

Asian bees threaten Australia

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Four swarms of Asian bees found in Cairns, Australia, may pose a serious threat to the country's honey bee population.

Asian bees are known to have found their way into Australian ports at least half a dozen times in the last 10 years, Agriculture Today reported in its June issue.

The latest is an invasive Javanese strain found living in the mast of a yacht docked in Cairns. The bees are believed to have been in the mast for at least three months. Three related swarms were found later in the area, the magazine said.

The Javanese strain can carry a mite that has wiped out commercial and feral bee populations around the world. Australia is the last major beekeeping country free of the mite.

Asian bees, such as the Javanese strain, kill domestic bees and rob their hives. About 90 of Australia's fruit and vegetable crops rely on pollination by domestic bees.

Bee mites have decimated American bee populations used to pollinate many crops.

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