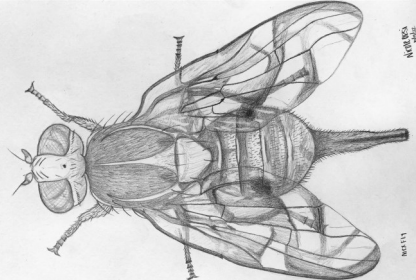


# San Diego County Entomology Newsletter



WINTER 2023

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Mexican Fruit Fly by N. Orsi

## Invasive Pest Alert — Cycad Aulacaspis Scale

Dr. Eric Middleton, University of California Cooperative Extension Entomology Advisor, alerted us to a heavy infestation of cycad aulacaspis scale, *Aulacaspis yasumatsui* (Hemiptera: Diaspididae) observed at a location in the county. This A-rated armored scale insect is native to South-East Asia but has spread to Central America, the Caribbean Islands, and parts of the Pacific Region and Australasia and the southern United States. It is a serious pest of cycads, with heavy infestations on the fronds and roots that are difficult to treat. The feeding damage causes chlorotic leaves and eventual plant death. While frequently intercepted on shipments, this infestation is the first record of the scale in the environment in California. We are collecting official sample records and looking for additional sites to determine if the infestation is more widespread. CDFA pest rating: <https://blogs.cdfa.ca.gov/Section3162/?tag=cycad-aulacaspis-scale>



Cycad aulacaspis scale infestation on *Cycas revoluta* cycad (left) and close view of life stages including large adult females, winged males, eggs and immatures (right). Photos: B. Cass

## Apiary Program Updates



Sami Jalel at a hive health inspection. Photo: J. Garza

Sami Jalel, Youth Career Readiness and Employment program intern, attended a commercial apiary inspection ride-along with Jaime Garza, Sr. Agricultural Standards Inspector, during the beginning of his internship with the AWM department. Sami wore a bee suit for the first time and met with the beekeepers at the apiary. The apiary was in compliance with the county beekeeping ordinance Best Management Practices. The bees exhibited gentle temperament, and Sami observed the beekeepers used their smoker to interfere with the bees' sense of smell to prevent the bees from reacting negatively to the disturbance of opening the hive box. As a result of the drought and low availability of forage, the beekeepers are providing a pollen substitute for the bees to consume. Varroa mites were of concern to the beekeepers, however the brood and the hives that were observed were healthy. Sami noticed a praying mantis attempting to enter into the beehive. Back in the office, Sami assisted the County's Apiary Program by calling cities across the county and updating the list of contacts of city Code Enforcement and Public Works departments for referrals regarding public concerns about wild and managed honeybees in City jurisdictions.

## Lab Updates & Outreach Events

The lab participated in the County Operations Center Halloween event, helping to host an outreach booth with pet-cockroach and spooky walking sticks live insect display. Dr. Cass, dressed as a fruit fly, was interviewed about the display. Participants could win prizes with an I-spy insects game in the UCCE Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden. Lab staff also participated in the Farm and Nursery Expo held in Escondido. AWM won 1<sup>st</sup> place for Most Informational Table. A highlight was the display cube with 1,000 Mexican and 1,000 Mediterranean Fruit Flies from the Sterile Release Program.



Agricultural Standards Inspector Aprille Geier at the Farm and Nursery Expo. Photo: B. Cass

## Favorite Samples & Acknowledgments



"Pobble" the giant sphinx moth caterpillar. Photo: B. Cass

Thank you to Danielle Gomez-Heller for helping to update the lab book library catalogue; Loren Libolt for a suspect invasive eucalyptus pest alert, Claire Aiken and Dusko Pantovik for helping us investigate. Our favorite insect recently was a Giant Sphinx Moth caterpillar (*Cocytius antaeus*, Lepidoptera: Sphingidae), who we named Pobble. These enormous caterpillars were found by Sierra Wolf and Evan Padgett feeding on cherimoya (*Annona* sp.), its host plant. This was the first official CDFA record of this insect species in California, however, unofficial records indicate it is found here occasionally. It is not considered an actionable agricultural pest. The bejeweled 'horn', impressive size, and calm demeanor made Pobble a popular visitor for county staff.

## Contact the Lab or Apiary Program

Labs.AWM@sdcounty.ca.gov

Lab: 858-614-7738 [sandiegocounty.gov/awm/entomology.html](http://sandiegocounty.gov/awm/entomology.html)

Apiary Program: 1800-200-BEES (2337) [sandiegocounty.gov/awm/bees.html](http://sandiegocounty.gov/awm/bees.html)

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