprisingly, they can even survive northeastern winters outdoors,” she says.

Some invasive species appear in the U.S. from strange beginnings. For example, Gambian giant pouched rats (*Cricetomys gambianus*), which are mostly confined to Florida and are more of an agricultural pest than

a structural one (sometimes popping into homes, though, and frightening occupants with their size), are thought to have begun as imported pets that escaped.

There’s also the stranger-than-fiction way the first invasive species to the U.S., house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), arrived: Sometime in the 1850s, Nicholas Pike, director of New York’s Brooklyn Institute, paid \$200 to import eight of these birds



Holly Sanefski

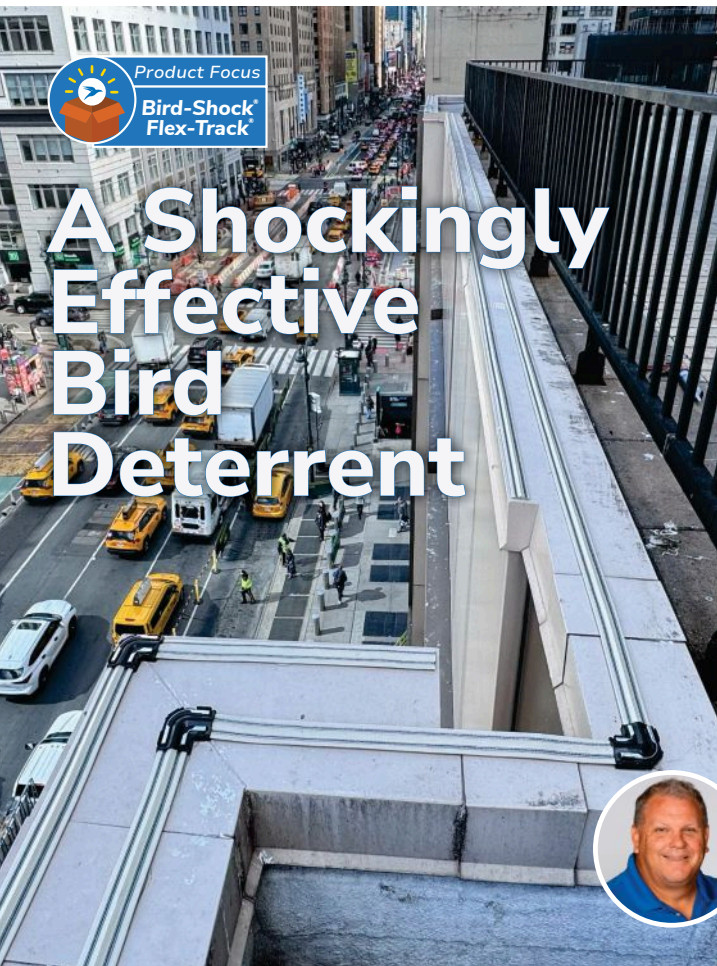


Asian cockroaches (*Periplaneta japonica*)

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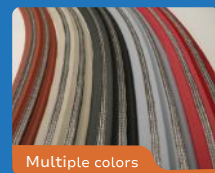
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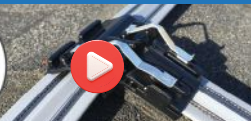


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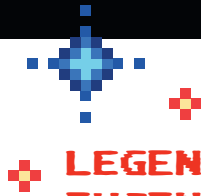


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**LEGEND HAS IT THAT
EUGENE SCHIEFFELIN WAS
ON A QUEST TO BRING
OVER ALL OF THE BIRDS
MENTIONED IN THE WORKS
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.**

from England. The prevailing theory is that Pike thought the sparrows would biologically control the cankerworms (Geometridae) plaguing city trees, but unfortunately, the birds eat more seeds than insects.

Not to be outdone, in 1890 Eugene Schieffelin imported 60 European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) into New York City's Central Park. Legend has it he was on a quest to bring over all of the birds mentioned in the works of William Shakespeare. On the other hand, he had helped sponsor Pike's sparrow project four decades earlier. He also was heavily involved in the American Acclimatization Society, whose 1871 charter stated a mission of introducing



House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

“such foreign varieties of the animal and vegetable kingdom as may be useful or interesting.”

