



CLOSE TO HOME

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A poem
begins in delight
and ends in wisdom.

Robert Frost

Autumn Visitors



White Footed
Mice

Wolf
Spiders



Box Elder
bugs

2007 The Year of the Yellow Jacket



2007 will be a year to remember for bee and wasp problems—and especially for the yellow jackets. Long hot summers serve as an incubator for large nests. The warmer it gets, the more quickly the life cycle progresses from egg to adult, and thus the larger the nests become.

But it is not only the size that is affected, it is the number of nests. It has not been an uncommon occurrence this summer to find 4 and 5 yellow jacket nests on one house! Conditions have been very favorable for prolific nesting.

The **Best Nest** of the year goes to a Fairport family that hired CastleGuard to exterminate a foundation nest of yellow jackets. In the basement, a second nest was discovered near a window. A fabric ceiling cover was all that separated the large paper nest from the living space in the basement. Yellow jack-

ets were flying into a hole in the mortar and up onto the sill plate where the nest was partially supported by the fabric. Hundreds of dead yellow jackets later, the nest was removed and the basement was again a safe place to go.

In the news recently was a story of a man from Greensboro, NC that attempted to exterminate a yellow jacket nest in his house on his own. When the spray didn't do the trick, he stuffed the entry hole with paper and lit it. The fire spread beyond the nest to engulf much of the house. \$80,000 in damages later, the yellow jacket nest was gone! The fire marshal was quoted as saying: "We certainly don't advocate the burning of these insects, though it may work."

There is another way to rid your yard of a pesky underground yellow jacket nest. You can go green! Or should we say black and white? A

favorite food of skunks is the high protein contents of an active yellow jacket nest. It is hard for them to resist the delectable eggs and larva of a large nest. It is even worth the multiple stings they receive. You can tell the skunks have been at work when a hole is dug out, the nest is in pieces on the ground, and the bees are gone. A free extermination service, you say? Perhaps, but sometimes there is a price to pay when a skunk gets irritated at all the bee stings!



THE PEST INSPECTOR'S JOURNAL!

THE ODD - THE SCARY - THE HUMOROUS

One of the joys of my work is hearing the innovative ways people try to solve their pest problems. I heard a new one this summer that bears repeating—perhaps it can save you from trying it yourself!

Yellow jackets nesting in

the ground by the children's swing was a clear and present danger for this family. The father went on line and read that sticking the hose of a shop-vac into the entry hole and turning it on for several hours will suck them all up.

This is a good recipe for mad yellow jackets! The homeowner discovered this for himself, then gave me a call. He suffered not only from multiple bee stings, but some harsh ribbing at work. Yankee ingenuity!



Glad You Found That!: Pictures from the Field



Here's a picture of what happens when aluminum circuit wiring is spliced together with copper wiring. The circled area shows a burned wire nut with corrosion under the cap. A true fire hazard!



Running along the black arrow is a large tree root that has pushed into the foundation of a detached garage. Foundation repairs like this can be expensive.



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CastleGuard Pest Management



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE!

Q: During our home inspection, the use of an extension cord with the garage door opener was noted as a problem. Why is this?

A: Extension cords should not be used as a permanent solution for powering an appliance. Appliances will have a heavier draw of electricity than will lighting. Oftentimes the extension cord is a smaller gauge wire than the circuit that is being plugged into. A circuit breaker that is rated for a 20 amp circuit could allow more power through the lines than the extension cord is rated for, causing overheating, and a possible fire.

On a recent home inspection, I discovered lamp cord that was in use to power a garage door opener. It was this very kind of problem that caused a garage fire for a friend several years ago.

Appliances like openers,

refrigerators, freezers, etc. should be plugged directly into outlets without extension cords. Where extension cords are used for lighting, they should never travel under carpeting or through walls.

Q: We have discovered tiny little insects on our bathroom floor and vanity. We're concerned we might have fleas, but we don't have animals and we only find them in this location. What are they?

A: The picture below is an insect called a "Springtail". It gets its name by its tendency to jump when you go to touch it. It is often mistaken for a flea because of this. It is a non-biting pest that usually shows up in the home near water.

Hot, dry summers tend to be ideal conditions to see springtails inside,



ASK JOHN!

and around settings like the swimming pool and garden hose outside. They are seeking moisture when their natural habitat in the grasses have dried up. In severe conditions, they can infest by the thousands. A simple, natural control for springtails is to water the lawn periodically. It helps to keep these thirsty beggars outside!

Q: What is the most unusual home inspection finding in recent weeks?

A: That's an easy one. I was inspecting a summer cottage on Canandaigua lake and was checking the structure and plumbing via the small window into the crawlspace. I was surprised to find that the piers supporting the house were not stone, brick, or cement block, but old oak wine barrels! Farmers in wine country certainly were creative—nothing went to waste.

My only concern was the vulnerability the barrels have to moisture and insect attack. But after 80 years, they appeared to be going strong!



Cheers!