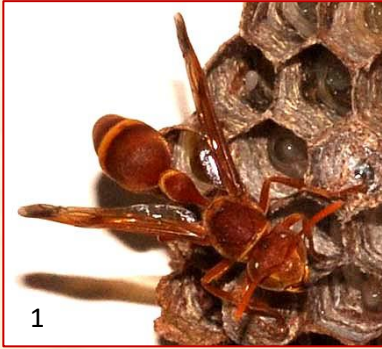


# Natural History Snippets

Brief reports by members based on their observations of nature  
Members are invited to submit their images and stories to [muhudubella@gmail.com](mailto:muhudubella@gmail.com)



## PAPER WASPS

Paper wasps build combs out of plant fibres mixed with their secretions. A common species that may build their combs inside houses is the *kalanduruwa* (Sinhala), a paper wasp in the family Vespidae of the genus *Rhopalidia* (1).

The nest is started by one fertilised female, termed a foundress. The nest, or comb, is attached to a solid object—I have had them building combs on the light switch in my bedroom, over my shaving mirror in the bathroom (2), or in multiple locations in my garage. Being non-aggressive they can be tolerated, but attack if harmed or feel threatened. The comb is attached by a stalk, and the brood cells constructed one by one. Each cell is

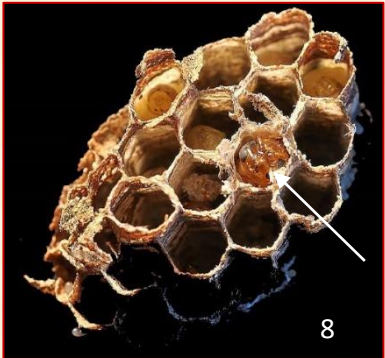
hexagonal, attached to each other side-by-side (3). As the comb increases in size, it takes on a discoid shape with one layer of cells. The foundress constructs the comb by herself, lays eggs and feeds the developing grubs by herself, till her offspring hatch. Then

they share in the task of comb building and childcare—and so the colony expands.

The cells are low at first, and an egg is laid inside, attached to the bottom (4). The eggs hatch to produce the larval grubs, and as they grow, the cells are increased in depth.



A grub in its cell is shown in (5)—the head is brown, and the concertina-like body cream coloured, filling the cell, facing the exterior. Grubs are fed by the adults who hunt for insects and caterpillars that they chew and put into the cells for the grubs to feed on. Once the grub is fully grown (6) the cell is sealed with a lid (7). Inside, the grub becomes a pupa (8), metamorphosis takes place, and a new individual emerges by chewing away the lid.



Wasps are beneficial insects as they prey on other insects that may be harmful to plants. They also gather nectar, pollinating flowers in the process. The nectar is shared with other adults on the comb.

Images and text by Malik Fernando.  
Sometimes these nests have to be removed, presenting an opportunity to examine the occupants in detail.  
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