

Common Stinging Insects of Colorado

Western Yellowjacket *Vespula pensylvanica*



Western yellowjacket scavenging syrup covered corn fritters.



Western yellowjacket nest entrance at the base of a brick wall.



Exposed nest of western yellowjacket. Photograph courtesy of Ken Gray/Oregon State University.

The western yellowjacket is a notorious pest around outdoor dining areas and is, by far, the most important stinging insect in the western United States. It is a scavenger that primarily feeds on dead animal material and available sweets. Nests are made of paper but occur underground or in cavities near the ground and are not visible unless uncovered.

European Paper Wasp *Polistes dominula*



European paper wasp collecting wood fibers for nest construction.



European paper wasps nesting in clothes line pole.



A large European paper wasp nest.

Since its arrival in Colorado ca. 2000 the European paper wasp has become a very common resident of yards/gardens in much of the state. They produce relatively small, single layer paper nests that they attach under eaves, other overhangs or in small above ground cavities. It is a predator of other insects and does not scavenge food. However, the nests are often hidden and when disturb stings may occur.

TOP THINGS TO KNOW

- In Colorado, people are stung most often by the Western yellowjacket or the European paper wasp.
- Worker honey bees can only sting once. Their barbed stinger pulls out and remains behind.
- All other stinging insects can sting repeatedly. They do not have a barbed stinger.
- Colonies of honey bees survive year round in hives and divide when swarming in late spring.
- Paper wasps, yellowjackets, bumble bees and the bald faced hornet all produce new nests each year. The old nest is abandoned at the end of the year.
- The first step in an Integrated Pest Management program is to correctly identify the insect.

Prairie Yellowjacket *Vespula atropilosa*



Prairie yellowjacket in a mating ball. Photograph courtesy of Joseph Berger.



Prairie yellowjacket.

PREDATOR: OTHER INSECTS

NESTS: IN CAVITIES ON OR NEAR THE GROUND

Aerial Yellowjacket *Dolichovespula arenaria*



Aerial yellowjacket nest. Photograph courtesy of Howard Ensign Evans.



Aerial yellowjacket.

PREDATOR: OTHER INSECTS

NESTS: LARGE, PAPER-ENCLOSED ABOVE GROUND ATTACHES BUILDINGS

Baldfaced Hornet *Dolichovespula maculata*



Baldfaced hornet nest.



Baldfaced hornet collecting honeydew from oak galls.

PREDATOR: OTHER INSECTS

NESTS: LARGE, PAPER-ENCLOSED ABOVE GROUND IN TREES AND SHRUBS

Bumble Bees *Bombus spp.*



Interior of a bumble bee colony. Photograph courtesy of Ken Gray/Oregon State University.



Bombus huntii, a common orange marked species of bumble bee.

POLLINATOR

NESTS: FOUND IN SMALL CAVITIES, SUCH AS ABANDONED RODENT OR BIRD NESTS. NESTS LAST FOR ONLY ONE SEASON.

Honey Bees *Apis mellifera*



Man-made honey bee hives in an apiary.



Foraging honey bee with full pollen sacs.

POLLINATOR AND SOURCE OF HONEY.

NESTS: MADE IN LARGE CAVITIES, EITHER HIVES PROVIDED BY HUMANS OR IN SITES SUCH AS HOLLOW TREES. HIVES ARE MAINTAINED YEAR-ROUND.

Golden Polistes *Polistes fuscatus*



Multiple nests produced by golden polistes. Photograph courtesy of Joseph Berger.



Golden polistes.

PREDATOR: OTHER INSECTS

NESTS: PAPER NESTS LARGER THAN THE EUROPEAN PAPER WASP

