

Yellowjacket Bee



Yellowjacket or **yellow-jacket** is the common name in North America for predatory wasps of the genera *Vespula* and *Dolichovespula*. Members of these genera are known simply as "wasps" in other English-speaking countries. Most of these are black-and-yellow; some are black-and-white (such as the bald-faced hornet, *Dolichovespula maculata*), while others may have the abdomen background color *red* instead of black. They can be identified by their distinctive markings, small size (similar to or slightly smaller or larger than a honey bee), their occurrence only in colonies, and a characteristic, rapid, side to side flight pattern prior to landing. They are often mistakenly called "bees". All females are capable of stinging. Yellowjackets are important predators of pest insects

A typical yellowjacket worker is about 12 mm (0.5 inches) long, with alternating bands on the abdomen while the queen is larger, about 19 mm (0.75 inches) long (the different patterns on the abdomen help separate various species). Workers are sometimes confused with honey bees, especially when flying in and out of their nests. Yellowjackets, in contrast to honey bees, are not covered with tan-brown dense hair on their bodies and lack the flattened hairy hind legs used to carry pollen. Yellowjackets have a lance-like stinger with small barbs and typically sting repeatedly, though occasionally the sting becomes lodged and pulls free of the wasp's body; the venom, like most bee/wasp venoms, is primarily only dangerous to those who are allergic, unless a victim receives a large number of stings.

All species have yellow or white on the face. Mouthparts are well-developed for capturing and chewing insects, with a proboscis for sucking nectar, fruit and other juices. Nests are built in trees, shrubs or in protected places such as inside human-made structures (attics, hollow walls or flooring, in sheds, under porches and eaves of houses), or in soil cavities, mouse burrows, etc. Nests are made from wood fiber chewed into a paper-like pulp.

Due to their aggressive behavior, including stinging, many other insects exhibit mimicry of yellowjackets; in addition to numerous bees and wasps (Müllerian mimicry), the list includes some flies, moths, and beetles (Batesian mimicry).

Yellowjackets are social wasps living in colonies containing workers, queens and males. Colonies are annual with only inseminated queens overwintering. Fertilized queens occur in protected places as hollow logs, in stumps, under bark, in leaf litter, in soil cavities and human-made structures. Queens emerge during the warm days of late spring or early summer, select a nest site and build a small paper nest in which eggs are laid. After eggs hatch from the 30 to 50 brood cells, the queen feeds the young larvae for about 18 to 20 days. Larvae pupate, emerging later as small, infertile females called workers. By mid-summer, the first adult workers emerge and assume the tasks of nest expansion, foraging for food, care of the queen and larvae, and colony defense