

# WASP FACT SHEET

## *Sphex ichneumoneus* Great Golden Digger Wasp



Female Excavating Nest



Female with Captured Prey



Male Visiting Butterfly Milkweed



Female Visiting White Prairie Clover

**Scientific Name:** *Sphex ichneumoneus* (Sphecidae)

**Common Name:** Great Golden Digger Wasp

**Range:** All US states and southern Ontario. Also scattered populations north of the 45th parallel in Canada.

**Biology:** *Sphex ichneumoneus* females excavate solitary nests in well-drained, compacted soil. Nests frequently occur in grassland habitats in close proximity to prey. Like other sphecid wasps, the female uses a vibratory mechanism to loosen soil particles during nest excavation: She clasps clumps of soil particles in her mandibles, then vibrates her thoracic muscles at a high frequency. These vibrations transfer to her head and mandibles, ultimately loosening the soil for eventual sweeping and removal by her legs. The completed solitary nest contains multiple cells; each cell is typically provisioned with two to six prey. A single egg is laid on the first prey placed in the cell.

**Prey:** Katydid (family Tettigoniidae) including the genera *Scudderia*, *Neoconocephalus*, *Conocephalus*, *Metrioptera*, *Neduba*, *Orchelimum*, and *Atlanticus*. Also true crickets (family Gryllidae) and raspy crickets (family Gryllacrididae).

**Common Native Nectar Plants:** Milkweed (*Asclepias*), mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum*), boneset (*Eupatorium*), goldenrod (*Solidago*), rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*) and white prairie clover (*Dalea candida*).

**Activity:** April to November (south) and June to early September (north).