



Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Te Manatu Ahuwhenua, Ngaherehere

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Exotic Pest Information Sheet

Yellow Flower (or Scoliid) Wasp (*Radumeris tasmaniensis*)

What are they?

The yellow flower (or scoliid) wasp is native to Australia and Papua New Guinea. In Australia the wasp is present throughout eastern and southern parts with a few records from inland and north-western Australia. This species is ectoparasitic (it lives on the outside of its host) and solitary in nature. Instead of forming a nest, the female tunnels into soil and locates a scarab beetle larva, which they sting and paralyse before laying an egg nearby. The larva then becomes a source of food for the young wasp as it grows. Adult wasps feed on nectar and honeydew. Both females and males are active on warm, sunny days and may be observed flying low over soil surfaces.

What's the big deal?

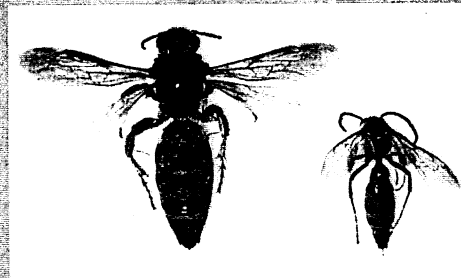
Prior to February 2000, the yellow flower wasp had not been recorded in New Zealand. In February 2000, several of these wasps were found amongst sand dunes in Northland. The wasp is a parasite of scarab beetles and for this reason, scientists are concerned that there may be a risk to native beetle species. Currently very little is known about this wasp, and scientists are keen to find out where it is present in New Zealand. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the Department of Conservation (DOC), with support from the Northland Regional Council (NRC) are co-ordinating an investigation to try to answer some of these questions and to identify whether any risk is posed by the wasp to native beetles.

What to do if you find one

The Northland Conservancy, DOC would like to receive reports of any sightings of wasps that you think match the description of the yellow flower wasp. If you are able to collect a specimen of the wasp and drop it in (or post it) to your local DOC office, it would be greatly appreciated. Samples of wasps can also be dropped off (or posted) to staff at one of the Northland Regional Council offices (address and phone numbers opposite). They can be collected by inverting a small jar or container over them and replacing the lid. Wasps can be killed humanely by placing them in a deep freeze for a few hours. To mail or transport specimens, they can be stored in a film container (or something similar). When you are sending samples, please also include information stating where the wasp was found and the date and time of day it was collected. Please also include your own name and contact phone number, in case further details are needed.

This wasp is not believed to sting humans. However, as when handling any wasp species, care should be taken.

What do they look like?



Left: Female wasp Right: Male wasp - actual size

Females are up to 30mm long with a wingspan of up to 40mm and a large, robust body. Males are smaller, up to 20mm long with a wingspan of about 25mm.

Females have a dark brown thorax, a narrow 'waist' and the broad abdomen is orange with narrow black stripes across its width. The underside of the abdomen has wider black stripes alternating with narrower whitish stripes. Males have a narrower abdomen with alternating black and yellow stripes of similar width on the upper and lower surfaces. The female has short antennae about the same length as the width of the head; the male has longer antennae, about half the length of the forewings. Both male and female have orange to brownish wings, with very fine veins towards the wing tips.

Where have they been found?

So far, the yellow flower wasp has only been found in three sites in New Zealand. All three sites are isolated coastal spots in Northland – Cape Maria van Diemen and North Herekino Head on the West Coast, and Whareana Bay, south of North Cape.

Department of Conservation:

Post to:

Andrea Booth, Northland Conservancy, 149-151 Bank Street PO Box 842, Whangarei Tel: 09 430 2470 e-mail: abooth@doc.govt.nz

Or drop off at the following offices:

Te Pahi Tel: 09 409 7521

Kaitiaki Area Office, 127 North Road, Kaitiaki Tel: 09 408 6014

Kenkeri Area Office, Landing Road, Kenkeri Tel: 09 407 8474

Waipoua Field Centre, Waipoua Forest Park Tel: 09 439 3011

Russell Field Centre, The Strand, Russell Tel: 09 403 9005

Whangarei Area Office, 8A Kaka St, Whangarei Tel: 09 430 2133

Northland Regional Council:

192 Commerce St, Kaitiaki Tel: 09 408 1451

Robert St, Whangarei Tel: 09 438 4639

61b Victoria St, Dargaville Tel: 09 439 6662

Beechy St, Opua, Paihia Tel: 09 402 7516

For general information you can also contact:

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry:

ASB Bank House, 101-103 The Terrace

PO Box 2526, Wellington

Gita Parsot Tel: 04 498 9806



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai