

BURROWING BEES & SAND WASPS

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THESE SPECIES TYPICALLY STARTS IN JULY AND LASTS 4-6 WEEKS



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GROUND NESTING BEES

Ground nesting bees are hairy, ½" long bees that are usually drab in color, with bands of black and brown or gray. Some species are metallic green or blue. They make individual nests in the ground with ¼" openings. Often, many individuals nest in the same area. The bees tend to fly about 6" above their nest.

Ground nesting bees are very unlikely to sting.

They are excellent pollinators, with some being specific to native plant species. Several native Illinois plants are in decline due to the lack of habitat for their native bee pollinators.

SAND WASPS

Sand wasps may be reddish or grayish in color and are usually about 1" long. Cicada killers and sand wasps build individual nests with ¼ to ½-inch entry holes in the soil.

Males usually patrol the airspace above the nests and are known to zoom around passersby. Due to their size and appearance, they often look intimidating. **Sand wasps rarely sting people, although they will sting if they are stepped on or grabbed.**

CICADA KILLERS

Cicada killers are about 1 ½" long, some can be up to 2" long. They have reddish transparent wings, and are black with yellow bands.

Cicada killers are very unlikely to sting. Cicada killers and sand wasps pollinate while feeding on pollen and nectar. They capture insects for their larvae to feed upon. Several species feed primarily on tree borers; one species feeds primarily on emerald ash borer and related insects.

Revised by Sarah Hughson, Extension Specialist - Entomology August 2019. Created by Phil Nixon, Extension Entomologist July 2016.