

Oplostomus haroldi (Witte, 1880)

Taxonomy

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

Distinguishing Features

Large, broad beetles, body length: 29-22mm length, body colour: black, shiny, with varying red to yellow/orange stripes usually present. Complete black forms have also been reported. Red/orange antennal segments. Ventral body surface with a dense coverage of bright orange setae on areas of the prosternum, metasternum, femurs and final sternites, and dorsally on the mesepimeron. Antennae 10-segmented, with a 3-segmented club. Clypeus with a subquadrate apex. Pronotum smooth with 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 punctated/striated area. Metasternum projecting between bases of mesocoxae, seamlessly continuing through to mesosternum, but without a forward protruding process.

Related and Similar Species

The genus *Oplostomus* has 10 described species. There are no representatives of the tribe Cremastocheilini in Australia.

A similar beehive pest species, *O. fuliginus*, is included in the 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 haroldi, also known as a form of 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. haroldi* is known from Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa, but is thought to be widespread across all of sub-Saharan Africa.

Oplostomus haroldi and *fuligenus* are thought to prefer slightly different climates, with *O. haroldi* more prevalent in wetter coastal areas, and *O. fuligenus* in dryer grazing land.

Useful Links

References

- Fombong, A.T., Haas, F., Ddegwa, P.N., Irungu, L.W. 2012. Life history of *Oplostomus haroldi* (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae) under laboratory conditions and a description of its third larval instar, International Journal of Tropical Insect Science 32(01): 1-8 doi:10.1017/S1742758412000021
- 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 haroldi dorsal view](#)

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[Oplostomus haroldi head front](#)

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[Oplostomus haroldi lateral view](#)

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[Oplostomus haroldi ventral view](#)

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[Oplostomus haroldi clypeus](#)

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[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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