Encyrtid wasps

Family Encyrtidae

Description and life history: Encyrtids are small wasps with an enlarged pair of middle legs used for jumping. Adults are gray to black, and extrememly small, usually less than 2 mm long. Some Copidosoma species are barely visible to the eye. The wings are covered with short hairs. The encyrtid adult female life span is 2–3 days.

Prey species: Encyrtid hosts include ticks and various insect eggs, larvae, or pupae, including beetles, true bugs, moths, mealybugs, and scales. Encyrtus species attack soft scales common in greenhouses. Copidosoma floridanum attacks cabbage looper larvae. A female encyrtid deposits 1–2 eggs within a host egg. As the caterpillar develops, the wasp eggs divide many times to produce 1000–2000 wasp larvae, which can be seen through the skin of the caterpillar prior to their emergence.