In 1900, Congress passed the Lacey Act before the country was purposely inundated with more non-native wildlife, fish and plants. One of its

Continued on page 34

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Continued from page 33

many objectives is to regulate the introduction of wild birds and mammals in places they typically do not inhabit.

VERTEBRATE PESTS

Tony Swilling points to invasive bird species like sparrows and pigeons. “They seem to be an issue from time to time getting into buildings,” adds Swilling, a pest management professional (PMP) for George Washington University in Washington, D.C.



Tony Swilling

Nisus Northeast Regional Manager George Williams, ACE, PHE, notes wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) have been an invasive pest in the Americas since they were brought over as a food source in the 1500s. Also referred to as Eurasian boars or razorbacks (as any loyal University of Arkansas fan knows), the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports more than 6 million of these pests bring destruction and native species competition to at least 35 states.



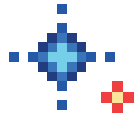
George Williams

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Several invasive species have received extensive media coverage, such as the proactive eradication efforts of northern giant hornets (*Vespa mandarinia*), native to Asia, in Washington state between 2019 and 2024.

Native to East Asia, the Joro spider (*Trichonephila clavata*) easily makes headlines in every southeastern U.S. town to which it spreads.

Wild boar
(*Sus scrofa*)



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Joro spider
(*Trichonephila clavata*)



Northern
giant hornet
(*Vespa mandarinia*)

GETTY IMAGES: GLOBALP (LEFT), GUMMYBONE, BRUNO UEHARA / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

“They are striking in appearance, with distinctive bright yellow, blue and red markings on their abdomens,” notes Desiree Straubinger, BCE, president of industry fraternity Pi Chi Omega, a technical service representative of BASF and a member of *PMP’s* Editorial Advisory Board. “Female Joro spiders can measure up to 3 inches in length, making them one of the larger spider species. Males



Desiree Straubinger

are significantly smaller and less colorful.” Andrew Taylor, BCE, owner of Grace Valley Pest Control in Dahlonega, Ga., is very familiar with the spider and its habitat. He recalls attending a local pest management conference where the speaker encouraged PMPs to leave Joro spiders be, because they neither bite nor pose a health risk to humans.

Continued on page 36

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GAME ON

Continued from page 35

"Sure, they don't bite people, but it's another story when you can't get to a new client's front door because of all the webbing," he quips, noting the webs a female can produce often span 10 feet or more and are very strong. "There is always a sense of calm around here leading up to July, thinking that maybe they have gone away for good. Then August comes, and you realize they never left."



Andrew Taylor

Meanwhile, with SLF, the public is encouraged to kill on sight. Native to Asia, it was first discovered in Pennsylvania in 2014 and has been steadily spreading across the country. The Keystone state has a quarantine in place for this pest, and encourages members of the public to squash it, then report it online — or by phone at 888-4BADFLY.

"Several states have SLF quarantine areas in place to help stop the pest's spread," reports Dr. Chuck Silcox,



Dr. Chuck Silcox

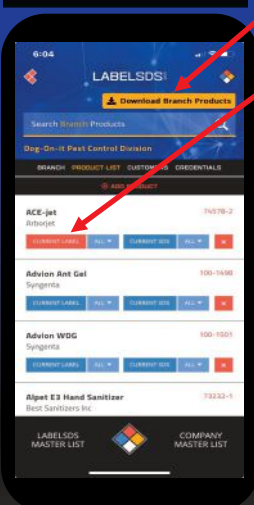
product development manager for AMGUARD. "Quarantine zones may be expanded if new infestations are detected. SLF feed on woody and non-woody plants, piercing the phloem tissue of foliage and stems with specialized mouthparts, and sucking the sap. While feeding, they leave behind a sticky, oozing residue called honeydew, which attracts other insects, causes mold growth and inhibits photosynthesis. Because they can appear in large numbers on a single plant, they can directly cause substantial damage to or even kill parts of the host plant while indirectly affecting the health and productivity of nearby plants."

