

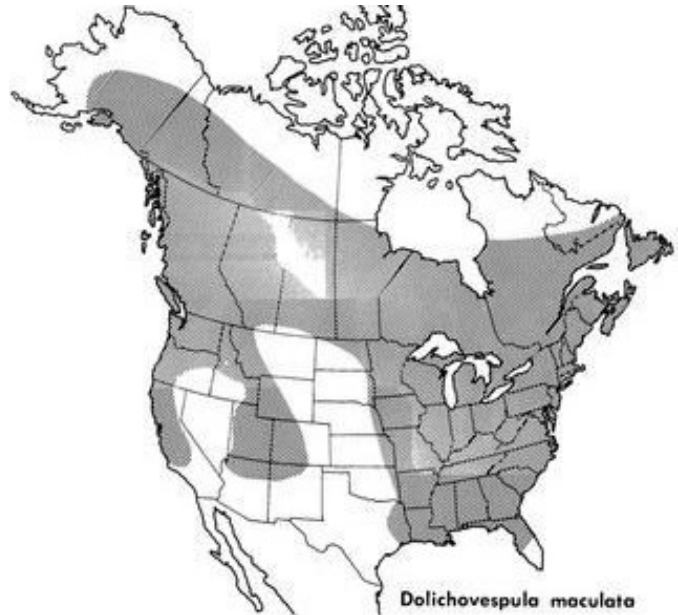
Bald-Faced Hornets

Bald-faced hornets in the genus *Dolichovespula* are large black and white paper wasps related to yellow jackets, but much larger. They build aerial nests in exposed places, usually on tree branches, although rarely they will build under the eaves of houses in wooded areas. The nests consist of layers of cells constructed out of paper, wrapped in a paper envelope. The paper is made by the wasps from plant fibers they scrape off leaves and wood mixed with their saliva. They then form this into thin layers.

These hornets feed only on live prey, particularly flies and spiders. These wasps can be important biological control agents for flies in areas with livestock, particularly cattle and horses. They can even be observed capturing flies on these animals.

Bald-faced hornets are social insects and the colonies consist of one queen and numerous workers. In temperate climates their colonies are annual. They are founded in the spring by new queens and die out in the fall. New queens are produced by the colonies in the fall and spend the winter in protected places until spring. Colonies can be fairly large with thousands of workers. They are generally not aggressive except close to the nest.

Ordinarily they are not considered to be pests. However, nests may be built in orchards, in Christmas tree farms or under eaves. In these situations they can become a problem.



Distribution of the bald-faced hornet. Graphic courtesy of Wikipedia.

Bald-faced hornets are commonest along the coast of California and in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Coastal Range and Siskiyou Mountains.



Bald-faced hornet.



Brood combs inside a bald-faced hornet nest. Photo courtesy of Wasrts, Wikipedia.



Typical bald-faced hornet nest.