

HORNETS, WASPS, & BEES

Oh My!

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #92 —

It was lunchtime in the African bush and three of us were sitting at a table under a shade tree. November is the dry season and often a curious honey bee will cruise around the lunch table looking for anything wet. We were engaged in conversation when I took a swig of beer. Immediately it was clear that there was something in my mouth besides beer; I spit it out, but not before the bee got his stinger into my upper lip – wow!

Another time in Africa, I was following Brenda and the rest of the team on an elephant track; it led us across a large open area and past a small tree. The PH and trackers all stepped around the tree, as the limbs were hanging pretty low; but Brenda simply stooped a bit and walked under it. Immediately she began screaming,

swatting her head with her hands and running; there was a wasp nest in that tree. She was lucky to have received only one sting – on the face.

Back home, in the summer of 1985, I was leading my brother in law Bill, his son Chris and my son Russell into the squirrel woods. Russell was in the rear and our two guests were in the middle, when all hell broke loose. We had

walked over a nest of yellow jackets and all ran like crazy out of the woods, with Bill and Chris pulling off their shirts and swatting at their attackers. Russell and I somehow escaped the wrath of the yellow jackets, but our guests were both stung multiple times. Needless to say, the squirrel hunting was over.

I remember a Potterfield family picnic, back when I was just a kid; cousin Johnny had to visit the outhouse and no



Yellow Jacket, bumble bee, honey bee and bald-faced hornet.

one knew there was a bumble bee nest inside. Johnny was either the first one to use the outhouse, or somehow disturbed them. He received several bumble bee stings before he could make his exit.

The bald-faced hornets build large gray nests, mostly on tree limbs. I've never personally had a run-in with these folks, probably

"...all hell broke loose."

because they are hanging a bit higher in the trees; but each fall, during

deer season, I look for them and am reminded that anyone who spends much time outside during the warmer months is going to have encounters with hornets, wasps and bees. The good news is that you won't see it coming!

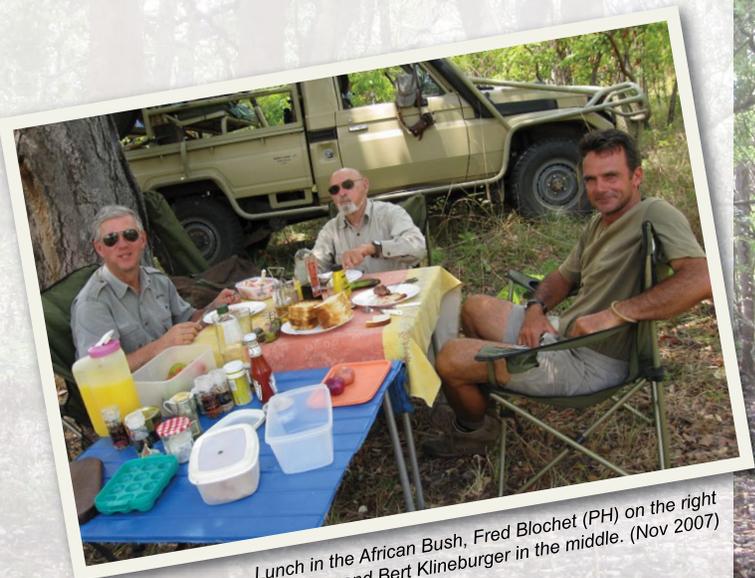


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Midway Farms
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The bald-faced hornet nest. Birds have begun to tear it apart, exposing the inner workings.



Lunch in the African Bush, Fred Blochet (PH) on the right and Bert Klineburger in the middle. (Nov 2007)