

Masked Hunter Bug

Phil Pellitteri, UW Insect Diagnostic Lab

The masked hunter bug (*Reduvius personatus*) is a type of assassin bug that is commonly found indoors. The common name of this insect comes from the fact that the immature stage of the insect (the nymph) covers itself with dust and debris. These true bugs prey on other insects, and can inflict a painful bite if handled.



The masked hunter bug adult (left), and nymph (right) covered with dust and debris.

Appearance: Adult masked hunter bugs are dark brown to black and 17 to 22 mm (about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch) in length. Nymphs are smaller and light brown in color. The bodies of the nymphs are covered with sticky hairs that catch pieces of lint, sand, dust, or other debris, and help to camouflage the insects.

Life Cycle: There is normally one generation of masked hunter bugs per year. Adults are common during mid-summer, but can also be found in the winter months. Both adults and nymphs are active at night searching for sowbugs, spiders, carpet beetles and other insects on which to feed. They hide in dark, dry locations during the day.

Control: To control masked hunter bugs, first and foremost, get rid of other indoor insects. These insects attract masked hunter bugs and serve as their primary food source. Caulk, screen and seal openings to prevent insects from wandering in from outdoors. Also, vacuum cracks and crevices to remove any materials that might attract insects. Place sticky cardboard traps (sold as glue boards and cockroach hotels at discount, hardware and grocery stores) in corners and under furniture to capture insects that do make it indoors. Most indoor insecticide sprays will kill both masked hunter bugs and the insects on which they feed. Treat pipe chases, attics and any other places where masked hunter bugs or other insects might hide. Residuals from these sprays will last for four to 12 weeks or more. Be sure to follow the instructions on the label of whichever product you select in order to use the product in the safest and most effective manner possible.

For more information on masked hunter bugs: Contact your county Extension agent.

© 2009 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin Extension. An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, University of Wisconsin Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. This document can be provided in an alternative format by calling Brian Hudelson at (608) 262-2863 (711 for Wisconsin Relay).

References to pesticide products in this publication are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over similar products. You are responsible for using pesticides according to the manufacturer's current label directions. Follow directions exactly to protect the environment and people from pesticide exposure. Failure to do so violates the law.

Thanks to Dan Mahr, Susan Mahr and Scott Reuss for reviewing this document.

A complete inventory of University of Wisconsin Garden Facts is available at the University of Wisconsin-Extension Horticulture website: whort.uwex.edu.