

Discover the Fauna of Our Campus

Ammophila sabulosa

Order: Hymenoptera

Family: Sphecidae (Digger wasps)

Genus: *Ammophila*

Species: *Ammophila sabulosa* (Red-banded sand wasp)

It has a very slender, long, and delicate body. Notably, the "waist" part (petiole)

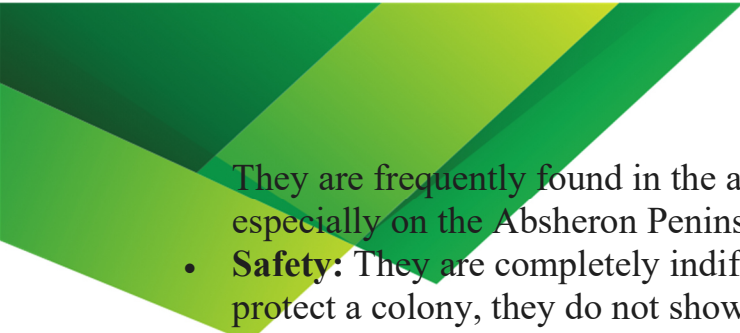


connecting the thorax to the abdomen is unusually long. Its length ranges between 15–25 mm. The body is primarily black, but the front part of the abdomen is bright orange or reddish. These contrasting colors make it easily recognizable in nature. Nesting and Hunting Behavior

Sand wasps are solitary insects, and their nesting process is studied with fascination by biologists. The female

wasp digs a vertical tunnel ending in a small chamber in sandy, sunny areas.

- **The Hunt:** The sand wasp primarily hunts butterfly caterpillars (specifically those of owl moths). It stings the caterpillar at a precise point so that the caterpillar does not die but becomes paralyzed. This is necessary to ensure the larva is provided with fresh food.
- **Transportation:** It grabs the paralyzed caterpillar—which is sometimes heavier than the wasp itself—with its jaws and carries it to the nest by dragging it along the ground or via low flight.
- **The "Architect":** After laying its egg on the caterpillar, it seals the nest entrance with sand and small pebbles so skillfully that it becomes impossible to find the nest from the outside. Some individuals have even been observed using a small pebble as a "tool" to hammer down and firm the soil at the nest entrance. Habitat and Human Interaction. They prefer open, dry, sandy areas, steppes, and forest edges. They are very active during sunny weather.



They are frequently found in the arid and sandy regions of Azerbaijan, especially on the Absheron Peninsula and in lowland districts.

- **Safety:** They are completely indifferent toward humans. Since they do not protect a colony, they do not show aggression. Stinging a human is a very rare occurrence (only if handled by hand). Their venom is designed to paralyze caterpillars and does not pose a serious threat to humans.
- **Benefit:** Sand wasps are beneficial for gardening and agriculture because they naturally reduce the population of caterpillars that damage plants.

The way this wasp builds a nest like an architect and preserves the caterpillar as "living canned food" is a testament to how perfectly nature is programmed.

