

# Why Is the Wasp a Pest?

by Phil Lester

*If you've ever stood on a wasp, you'll know they have a very painful sting. But bees can sting, too, and we don't think of bees as a problem. So why do most people think of the wasp as a pest? There are several reasons.*

## There are lots of them.

In many of our native forests, there are about twenty wasp nests per hectare. Each nest is home to around five thousand wasps. If you could weigh all the wasps in a native forest in autumn, scientists think they would weigh four times the weight of all the birds, mice, rats, and stoats together!



## They eat all kinds of things.

Wasps collect nectar from flowers (and chase away other creatures that eat nectar, too). They also attack bees, rob bee hives of honey, and kill and eat bee larvae. Some beekeepers have lost 30 percent of their hives to wasps in a year. Wasps kill and eat many other kinds of insects as well, including beetles and butterflies. Some types of butterflies have completely disappeared from our forests as a result. Wasps have even been known to attack birds' nests and eat the chicks.

## They don't have many enemies.

Wasps that live in colonies are not native to New Zealand. They came here from overseas. Like some other animals that have been introduced, such as rats and possums, wasps have few predators in New Zealand.

## They are smart.

Wasps have amazing senses. They use their vision, hearing, and sense of smell to find food. They can also learn. Wasps remember where the food is so they can make trips back and forth to their nests. Scientists have found that wasps can recognise the faces of other wasps. Not only that – wasps can even be taught to recognise different human faces!



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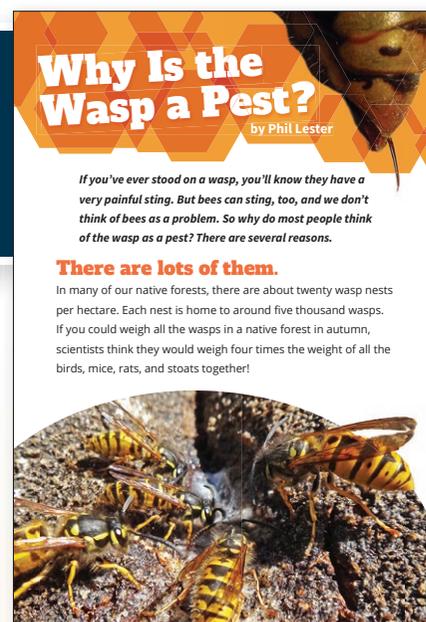
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