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POLISTES DOMINULUS (HYMENOPTERA: VESPIDAE)
FOUND IN MICHIGAN

Timothy M. Judd¹ and James M. Carpenter²

On 25 May 1995, a single foundress colony of *Polistes dominulus* (Christ) was discovered on a study site at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan (Oakland County). This is the first record of *Polistes dominulus* in the state of Michigan. The nest was constructed in a nest box set out for *Polistes fuscatus* (Fabricius). The nest boxes are small wooden boxes with a screen on one end to allow wasps to fly in and out but to prevent vertebrates from reaching them. They are painted brown on the outside and white on the inside. The boxes are suspended from a wooden cross piece attached to a metal pole so the box hangs about 1 meter from the ground. To minimize any threat to the survival of the newly-discovered colony, a worker was collected at night on 31 July for identification when the colony contained about 20 workers. The voucher specimen has been deposited at the American Museum of Natural History.

Polistes dominulus is a Palearctic species, where it is common from the Mediterranean region to China (Guiglia 1972). *Polistes dominulus* was first reported in the United States from Cambridge, in Middlesex Co., Massachusetts (Hathaway, 1981, under the name *Polistes gallicus*). By 1981, it had spread to other nearby towns in the Boston area. Since then, this species has been reported from New Jersey (Jacobson 1986), Maryland (Staines and Smith, 1995), Pennsylvania and upstate New York (Jacobson 1991a), northern Ohio and probably Vermont (Jacobson 1991b, 1994), and Connecticut (Menke 1993). Aside from the United States, the species has established itself in Australia (Richards 1978) and Chile (Willink and Chiappa 1993).

This species appears to prefer sheltered nesting sites in the U.S., mostly around human habitations. For example, in New York City it is now the most common paper wasp in such exotic locales as Central Park, and this is also true in the Boston area. TMJ has also seen it in abundance in suburban Buffalo. In these cities, the adventive *P. dominulus* may have displaced the native *P. fuscatus* to some extent, or may simply be an more accomplished synanthrope, much like *Vespula germanica* (Fabricius), which is now a very widespread and common vespine in North America (Akre et al, 1981). Unfortunately, both the pathway of entry into the U.S., and the mode of spread, are unknown. Commercial freighter shipping through the Great Lakes region should be viewed as a possible mode of distribution. Clearly, the range of *P. dominulus* is expanding, and continued documentation of its spread and interaction with native species is desirable.

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