

THE CHARCOAL DIGGER WASP,
*ISODONTIA PELOPOEIFORMIS*¹

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ABSTRACT

A digger wasp, *Isodontia pelopoeiformis* Dahlbom, was discovered in the Angolan plateau in Africa, using charcoal as a nest building material, in this case building the nest in a shotgun barrel.

On a recent trip the writer camped in the savannah woods on the Angolan plateau in Africa, somewhere between the Cuanza and Cunene Rivers. A 16 gauge single-barreled shotgun was left hanging unattended on a pole at the entrance of the tent for several days. One morning, when attempting to load this shotgun many fragments of charcoal tumbled out when I drew back the bolt. An examination revealed that the chamber was solidly filled with the same material. I cleaned it out, used the gun, and returned it to its place on the tent pole. Several days later, when I went to use the gun again, I examined the barrel, and once again the chamber was solidly plugged with charcoal.

The following day, I noticed a digger wasp running hither and thither on the sandy ground. It found a bean-sized fragment of charcoal which it manipulated for a moment, and then grasped and flew away with. I ran to the tent in time to see the wasp disappear into the mouth of the shotgun with its load of charcoal. This appears to be a remarkable behavioristic adaptation connected with fires which yearly, during the dry season, sweep over the grasslands and through the savannah woods of Africa.

The wasp was captured and later identified as *Isodontia pelopoeiformis* Dahlbom, by Mr. H. N. Empey of Johannesburg, South Africa.

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