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Hordes of tarantulas across U.S. emerging for mating season

Elizabeth Weise USA TODAY

If you’re hiking or camping in the arid Southwest and West in the next couple of months, get ready for what could be the experience – or fright – of a lifetime.

Across the United States, in California, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas, tens of thousands of tarantulas will be crawling out of their burrows in search of females – making for a fascinating, if a little creepy, display of the wonders of nature.

It’s tarantula mating season.

“If you’re lucky enough, you can sometimes see them in hordes crossing the roads at certain times of the year,” said Dan McCamish, a senior environmental scientist with California State Parks.

While the idea of thousands of hairy, baseball-sized spiders picking their way through parks and campgrounds might give people the heebie-jeebies, in general these misunderstood, wandering arachnids are simply young males in search of love. And if they wander into your tent, they didn’t mean to.

“In truth they’re gentle, ecologically valuable animals,” McCamish said. “Mostly they’re interested in escaping from confrontations – especially with something they know could squish them.”

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Contrary to common fears, tarantulas don’t want to interact with humans any more than most humans want to interact with them. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

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Fort Bliss detention center alarms Japanese Americans

Eduardo Cuevas and Lauren Villagran
USA TODAY

FORT BLISS, TX – Americans of Japanese heritage say they hear echoes of their families’ forced internment in the Trump administration’s newest immigrant detention site.

Homeland Security officials say President Donald Trump’s sweeping mass deportation campaign requires a build-up of detention centers to bridge the gap between arrests and removals. They’ve turned to the U.S. military and private contractors to get the job done, including erecting the nation’s largest immigrant detention site on Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas.

But stewards of Japanese American

history, including the children and grandchildren of those who were held in detention, are criticizing the use of Fort Bliss and the plans to expand immigrant detention on American military bases.

Fort Bliss was a “cog” in the United States’ Japanese internment machine, said Brian Niiya, a historian and content director at Densho, a nonprofit that chronicles Japanese American internment.

Niiya’s grandfather, the managing editor of a Japanese language newspaper, was arrested the night of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941, and held in six different internment camps over the next two years.

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The Fort Bliss facility, also known as Camp East Montana, rises like a white tent city on a flat desert plain. PAUL RATJE/REUTERS FILE

Ruling protects more sanctuary cities

Trump blocked from withholding funding

Dietrich Knauth and Nate Raymond
REUTERS

A federal judge on Aug. 22 blocked the Trump administration from withholding federal funding from more than 30 so-called sanctuary jurisdictions including Los Angeles, Baltimore, Boston and Chicago that have declined to cooperate with the president’s immigration crackdown.

U.S. District Judge William Orrick expanded an injunction he issued in April covering 16 cities and counties to cover a new batch of local governments that recently joined the case.

The lawsuit was filed after President Donald Trump signed two executive orders that the cities and counties said unlawfully threatened to cut off funding unless they cooperated with federal immigration law enforcement, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The orders targeted so-called sanctuary jurisdictions that have laws and policies that limit or prevent local law enforcement from assisting federal officers with civil immigration arrests.

Orrick on Aug. 22 said Trump’s orders “threaten to withhold all federal funding from the plaintiffs as sanctuary jurisdictions if they do not adapt their policies and practices to conform with the Trump administration’s preferences.”

“That coercive threat (and any actions agencies take to realize that threat, or additional executive orders the president issues to the same end) is unconstitutional, so I enjoined its effect,” Orrick wrote. “I do so again today for the protection of the new parties in this case.”

The White House did not respond to a request for comment. The administration is already appealing Orrick’s earlier ruling.

Among the cities covered by Orrick’s new order is Los Angeles.

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