

# Discover the Fauna of Our Campus

## Wasp

Order: Hymenoptera (Ants, Bees, and Wasps)

Family: Vespidae (Vespid or Social Wasps)

Genus: *Vespa* (Hornets)

Species: *Vespa crabro* (European Hornet)

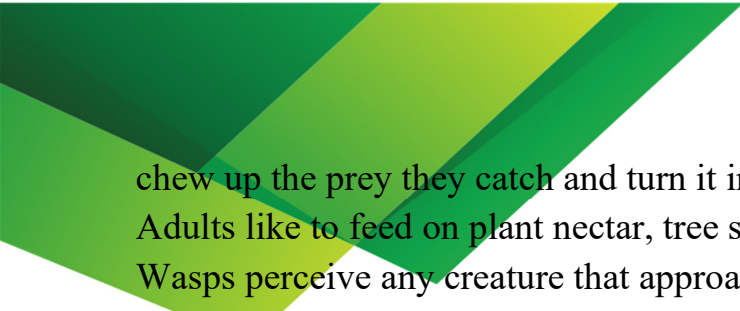
The wasp (*Vespa*) is a genus of insects belonging to the family of wasps, known for its large size and aggressive defense mechanism. The reason why they are sometimes called “wasps” among the people is that they are many times larger and stronger than ordinary honey bees. Wasps are considered the largest social bees in the world. Ordinary worker wasps can be from 2 cm to 3.5 cm long.



However, in species such as the “Asian giant wasp”, the queen is more than 5 cm long. They usually have yellow-black or orange-brown stripes. Their heads are relatively large in relation to their bodies. Their sting, unlike honey bees, is straight, not hooked. This allows them to sting several times in a row. Wasps live in colonies. Their nests are architecturally interesting: They build their nests from a special “paper” that they make by chewing up decaying wood fibers and mixing them

with their saliva. Nests are usually located in tree cavities, attics, underground, or in wall cavities.

The colony consists of a queen bee (productive female), hundreds of worker bees (females), and males that emerge at the end of the season. Wasps are both predators and sap-suckers. They hunt flies, insects, and especially honeybees. They



chew up the prey they catch and turn it into a source of protein for their larvae. Adults like to feed on plant nectar, tree sap, and sweet fruits (grapes, pears, etc.). Wasps perceive any creature that approaches their nest as a threat. Their sting is more painful than that of ordinary bees, because their venom contains a high amount of acetylcholine.

In normal people, it causes severe swelling, redness, and unbearable pain at the site of the sting. In people who are allergic to bee venom, it can cause “anaphylactic shock,” which can be fatal if not treated medically. When a hornet stings, it releases a special pheromone into the air, which calls other members of the colony to attack. Hornets can cause serious damage to beekeeping. A few large hornets can destroy an entire honeybee hive in a short period of time. Honeybees sometimes try to repel them with “thermal defense” (the bees gather around the hornet, raising the temperature and suffocating it).

First Aid: If a hornet stings, panic increases blood circulation, causing the venom to spread. Wash the sting site with soap and water, and apply ice to reduce swelling and pain. If shortness of breath, nausea, or a massive rash develops, seek emergency medical attention immediately. Interesting fact: Wasps can also be active at night and are attracted to artificial light sources (lamps, etc.).

