

Terrestrial Invertebrates



Photo: Forest and Kim Starr and Karl Magnacca, *Hylaeus* spp.

Bees and Wasps Order Hymenoptera

ORDER INCLUDES:

17 Native Families

60 Native Genera

650+ Native Species

650+ Endemic Species

GENERAL INFORMATION: The order Hymenoptera is large and diverse, and is best known because of the social behavior of ants, bees, and wasps. Hawaii's native Hymenoptera fauna, however, is comprised of non-social bees and wasps and does not include any native ants. The most specious genus is *Sierola* (Bethylidae) with approximately 180 species. Several species in each of the genera *Hylaeus* (Colletidae), *Ectemnius* (Sphecidae), and *Odynerus* (Vespidae) including *H. chlorostictus*, *H. difficilis*, *H. pubescens*, *E. nesiotus*, *E. polynesialis*, *O. peles*, and *O. scoriaceus* are common and relatively abundant. However, the status of many other species in these genera, as well as species in the genera *Enicospilus* (Ichneumonidae), *Sclerodermus* (Bethylidae), *Sierola* (Bethylidae), is unknown. As elsewhere, Hawaiian bees and wasps have played an important role in keeping other insects, particularly herbaceous species, in check and in pollinating plants. The family Colletidae or native yellow-faced bees are important pollinators for many native plants. Most of the native wasps are arthropod parasites, often specific to particular taxa. For example, species in the family Mymaridae parasitize small insects and insect eggs, species in the family Encyrtidae prey on scale insects (Homoptera); species in the family Eucoilidae lay their eggs on fly (Diptera) pupae, and species in the families Vespidae and Bethylidae prey on Lepidoptera caterpillars. As an example of the diversity of Hawaii's hymenopterans, two genera are briefly outlined. The approximately 60 species in the bee genus *Hylaeus* occur on all the MHI. Female are inseminated as young adults and utilize the stored sperm throughout their life. Most of the species on Kaua'i and Hawai'i are endemic, while only five species are endemic to O'ahu and Maui and one to Moloka'i. They nest in hollow stems, holes in trees, in crevices, or in burrows in soil. Potential threats include non-native bees (*Ceratina* spp.) found in the native coastal habitats used by *Hylaeus* species, and competition with the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) for nectar and pollen. Confirmed threats include introduced ants (Formicidae) which compete with *Hylaeus* for nesting sites, and the big-headed ant (*Pheidole megacephala*) and Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*) which prey on the native bees. Since *Hylaeus* bees pollinate native plants, their loss would be detrimental to recovery of native plants. Wasps in the genus *Sierola* are found worldwide, but over 90 percent of the known species are endemic to Hawai'i. They are small, black wasps found primarily in wet and mesic forest. Fullway (1920) described 171 species, with 119 from O'ahu and 44 from the island of Hawai'i. Possibly hundreds of species remain to be described, and it is not uncommon to find greater than ten morphospecies (i.e., species established solely on morphological characteristics) at a single site. These species are difficult to collect, and many morphospecies are found in very low numbers; this may be an artifact of collection methods or due to their rarity. Similar to other wasps, females find a Lepidoptera

larva, sting and paralyze it, and lay an egg on it. Once the egg hatches the larva feeds on the caterpillar.

DISTRIBUTION: Hymenopterans are found on all the MHI.

ABUNDANCE: Unknown. A lack of systematic surveys prevents any population estimate. However, the loss of native habitats likely means that species within the order are declining.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Hymenopterans occur in most terrestrial habitats.

THREATS:

- Competition with non-native wasps and ants.
- Predation by non-native insects.
- Loss or degradation of habitat, especially the loss of native host plants for bees.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: The goals of conservation actions are not only to protect current populations and key breeding habitats, but also to establish additional populations, thereby reducing the risk of extinction. In addition to common statewide and island conservation actions, specific management directed toward hymenopterans should include:

- Conduct surveys to determine the distribution and abundance of known hymenopterans and to document and identify new species.
- Preserve, maintain, and restore habitat for existing populations.

MONITORING:

- Continue monitoring the status of known populations.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- Conduct systematic and taxonomic assessments of poorly known taxa.
- Conduct studies to document the biology, habitat requirements, and life history of endemic species.
- Refine methods for conducting quantitative survey.

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