


Montana  Pollinator  
Education Project

# Yellow-Faced Bee



**social nester**

Background: Indian Paintbrush  
Photo courtesy of ©Martha Marks, Shutterstock

# Yellow-Faced Bees - *Hylaeus* spp.

Genus: *Hylaeus* Family: *Colletidae*

Resemble small wasps

5 - 7 mm long

Approximately 130 species in America

These small bees are often mistaken for a wasp because of their color. Yellow-faced bees are relatively hairless, and wasp's hairs will shine and glisten in the light.

The yellow-faced bee is different from many other bees because they carry their pollen in special parts of their stomachs, called crops. They regurgitate the pollen in their crops when they get back to the nest. For scientists who study pollen gathering and bees the task of identifying which flower the yellow-faced bee visits is difficult. The yellow-faced bee must be dissected to find out which flowers they visited for pollen. Even though they have short tongues, their slender body makes it easy for them to dive deep into flowers.

These tiny bees nest in existing tunnels in wood and stems. Yellow-faced bees line their nest with a material that will harden into a cellophane type material. Each cell is a separate division, each one surrounded by the cellophane like material. The yellow-faced bee will close the opening to its nest in the tunnel or stem with the same material.

Some species of the yellow-faced bees live only in certain areas of the United States. The *Hylaeus lunicraterius* lives only at the area called Craters of the Moon in Idaho. Another of the *Hylaeus* genus is native only to Hawaii. Even though there are visual similarities between the yellow-faced bee and wasps, there are also many differences. Wasps have something called a "wasp waist" which resembles a small skinny joint connecting the abdomen with the thorax. Wasps also make paper nests, as this wasp is doing in the photograph.



"Wasp waist"  
on paper wasp.

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