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First European records of an alien paper wasp: *Polistes (Aphanilopterus) major* Palisot de Beauvois, 1818 (Hymenoptera: Vespidae) in northern Spain

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The frequency and speed of the transport of goods and passengers have been on the increase for decades, involving a higher rate of introductions of animals and plants to new regions that they were not able to colonise unassisted. In particular, a large number of Hymenoptera have become introduced, either deliberately (for crop pollination purposes or pest control) or unintentionally. No global data are available, but a few regional examples may outline the size of the problem: 286 hymenopteran species are known to have been introduced into Europe (Rasplus *et al.* 2010), 148 into New Zealand (Landcare Research 2009), 35 into the Galápagos Islands (Causton *et al.* 2006) and 28 into the Canary Islands (Báez & Oromí 2010).

The introduction of vespids has become relatively common worldwide: 33 species are known as introduced, with Hawaii (15 species) and North America (8) as the main host regions (Beggs *et al.* 2011). Although some vespids have been translocated from certain European countries to others (Rasplus *et al.* 2010), only one exotic vespid, *Vespa velutina* Lepeletier, is known to have become established in Europe (Beggs *et al.* 2011).

The cosmopolitan genus *Polistes* Latreille is one of the most diverse among vespids (*ca.* 220 species: Carpenter 2008, updated). There are 10 native *Polistes* spp. in Europe, all in the nominotypical subgenus (Carpenter 1996a, updated), while no European records of exotic Polistinae have been published (Rasplus *et al.* 2010). Here we report the occurrence of a reproductively active population of the American paper wasp *Polistes major major* Palisot de Beauvois in northern Spain, constituting the first record of an introduced *Polistes* in Europe. Also, we present a diagnosis of *P. major* and discuss the potential pathways for introduction into Europe and the possible impacts that it may generate at its new location.

Polistes (Aphanilopterus) major major Palisot de Beauvois, 1818

Palisot de Beauvois 1818: 206, pl. 8 fig. 1; República Dominicana: Santo Domingo. Type depository unknown, according to Richards 1978.

Material examined. OVIEDO (Asturias, Spain): Parque del Oeste, 23.VIII.2008, photographs of 4 ♀ at an immature nest with 19 cells, five of them closed and several containing one egg each (Fig. 1e), 26.V.2010, 2 ♀ (BOS-Hym 2 [Fig. 1a, 1b] and BOS-Hym 3); Oviedo University: Campus del Cristo, 15.II.2013, 1 ♂ (BOS-Hym 1; Fig. 1c, 1d); *leg.* A. Arias, *det.* L. Castro. The collected specimens are deposited in the BOS Arthropod Collection (Departamento de Biología de Organismos y Sistemas of Oviedo University). The sites are at 43°21'N, 5°52'W, at an altitude of 200–300 m and rather less than 1 km from each other; they are both parks or green spaces in an urban matrix.

Diagnosis. The genus *Polistes* is defined by the combination of the following character states: metasomal segment 1 subsessile, subconical in dorsal view; propodeal foramen very long and dorsally rather narrow; pronotum posterior angles with a pretegular carina; metasomal tergum 2 not fused with sternum 2; dorsal carina of pronotum complete, almost reaching ventral angle of propleura (Richards 1978; Carpenter 2004). The genus consists mainly of primitively eusocial species, with some members living as social parasites of congeneric species (Hunt 2007). Nests are built with paper made by chewing wood, and have just one comb (which typically hangs from a single pedicel) and no envelope.