

ROBBERFLIES

Flies are easily distinguished from other flying insects because they have only one pair of wings (all other insects have 2 pair). Robberflies are common, swiftly flying predators. All robberflies have a characteristic divot on top of their head, which is located between their especially prominent compound eyes. Many species are important predators in grassland habitats. Robberflies are particularly abundant in arid and sunny habitats with many flowers. This is generally where their favorite prey of small bees and wasps, abound.



SIZE **Up to 1¼ inches**
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If you have ever seen a rather large wasp-looking insect quickly fly out to catch another insect in mid-air, you have probably seen a robberfly. Robberflies are often mistaken for various different species of bees or wasps, but only robberflies hunt in this manner. Interestingly, this insect is capable of gauging the distance and speed of the object moving out in front of it. As it flies out, it intercepts the object. If it is acceptable prey, the robberfly stabs it in mid-air with its piercing mouth appendage. It will then return to its perch and busily eat its catch. This process begins with the robberfly injecting a fluid into its prey that liquefies the internal parts of the insect so it is easily sucked out. In many areas, the robberfly is considered a beneficial insect and is commonly called the assassin fly because it often eats various plant pests. However, in some locations, certain species of the robberfly are considered pests, preying on beneficial bees.

Information from UF featured creatures website at

<http://www.entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/>

Royal BC Museum at: http://rbcml.rbcm.gov.bc.ca/end_species/species/robfly.html

Image from Oklahoma State Entomology <http://www.ento.okstate.edu/4H/images/robberfly.jpg>