

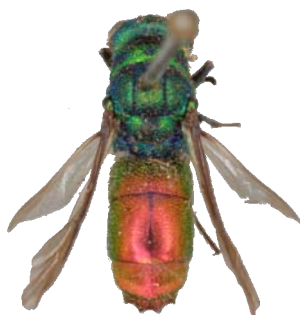
Hymenoptera from the Linnaean Collection

High resolution images are available from Kate Longhurst: kate@linnean.org

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The honey bee, *Apis mellifera* Linnaeus, is one of the few domesticated species of insect. It supplies us with honey and beeswax and it is the pollinator of many important crops. This specimen has obviously been mouldy at some time in the 250-or-so years since it was collected by Linnaeus, but it still survives and serves as the reference point for identification of the species.



This ruby-tailed wasp belongs to a group which lay their eggs in the nests of other solitary wasps and bees. Its larva eats the larva of the host and the stored food provided for it by the host female. Because of this habit they are also called cuckoo wasps. This species, *Chrysis ignita* Linnaeus, is found throughout Britain and Ireland and its hosts are mason wasps of the genus *Ancistrocerus*.



The red-tailed bumble bee, *Bombus lapidarius* Linnaeus, is common and widespread. It is frequently seen in gardens and unlike many other bumble bee species it is not regarded as endangered.



The largest of the European social wasps is the hornet, *Vespa crabro* Linnaeus. In Britain it is regarded as uncommon, but from time to time (for example in the late 1940s and again in the last few years) it increases in numbers and spreads more widely. This is usually connected with a series of good summers. It nests in hollow trees. Although hornets are large and noisy they are not as aggressive as other social wasps.

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This specimen was given the name *Apis muscorum* by Linnaeus, but his description was misinterpreted by entomologists for over 200 years and the name *muscorum* was wrongly applied to another, related species. When this mistake was discovered the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature disqualified Linnaeus's specimen and designated another, in accord with the traditional interpretation, as the reference (type) specimen. This was done to preserve stable nomenclature and avoid the confusion that would be caused by switching the name from one well-known species to another. Linnaeus's specimen belongs to a species we call *Bombus humilis* Illiger, the brown-banded carder bee.



Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778)

The Linnean Society of London, founded in 1788, takes its name from the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, whose botanical and zoological collections and library have been in the Society's keeping since 1829, having been purchased from the executor of the Society's first President, Sir James Edward Smith.



The Linnean Collections at the Linnean Society of London. The Society is guardian of the priceless collections of specimens, manuscripts and letters of Carl Linnaeus and is creating a digital archive of over 12 Terabytes of unique material relating to its historic collections, enabling full global access.