

Oplostomus fuliginus (Olivier, 1789)

Taxonomy

Sub family: Cetoniinae / Tribe: Chremastocheilini / Genus: *Oplostomus*

Distinguishing Features

Large, broad beetles, body length: 20-23mm length, body colour: black, shiny. Antennal segments red/orange. Antennae 10-segmented, with a 3-segmented club. Clypeus with a rounded/subquadrate apex with rounded corners, and a raised longitudinal ridge medially. Mentum large, vertically produced to cover mouthparts and palpal insertions. Pronotum smooth with an even covering of shallow punctations. Mesepimeron partially visible anterior to elytral shoulders. Scutellum large, triangular, pointed at apex. Elytra with raised areas on apical half, flanked by depressions of a broad punctated/striae area. Metasternum projecting between bases of mesocoxae, seamlessly continuing through to mesosternum, but without a forward protruding process. Femurs striate patterned, somewhat flattened.

Related and Similar Species

The genus *Oplostomus* has 10 described species. There are no other representatives of Chremastocheilini in Australia.

A similar beehive pest species *O. haroldi*, is included in this key. They can be separated through *O. haroldi* having a potential variation in body colour- from all black similar to *O. fuliginus*, to black with broad reddish brown to orange stripes along the pronotum and elytra. *O. haroldi* also has striking bright orange setae ventrally and on the mesepimeron. The clypeus has a longitudinal ridge and more rounded edges on *O. fuliginus*, compared to no longitudinal ridge and angled/sharper edges on *O. haroldi*.

Biological Data

Oplostomus fuliginus, also known as the Large Hive Beetle or Large African Hive Beetle (LAHB), is a recognised pest of honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) hives. Adult beetles invade colonies to feed on young bee brood, stored pollen and honey. Severe infestations of hundreds of beetles per hive have been recorded. Their feeding can potentially lead to the death of the colony. Adult beetles can live for multiple months under laboratory conditions. Larvae live in the soil and feed on animal (cattle or horse) dung and compost. Any potential sightings of *Oplostomus* in Australia should be immediately reported to your local department of Agriculture.

Distribution

Oplostomus are African in origin, and absent from Australia. *O. fuliginus* are known from the African countries of Zambia, Namibia, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa, but is thought to be widespread across all of sub-Saharan Africa.

Useful Links

PaDIL image set: <http://www.padil.gov.au/pests-and-diseases/pest/main/135699>

BeeAware information page: <http://beeaware.org.au/archive-pest/large-hive-beetle/#ad-image-2>

RIRDC Project Summary: <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/16-054.pdf>

References

Oldroyd, B.P., Allsopp, M.H. 2017. Risk assessment for large African hive beetles (*Oplostomus* spp.)—A review. *Apidologie*. doi: 10.1007/s13592-017-0493-7

Wambua, B., Muli, E., Kilonzo, J., Ng'ang'a, J., Kanui, T., Muli, B. 2019. Large Hive Beetles: An Emerging Serious Honey Bee Pest in the Coastal Highlands of Kenya, *Bee World*, 96(3): 1-2 DOI: 10.1080/0005772X.2019.1568355



Oplostomus fuliginus dorsal view

Photographer:

Pia Scanlon



Oplostomus fuliginus lateral view

Photographer:

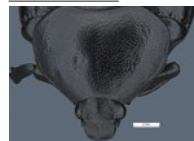
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Oplostomus fuliginus ventral view

Photographer:

Pia Scanlon



Oplostomus fuliginus clypeus

Photographer:

Pia Scanlon



Oplostomus haroldi and *Oplostomus fuliginus* attacking a colony of *Apis mellifera scutellata*. Chawia forest, Taita Hills, Kenya. Photo credit: B. Wambua, 2018. Published in (Wambua et.al. 2019)

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