

WHEEL BUG

HEMIPTERA: REDUVIIDAE

Arilus cristatus

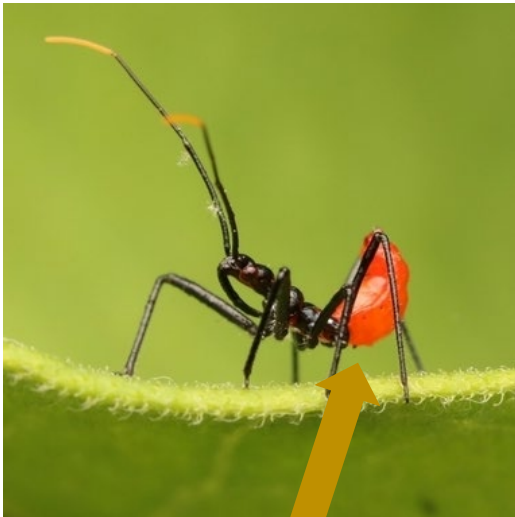
Did you know? Wheel bugs are part of the family commonly known as assassin bugs! They have a stout 3-segmented beak that they stab into their prey. They inject a liquefying venom and suck out the juices for food!

Did you know? Many true bugs (Hemiptera) are phytophagous, which means they feed on plants; however, the wheel bug (like all assassin bugs) is predatory!

Did you know? Assassin bugs, especially wheel bugs, pack a painful bite! They won't bite you unless they feel threatened. Be careful picking them up: grasp the sides gently and avoid the beak!

Did you know? Wheel bugs are readily identified as adults by the gear-like projection on their thorax! They're the only insect in North America with that character.

Look and see!



As a young wheel bug gets older, its abdomen will change from red to gray before it eventually matures and gets its wings.



The 3-segmented beak of the wheel bug fits into a channel on the underside of its body when it isn't feeding!

When they feel threatened, they rub the beak against the channel to make a warning noise.

The "wheel" on this bug's thorax is what earned it its common name! It can have anywhere from 8 to 12 "teeth".



Credits:

Photos: Kaden Slone ([inaturalist.org/people/kaden_slone04](https://www.inaturalist.org/people/kaden_slone04)), top photo; Benjamin Burgunder ([inaturalist.org/people/benjamin189](https://www.inaturalist.org/people/benjamin189)), nymph; Christine Young ([inaturalist.org/people/christineyoung](https://www.inaturalist.org/people/christineyoung)), wheel bug on leaf

Facts: Missouri Department of Conservation ([mdc.mo.gov](https://www.mdc.mo.gov)); Texas A&M Extension (extensionentomology.tamu.edu)

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