



Class Insecta, Insects

Order Diptera, Flies, gnats, and midges

Diptera means “two wings,” and true flies bear only one pair of functional wings. Flies are one of the largest insect groups, with approximately 35 families that contain predatory or parasitic species. All flies have piercing/sucking/sponging mouthparts.

Robber flies

Family Asilidae

Description and life history: Robber flies are medium to large, hairy, fast flying insects with a hollowed area between their eyes and a beard. Most species have an elongated humped body with a slender tapering abdomen. Most species are gray, brown or black, while some resemble bumblebees or are very slender like damselflies.

Prey species: Adult robber flies are highly aggressive generalist predators, attacking prey often larger than themselves. They feed on butterflies, wasps, bees, dragonflies, grasshoppers, beetles and other flies. Larvae live in the soil and decaying wood and are also predatory. They feed primarily on soft-bodied insects, some specializing on grasshopper eggs and insect larvae, such as white grubs.



Robber fly adult female. (321B)
Photo: John Davidson



Robber fly with prey. (W46)
Photo: Whitney Cranshaw



Robber fly adult male. (321C)
Photo: John Davidson



Robber fly adult. (321A)
Photo: John Davidson