Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*)-Murder Hornet

The Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) has arrived in North America. This insect has attacked honeybees: it crawls into hives and rips off the heads of bees in large numbers—making its supervillain nickname, “murder hornet,” feel disturbingly apt. Government agencies and local beekeepers have sprung into action, hoping to eradicate the hornet before it can consolidate a foothold in the continent. Success may lie in how predator and prey interact naturally.

*V. mandarinia* is the largest hornet in the world. A female worker may grow to a length of nearly four centimeters (an inch and a half), and the insect has large biting mouthparts that enable it to decapitate its victims. Hornets are usually solitary hunters. But between late summer and fall, *V. mandarinia* workers may band together to conduct mass attacks on nests of other social insects, notably honeybees. This behavior even has a name: the slaughter and occupation phase. U.S. beekeepers supply billions of honeybees each year to help pollinate at least 90 agricultural crops. And they are worried that this new raider could further worsen already deep losses in important pollinator populations.

The hornet is native to Asia, ranging from Japan and Russia down to Thailand and Myanmar (formerly Burma).