

***Polistes dominulus* (Christ, 1791) (Hymenoptera: Polistinae: Vespidae) newly recorded from South Africa**

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South Africa has three indigenous genera of paper wasp, *Polistes*, *Rhopalidia* and *Belonogaster* (family Vespidae). These wasps are mostly brown in colour, usually with pale maculation, and construct nests that are exposed. Thirty four years ago Whitehead & Prins (1975) recorded the European wasp, *Vespula germanica* (Fabricius, 1793), from Cape Town. This paper wasp builds subterranean nests. Occasionally *V. germanica* makes nests in closed cavities, such as cavities within the walls of houses, and may also have nests that project outside such cavities. This species has slowly expanded its range to include a substantial area around Cape Town, including the Cape Peninsula, Stellenbosch and the Hottentots-Holland Mountains (Tribe & Richardson 1994, G. Tribe, pers. comm.), and further spread is expected.

On 1 February 2008 A.R.W. found *Polistes dominulus* (Christ, 1791) (= *Polistes gallicus* (Linnaeus, 1767)) nesting in his house in Kuils River (33.56°S 18.41°E), a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. This is the only record of this species in South Africa and the nest was destroyed. The nest, consisting of a single horizontal comb (20 × 12 cm wide), contained about 104 adult specimens that were identified by F.K. Subsequently, adults were frequently observed flying during the summer of 2008/9 throughout this suburb. *Polistes dominulus* is native to Europe where it is widespread, being common in southern Europe, which has a Mediterranean climate, and reaches Belgium and southern Holland (Hathaway 1981). It was subsequently recorded in the U.S.A. in 1981 (Hathaway 1981) and today apparently occurs though much of the western hemisphere (Carpenter 2009). *Polistes dominulus*, like other vespoids, feeds its larvae on soft-bodied insects, such as caterpillars; adults visit flowers for nectar.

This species can be easily identified by the

following combination of characters: a longitudinal fold along the fore wing when at rest; pronotal lobes pointed posteriorly, and adjacent to anterodorsal region of tegula; tarsal claws simple; tegula evenly curved at edges (margin not raised); first gastral tergum expanding evenly from petiole to its distal edge; second gastral tergum greatly expanded compared to first and third terga; antenna nearly entirely orange, body black with yellow maculation as illustrated (Figs 1, 2a,c), female and male differ in colour patterns on face, but are similar in dorsal view, pattern on side of thorax variable in both sexes.

It has an exposed, open nest (Fig. 1) much like that of the South African Vespidae, though nests may become larger than those of the indigenous species.

Vespula germanica which is also black and yellow, has a subtly different colour pattern (Whitehead & Prins 1975), with the first gastral tergum having an abruptly expanded anterior surface and a distinct, sub-horizontal posterior surface. It has subterranean nests that are enclosed in a papery envelope.

The Western Cape Province, where *P. dominulus* was found in South Africa, has winter rainfall and therefore is climatically similar to part of this species' native habitat, and the region of introduc-



Fig. 1. *Polistes dominulus* on a nest in Kuils River.

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