Jen Sweeney-Ingram, BCE, notes, "Although we now have sightings of spotted lanternfly, they haven't spread enough yet for us to get regular

Continued on page 38

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HOW TO HELP

While many of the species discussed in this article are not new to many pest management professionals (PMPs), some may be popping up in new areas. When a suspected occurrence happens, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC) encourages reporting the information to your local extension office or other appropriate resource. The agency hosts InvasiveSpeciesInfo.gov/subject/reporting to offer more guidance and information.



Jen Sweeney-Ingram

Continued from page 36
calls,” and adds that she knows it’s likely just a matter of time before that changes. The technical director of Nashville, Tenn.-based All-American Pest Control says the Top 2 invasive pests in her market are both overwintering species: multicolored Asian lady beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*) and brown marmorated stink bugs (*Halyomorpha halys*, or BMSB).

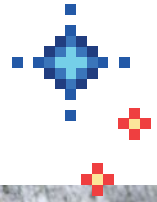
PUBLIC HEALTH

Laura Krueger, BCE, is a Garden Grove, Calif.-based medical and veterinary entomologist for the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District. She points to several invasive mosquito species that also are vectors of disease, such as yellow fever mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti*), originating in Africa, and Asian tiger mosquitoes (*A. albopictus*).

“I don’t think *Aedes notoscriptus* is expanding outside of California,” Krueger adds, referring

Continued on page 40

NATIVE TO ASIA, SLF WAS FIRST DISCOVERED IN PENNSYLVANIA IN 2014 AND HAS BEEN STEADILY SPREADING ACROSS THE COUNTRY.



Spotted lanternfly
(*Lycorma delicatula*, or SLF)

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Laura Krueger

Continued from page 38
to what's known as the Australian backyard mosquito. "But there are other invasive *Aedes* species in other parts of the country, like *Aedes japonicus*, or Asian bush mosquitoes."

George Wynne, ACE, field training manager for ABC Home and Commercial Services in Wimberley, Texas, teases that there are "a variety of varmints."

"One of our top invasives in Austin and the Texas Hill Country, though, would be tawny crazy ants," Wynne adds, referring to *Nylanderia fulva* — which, interestingly enough, was discovered by Texas PMP Tom Raspberry in 2002 and was initially known as the Raspberry crazy ant.



George Wynne

PREPARE FOR BATTLE

As noted earlier with Asian giant hornets, a proactive campaign against an invasive species can have some success, with public messaging about reporting sightings and in the case of SLF, even creating a dance about how to stomp on sight (see news.vt.edu/articles/2023/10/cals-stompthespot.html, put together by a group of Virginia Tech students who are committed to eliminating the pest).

Some species, like the BMSB, are barely worth the trouble of treating for since their lifespans are short. In many cases, exclusion and sanitation can go a long way toward prevention and control.



Red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*, or RIFA)



Black imported fire ant (*S. richteri*, or BIFA)



Asian bush mosquito (*Aedes japonicus*)



Australian dried fruit beetle (*Carpophilus truncatus*)

For others, of course, like South America's red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*, or RIFA), the black imported fire ant (*S. richteri*, or BIFA) and the emerging hybrid of the two (creatively, *S. invicta x richteri*), several professional insecticides are labeled for such infestations. This is especially important when the invasive pests are numerous — RIFA colonies can have up to 500,000 workers — or threatening public health, like these ants do with their potentially deadly sting.

Unfortunately, there is still a category of invasive species for which PMPs are left scratching their heads. James Miller, ACE, global director of PCO sales for Trécé Inc. and president-elect of Pi Chi Omega, says the Australian dried fruit beetle

Continued on page 42



Continued from page 40

(*Carpophilus truncatus*) falls directly into that group.

“It’s a very concerning invasive pest, affecting nut growing and processing facilities across California,”



James Miller

Miller explains, adding that the species, also known as the carpophilus beetle, was first detected in the Golden State in 2023.

