

# Identification Information Sheet

## Possible areas of confusion between insects

If you print this page on an A4 sheet, the insects will be life size.  
More information and a notification sheet are available on the internet:  
[http://inpn.mnhn.fr/espece/cd\\_nom/433589/tab/fiche](http://inpn.mnhn.fr/espece/cd_nom/433589/tab/fiche)



The **Asian hornet**, also known as the yellow-legged hornet, *Vespa velutina*, is predominantly black with a broad orange stripe on the abdomen and a fine yellow band on the first segment. When seen from the front its head is orange, and its legs are yellow at the tips. It measures between 17 and 32mm.



Asian hornet/Yellow-legged hornet, *Vespa velutina* var. *nigrithorax*

The **European hornet**, *Vespa crabro*, has a predominantly pale yellow abdomen, with black stripes. Its head is yellow from the front and red from above. Its thorax and legs are black and reddish-brown. Workers measure between 18 and 23mm and queens between 25 and 35.



European hornet, *Vespa crabro*

The **Oriental hornet**, *Vespa orientalis*, is the same size as the European hornet. It is entirely red, only its head from the front and a band of its abdomen are yellow. It is only present in the south-east Europe (south Italy, Malta, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria).



Oriental hornet, *Vespa orientalis*

**Wasps** are smaller than hornets. The workers measure about 15mm in late summer. Be aware that a queen wasp may slightly exceed 20mm, i.e., the size of the Asian hornet shown here, without the head. In spring, wasps may therefore be larger than the earliest hornet workers.

The **Mammoth wasp**, *Megascolia maculata flavifrons*, is one of the largest European "wasps". It is therefore frequently confused with the Asian hornet. It is covered with a dense layer of hairs and has a glossy black body. Its head is yellow on top and it has 4 yellow hairless areas on the abdomen. It is a parasite of the larvae of large beetles (such as the cockchafer).



Median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*

German wasp, *Vespula germanica*

Paper wasp, *Polistes biglumis*

The **Giant Woodwasp**, *Urocerus gigas*, is a sawfly whose larva feed on wood. This black and yellow banded wasp can be easily distinguished from a hornet by its cylindrical body and its long and entirely yellow antennae. The female can reach 45mm in length and has a long ovipositor to lay its eggs in tree trunks. This species is totally harmless.



Giant Woodwasp, *Urocerus gigas*



Mammoth wasp, *Megascolia maculata flavifrons*

The **Blue Carpenter bee**, *Xylocopa violacea*, measures 20-30mm; it is fully black with purple-blue relexions. The female of this solitary bee builds its nest in rotten dead wood and collect pollen to feed its larvae.



Carpenter bee, *Xylocopa violacea*

Many **flies** (Diptera) can resemble wasps or hornets. But they differ in having only one pair of wings instead of two. Their eyes are usually much more globular and their antennae shorter.



Hornet mimic hoverfly, *Volucella zonaria*



Hornet hoverfly, *Milesia crabroniformis*

# Identification Information Sheet

## Possible confusions between wasp nests

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In spring, each founder queen builds her nest alone, often in a protected place. In most wasps, the embryonic nest resembles a small sphere, 5 to 10 cm in diameter with an opening at the bottom. With hornets, the colony will not hesitate to move if its location turns out to be unsuitable (lack of space or security).



### Asian hornet/yellow-legged hornet, *Vespa velutina* var. *nigrithorax*

73% in trees over 10m tall  
 10% in buildings  
 3% in hedges  
 spherical to pear-shaped  
 small side opening  
 ~ 60x80cm



### European hornet, *Vespa crabro*

hollow trees, chimneys  
 rarely in the open air  
 cylindrical  
 wide opening at the bottom  
 ~ 30x60cm



### Median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*

bushes less than 2m tall  
 conical  
 small opening at the lower end, off-center  
 ~ 20x25cm



### Common wasp, *Vespa vulgaris*

on the ground, confined spaces in buildings  
 conical  
 small hidden opening at the lower end  
 ~ 30x35cm

(*V. germanica* builds nests that are slightly larger and grey)

