

Africanized Bees

Description

Africanized honey bees (AHB) are a temperamental hybrid of several species of European honey bees (EHB) (*Apis mellifera*) and the African honey bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*). Africanized honey bees may appear very similar to EHB in the field or to the untrained eye. There are several characteristics that distinguish these two species from each other, but often a microscope is needed to make the distinctions. When in the field, the most noticeable difference between AHB and EHB is their behavior. Africanized bees are extremely aggressive in defense of the colony. When agitated, AHB will often “swarm” to defend the hive and adults bees will often attack by stinging in large numbers.



Photo credit: Pest and Diseases Image Library, Bugwood.org



Photo credit: Pest and Diseases Image Library, Bugwood.org

Images above show a female Africanized honey bee (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) from different angles.



Photo credit: discoverlife.org

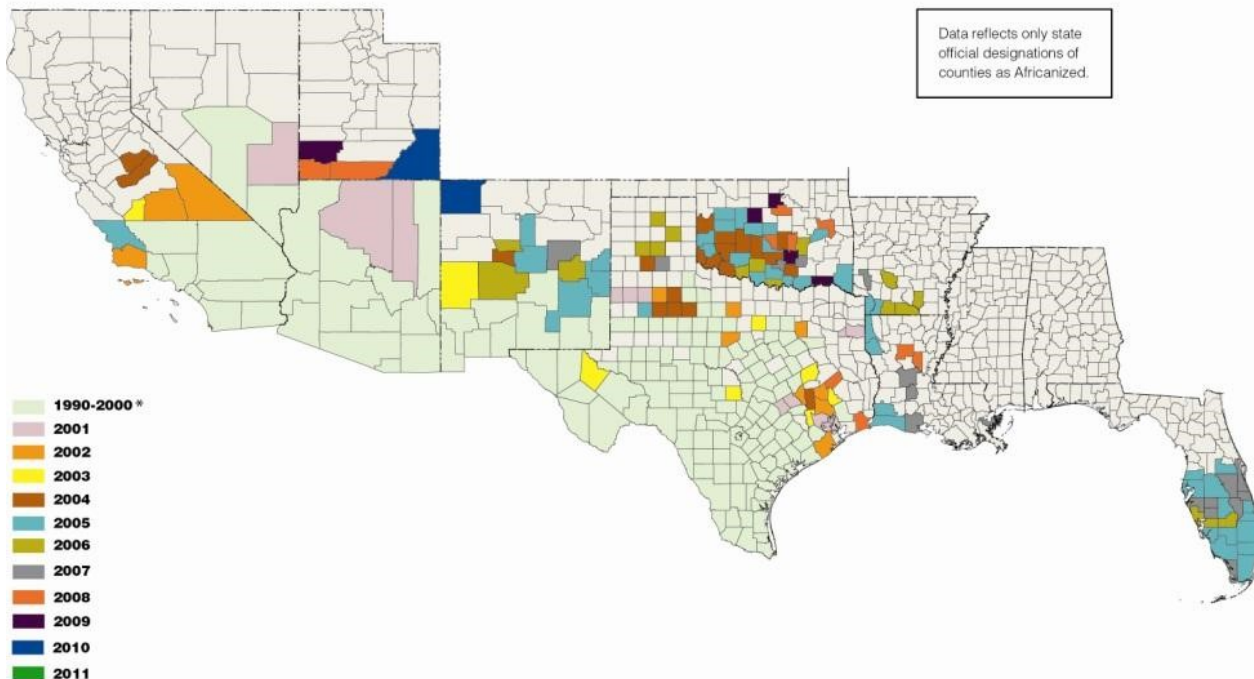
Image to the left shows an aerial view of a female European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*).

Montana is not considered suitable habitat for AHB to be prolific, but they have migrated north up into the southern United States from regions of South America. Please see the map below on distribution of AHB in the US.

Spread of Africanized honey bees by year, by county

Updated March 2011

Agricultural Research Service, USDA



Alyssa Piccolomini

State Entomologist and Apiary Inspector

302 N Roberts St | Helena, MT 59601

T: (406) 444-3790

E: apiccolomini@mt.gov

Web: www.agr.mt.gov/bees

If you suspect AHB in your yard, please contact the Department immediately. Do not attempt to trap the bees yourself. Africanized honey bees can be extremely aggressive and an agitated colony may sting several hundred times. Recording the number of cases is important to bee health in Montana and can help in collecting data on AHB.