

### Mysterious Singer

I had to do a bunch of digging to find a leak in the drip system this morning. The pipe was pretty deep, so to clean out the hole, I had to get down on my knees. As I pulled mud out of the hole, I began to realize that I was hearing something over and over.

I stopped digging to listen and couldn't decide where the sound was coming from. It was a steady stream of high-pitched noises, almost like squeaking, though more like a song of sorts. I figured it must be a bird in the distance, but as I raised up, the noise became quieter. Bending back over the hole in the ground, I once again heard the tiny melody.

I looked around a bit and caught sight of movement a little over an arm's length away, in the shade of a small bush. There was my singer, wandering around and singing all the while!

It was a Creosote Bush Seed Ant, which in reality is a wasp.

The females are wingless (the males have wings), not very fair in my estimation of reality. I have seen 3 different types in my area of what we used to call Earth Babies when I was a kid. There is a red and black Velvet Ant and a fluffy white and very busy Thistledown Ant and then this wasp that looks just like a large, wandering, creosote bush seed.

Creosote bush seeds are fuzzy and off white. I have been seeing one of these wasps every day around the yard. I don't know if it is the same one or many. It isn't as busily ambitious as its cousins, the other 2 wasps that I see. The Creosote Bush Seed Ant/Wasp moves more slowly. I suspect that is because it is hard to sing while you are racing about, looking for things to eat. I haven't looked in books to see if anyone else decided that this wasp resembles a creosote bush seed, I just named it that myself. At any rate, it sings beautifully.

Subsequently I have looked at various sources of insect information and haven't been able to find out about this exact wasp. Maybe I just need to dig deeper but it is clearly different than the other wasps mentioned above and does not fit the description of the mentioned Creosote Bush Seed Ant. Gads, that is a mouthful!