“The USDA cannot find breathing entry holes in their eggs, so fumigation kill steps are not complete. They can reproduce in stored nuts and food facilities as well. They’re tough little buggers! And yet, as it stands, there isn’t a marketable monitoring system for this species.” **PMP**

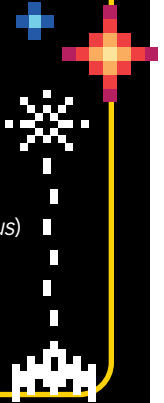
Gooch can be reached at hgooch@northcoastmedia.net or 330-321-9754.

INVASIVE URBAN PESTS LIST

Inside the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC), online at InvasiveSpeciesInfo.gov. Invasive species also include viruses, such as West Nile virus, carried by some mosquito species, and plants, like tree-of-heaven, the spotted lanternflies’ tree host of choice.

Here is just a sampling of the structure-invading insects and vertebrates the team covers:

- ▶ Africanized honey bee (AHB) (*Apis mellifera scutellata* Lepeletier)
- ▶ Argentine black and white tegu (*Salvator merianae*)
- ▶ Asian long-horned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*)
- ▶ Asian longhorned tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*)
- ▶ Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*)
- ▶ Brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*)
- ▶ Brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*)
- ▶ Cane toad (*Rhinella marina*)
- ▶ Formosan subterranean termite (*Coptotermes formosanus*)
- ▶ Gambian giant pouched rat (*Cricetomys gambianus*)
- ▶ Northern giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*)
- ▶ Red imported fire ant (RIFA) (*Solenopsis invicta*)
- ▶ Spotted lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*)



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INVASIVE ASIAN NEEDLE ANTS ARE HERE TO STAY



By Dr. Kathy Heinsohn, BCE | PMP Contributor



Asian needle ants (*Brachyponera chinensis*), previously known as *Pachycondyla chinensis* in many scientific publications until 2014, are not new to the U.S. However, there was a recent uptick in news coverage about them in June, especially regarding the unusually painful reactions humans can experience from their stings.

This rise in attention is not due to an increase in their population since their introduction. Instead, it's primarily because people are spending more time outdoors during summer activities, which increases their likelihood of encountering these ants in their typical habitats: wooded areas and gardens.

This invasive species, in the subfamily Ponerinae, has

spread across much of the Southeastern U.S. and into the mid-Atlantic region, reaching as far north as Massachusetts and potentially as far west as Missouri. However, comprehensive research and mapping studies are still needed to confirm the full extent of their distribution.

These ants prefer damp hardwoods for nesting, making them common in moist mulch, fallen trees and logs, under landscaping railroad ties, within leaf litter, under pavers and stones, and in wood piles. While they are not highly aggressive, they will sting to defend their nests.

HOW THEY GOT HERE

Like odorous house ants (*Tapinoma sessile*, or OHA) and Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*), Asian needle

ants are a nonnative species. They arrived in the U.S. as early as the 1930s and have outcompeted native ant

species such that they are considered to have a negative impact on the ecological biodiversity of the areas they inhabit.

As their common name implies, Asian needle ants are originally from Japan, Korea and China. And, like several invasive species, they were most likely brought in and spread on nursery and landscaping stock. Their discovery continues in non-arid areas of the southeast and other areas of the U.S.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM

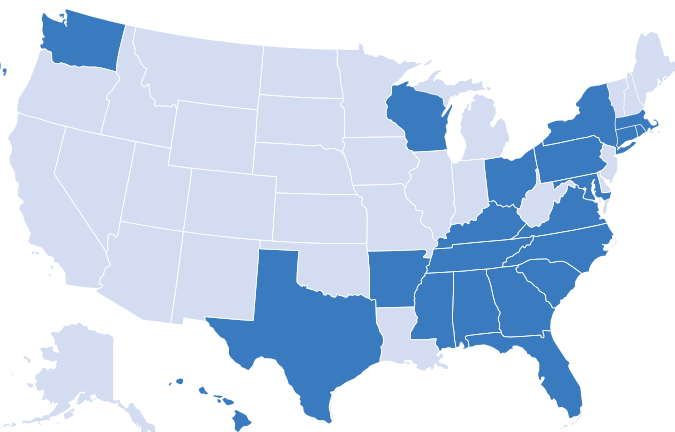
There is little that is remarkable about how the Asian needle ant looks. With a shiny dark brown to black body, workers are small, measuring 0.12 to 0.25 of an inch in length, while the queen can reach 0.26 of an inch in length.

