



Class Insecta, Insects

Order Hymenoptera, Ants, bees, and wasps

Hymenoptera means “membraneous wings.” The hind wings are smaller than the front wings and have a row of tiny hooks, hamuli, that attach the two wings. There are two suborders. The smaller suborder includes sawflies and horntails, which are phytophagous. Bees, wasps, and ants belong to the larger suborder, which includes nectar, pollen, and insect feeders. Hymenoptera is the second largest group of insects, most of which are beneficial. These insects undergo complete metamorphosis and have complex behaviors. Most parasitic wasps do not sting humans. All hymenopterans have chewing mouthparts.

Chalcidid wasps

Family Chalcididae

Description and life history: There are over 1500 known species of Chalcid parasitoids. Adults are robust, have a greatly enlarged hind leg segment, and are often dark and shiny. Chalcids are characterized by their highly reduced wing veins, and usually have elbowed antennae.

Host species: Parasitic Chalcid wasp larvae are internal parasitoids of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies), Diptera (flies) and Coleoptera (beetles). Some species are also parasitoids of other wasps.



Parasitic cynipid gall wasp adult with swollen and toothed hind femora. These wasps attack caterpillars, maggots, and beetle larvae. (346)

Photo: David Laughlin