

# WASP FACT SHEET

## *Sphecius speciosus* Eastern Cicada Killer Wasp



Female Excavating Nest



Excavated Nest



Male Guarding Territory



Male Visiting Rattlesnake Master

**Scientific Name:** *Sphecius speciosus* (Crabronidae)

**Common Name:** Eastern Cicada Killer Wasp

**Range:** Eastern and central North America. The Dakotas east to southern Maine, south to eastern Texas and Florida. Also in the west in eastern Colorado, New Mexico, and northeastern Mexico.

**Biology:** This is one of the largest predatory wasps, ranging from 30 to 40 mm (1.2 to 1.5 in) in length. Females excavate a solitary nest in compacted, well-drained soil. The nest burrow diameter is very wide compared to other wasp nests; the burrow must be able to accommodate the female wasp and her oversized cicada prey. Because of the large nest diameter and the quantity of excavated soil, the nests can easily be mistaken for a small rodent burrow (photo left). The nest contains multiple cells, and each cell is typically provisioned with one or two cicadas. This wasp produces one generation per year.

**Prey:** Dog day cicadas including annual cicadas (genus *Neotibicen*) and scrub cicadas (genera *Diceroprocta* and *Neocicada*).

**Behaviors:** Males emerge prior to females, then establish a mating territory near the emergence site. Males defend territories by chasing other males that enter. This activity may seem alarming to people concerned about getting stung, particularly where large nesting aggregations occur. However, the males are harmless (and cannot sting) but may investigate non-wasp intruders entering their territory. Also, females are not inclined to sting humans.

**Activity:** May to October (south); July to mid-September (north).