Identifiable by their light brown antennal tips, legs, mouthparts and stinger, this species primarily consumes small arthropods like termites and springtails, along with other soil and leaf litter

Asian needle ants were in the U.S. for decades before being officially recognized as a pest in 2006, per North Carolina State University.

AntMaps.org reports that as of June 2025, the U.S. Forest Service reports the presence of Asian needle ants in 20 states, with isolated populations identified in Wisconsin and Washington state.

SOURCE: ANTMAPS.ORG



Continued on page 46

PHOTO: JESSICA LOUQUE, SMITHERS VISCIENT, BUGWOOD.ORG; MAP: TINNAKORN / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



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Continued from page 44

invertebrates. Inside structures, they scavenge kitchen and garbage food. While they are drawn to sugar, the ants' preferred nesting sites typically are near termite colonies, a reliable food source.

These ants have been observed foraging indoors and employ an unusual recruitment method called "adult transport," where workers physically carry nestmates during emigration. Unlike other ants, they don't use pheromones for foraging trails, nor do they construct large nests like fire ants, making large groupings of them rare. Many sting victims report not even seeing the ant that stung them.

Although subtle in behavior and appearance, ant stings are potent and more painful than a fire ant's.

The pain reportedly can persist for up to 48 hours, often in waves. Victims may experience skin reactions such as hives, itching and flushed or pale skin. More severe reactions include nausea, dizziness and a rapid pulse, with life-threatening anaphylaxis being the most critical. Immediate medical attention is advised for any reaction to an ant sting.

WHEN TO EXPECT THEM

In the U.S., Asian needle ants begin to appear in March as ground temperatures warm and

THESE ANTS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED FORAGING INDOORS AND EMPLOY AN UNUSUAL RECRUITMENT METHOD CALLED "ADULT TRANSPORT," WHERE WORKERS PHYSICALLY CARRY NESTMATES DURING EMIGRATION.



colony sizes grow, peaking in the mid-summer months. This ant can handle cooler temperatures better than most ant species and also survive the winter months at a higher rate. So, an increase in human outdoor activities coincides with the ant population's growth,

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accounting for more human interactions.

Asian needle ants have both ecological and medical impacts on their immediate environment. This nonnative ant displaces plant species that depend on native ant species to spread their seeds.

BE PROACTIVE

Cooperative extension agents around the country have been receiving an increase in calls for hospitalizations associated with this ant. People who have increased sensitivity to insect stings, up to and including anaphylaxis, need to take all precautions. Advise such customers in areas where Asian needle ants are found to keep antihistamines on hand and carry an epinephrine injection pen when working or playing outdoors.

Also, advise these customers to inspect the potting soil of new plants and shrubs before planting. If any Asian needle ants are found, they should get rid of the infested soil. They also should wear thick work or garden gloves when working in mulch or around wood piles to guard against stings. Cutting up fallen trees into smaller sections will also make the wood less attractive as a nest site.

Asian needle ant colonies are polygynous and polydomous, meaning they have multiple queens and multiple nest sites. Therefore, proper treatment is crucial to prevent budding, which can split the colony and worsen the infestation. Most appropriately labeled professional ant treatment protocols and products, such as granular and gel baits used for OHA and Argentine ants, also are effective against Asian needle ants. Workers will carry the bait back to the colony and share it with their

queens, leading to the reduction and elimination of nest sites.

Research for more targeted treatments that minimize the impact on native ant species and the local ecology is ongoing, as the Asian needle ant continues

to spread, to establish best management practices. **PMP**




Dr. Heinsohn is an entomologist at Fulton, Md.-based American Pest, an Anticimex company.



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