

Separate bee attacks put 3 people in the hospital: One species may be the culprit

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Cricket Aldridge

Cricket Aldridge, executive director of the Arizona Backyard Beekeepers Association, inspecting cordovan Italian bees at Butterfly Wonderland in Scottsdale.

Last week, separate bee attacks hospitalized at least three people: two Chandler residents and a Sun City golf course worker.

“There’s lots of things going on in the environment to make bees testy,” said Cricket Aldridge, the executive director of the Arizona Backyard Beekeepers Association.

For example, a lack of pollen and water due to the heat.

“There’s a food shortage, there’s need for water, then there’s people doing landscaping and noisy things around their hive,” Aldridge said. “So those are the kind of things that create kind of a scenario where people are gonna get stung.”

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“Bees in general don’t like stormy weather, cloudy weather, rainy weather,” she said.

That even includes docile bees. Arizona is home to a significant population of species that might explain why: Africanized honey bees, or *apis mellifera scutellata*.

“When they’re at their hive, they’re very very defensive,” Aldridge said.

They also reproduce about ten times more often, which Aldridge said is “why Arizona has so many African honey bees.”

Normally, she said even Africanized bees won’t attack unprompted.

“If you do happen to have bees attacking you, the best thing you can do is get into a car,” Aldridge said. “Close the windows. Even though there’s going to be bees in there with you, they will go to the window.”

It’s a method she’s used many times herself.

For other bee encounters or if you find a hive: “Call a beekeeper if you see bees and you want them removed.”

Because, Aldridge said, every kind of bee is worth saving.



Cricket Aldridge

Cricket Aldridge, executive director of the Arizona Backyard Beekeepers Association, relocated this hive of Africanized bees from the home they made inside a hollow fake rock.



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