

HOT NEWS

COPY CAT KILLER THE EUROPEAN HORNET

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Same M.O., different perpetrator. M.O. or ‘modus operandi’ is a Latin phrase, used in law enforcement to describe a criminal’s characteristic pattern or style of committing a crime. When a serial killer’s M.O. is copied or adopted by a second criminal, investigators are often confused. The term Copy Cat Killer was coined to refer to the second criminal who adopts the M.O of the first and continues the crime spree.

If this sounds like something out of a detective movie it probably should because the Giant European Hornet (a copy cat killer in the insect world) is sometimes mistakenly confused with the Cicada Killer Wasp.

In fact, this wasp is a Giant European hornet (*Vespa crabro*). Notice the yellow and black abdomen – rather than more white and black abdomen of the cicada killer (*Sphecius speciosus*). Overall, the European hornet is slightly smaller, and has a bronze thorax and head, and the front of the thorax is rounded rather than flat, when compared to the cicada killer.

European hornets do kill cicadas, among other insects, but they differ slightly in the way in which they dispose of the body. Cicada killers paralyze and drag the whole cicada carcass to their nest, which is a hole in the ground. European hornets, on the other hand, dismember the carcass and make several trips carrying away pieces one by one to their paper nests made in hollow trees, attics and sometimes wall voids.

Although the M.O. of the European hornet may be slightly different than that of the cicada killer, this presents little consolation for the poor cicada. Dead is dead.



Giant European hornet killing a cicada

Case-in-point The enclosed photos were sent to me along with questions regarding the cicada killer wasp. Here are photos of the suspect, caught red handed, killing and dismembering a cicada. Evidence is clear. This must be a cicada killer wasp. But wait, not so fast. Even though the photo presents indisputable evidence that the victim (cicada) was killed by this wasp, does not necessarily make it a cicada killer wasp.



Giant European hornet dismembering a cicada