

## Carpenter What?

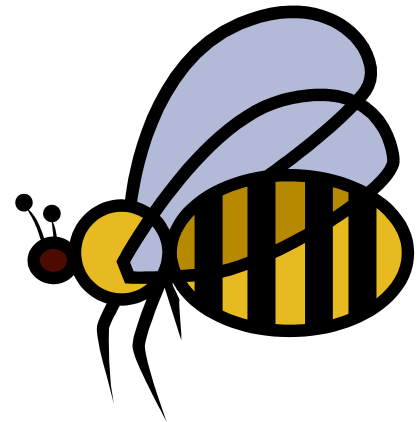
### What You Always Wanted to Know About Carpenter Bees

Lisa Turner

I was inspecting a beautiful cedar framed home on Lake Chatuge recently when I heard a buzzing noise and looked up from the side deck to see several large bees coming right for me. They flew straight at my head and at the last minute I ducked as they flew by. As I looked down, I noticed a line of fresh sawdust on the deck directly below the roofline.

“Carpenter bees!” I exclaimed, moving away from the roof fascia board above, where I knew mother bees were boring fresh nests in which to lay their eggs.

“Carpenter what?!” said the home buyer as she came around the corner of the house and up to where I was inspecting 3 perfectly round, exactly one half inch diameter, holes in the fascia trim of her new home.



“Carpenter bees,” I said. “It’s springtime, and the mother bee bores a hole into your wood trim – only the horizontal members by the way – and lays her eggs. After going into the wood one inch, she turns 90 degrees and moves down the board inside 4 to 6 inches – some tunnels found have been 10 feet long – and then she creates individual nesting cells for her baby bees.”

The 2 furious bees that had dive bombed me earlier were now back, buzzing our heads. We moved away from the roofline.

“The male bees are highly territorial, and stay buzzing around the nests in protection, but the males don’t have stingers, so they are scary but harmless,” I continued.

“That’s very interesting,” the homebuyer said, “But look at my trim!”

We both looked up and saw multiple lines of holes, and 2 open tunnels about 6 inches long. This was repeated on the other sides of the home in various degrees, and some of the unfinished wood was chewed or scratched by woodpeckers trying to access the nests for a meal.

“What can be done?” asked the concerned buyer.

“Well,” I replied, “Carpenter bees are definitely annoying and damaging, but rarely pose a structural problem unless the damage has gone on unchecked. The bees do not actually eat the wood – unlike termites – which is good, but the bad news is that carpenter bees are hard to control for this very reason – adding pesticide to the wood does not help much. Your best bet is to have a qualified pest control company take a look, and along with the routine inspections for other pests they can spray these nests with boric acid dust or other appropriate chemical – then you should caulk up these holes and tunnels and make repairs. Some pest professionals say you can take care of these yourself by spraying WD-40 into the holes and then caulking them. Apparently the bees do not like oil based surfaces.”

“Well My Goodness!” said the curiously intrigued homebuyer, wrinkling her nose as she observed a female bee entering one of the perfect half inch holes in her roof trim. “What can be done long term to discourage this?”

“About the only thing you can do is stay on top of repairs and keep a heavy coat of varnish or paint on these surfaces,” I said. “And if you decide to replace the siding, fascia, or deck rails, try to find a good synthetic product – plastic or composite – that will eliminate the problem entirely!”

Carpenter Bees – now you know!

