

# SPURRED CERATINA

Hymenoptera: Apidae  
*Ceratina calcarata*

Bug  
of the  
Month



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*Ceratina calcarata*, the spurred ceratina, is a small carpenter bee native to eastern North America. This tiny pollinator, identifiable by its shiny dark blue color and teardrop-shaped abdomen, is commonly spotted in Pennsylvania between the months of April and September. *C. calcarata* visits a wide range of flowers but is particularly fond of clovers and roses. Unlike larger carpenter bee species, *C. calcarata*

won't chew through the wood of your house or deck. Instead, they build nests in dead plant stems. A single female establishes a nest by chewing her way through the pith of a stem, creating a hollow tube. She lays her eggs in this tube, using extra pith to enclose each egg in its own small compartment, along with a lump of pollen. The egg hatches into a larva, which eats the pollen and then metamorphoses into an

adult bee, which chews its way out of the compartment. The first daughter to emerge within a *C. calcarata* nest is often particularly small. Instead of flying off to establish her own nest and lay her own eggs, this daughter helps her mother collect pollen and feed her siblings. Scientists are studying this basic form of social behavior in *C. ceratina* to understand how highly social bees like honey bees may have evolved.

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