

## Nomada guttulata - a rare garden visitor

Wendy Carter

I'd just about finished pottering in the garden in Defford on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> May when I spotted some shrivelled leaves on my dwarf buddleia. Thinking they may be rolled by an insect rather than just dead, I took a closer look. Something caught my eye. Buried in the middle of the bush, hanging off a small leaf was something that looked like a bee.

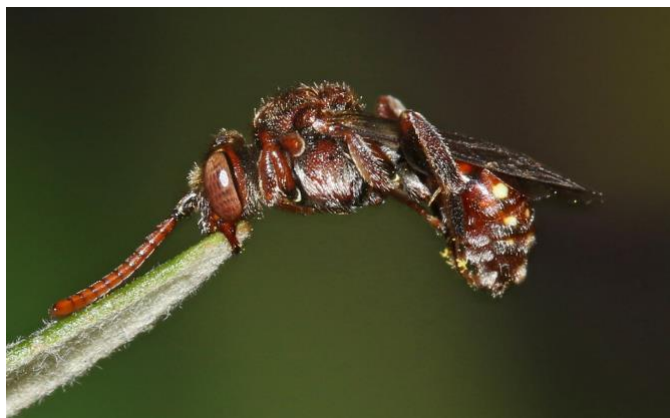
Moments later and I was rushing inside to get my camera in order to zoom in on the first *Nomada* for my garden. A closer look at the photo...which *Nomada* was it? I didn't recognise it.



01. *Nomada guttulata* Defford 10 May 2018. Wendy Carter.

The bee was at roost, attached to the leaf by her mandibles. I gently eased the leaf from the buddleia and got out Steven Falk's excellent Field Guide to Bees book (Falk 2015). I got so far through the key but realised that I couldn't see one of the key identification features – not even through my hand lens. In my excitement to retrieve the bee from the plant, I realised that I didn't have any spare hands so quick thinking was the order of the day. I got a cocktail stick, pierced the leaf, planted the bee in a plant pot and rushed off to get extension tubes for my camera in order to take a closer photograph to capture the identification feature.

Finally, I managed it. I could see three very short comb spines at the tip of the hind tibiae that, together with black antennal scapes, silvery hairs on the hind face of the propodeum, blunt mandibles, an orange-red face and its diminutive size clinched the ID as *Nomada guttulata*. The ID was confirmed by Steven Falk the following morning.



02. *Nomada guttulata* Defford 10 May 2018. Wendy Carter

*Nomada guttulata*, or the Short-spined Nomad, is an RDB1 species and is the cleptoparasite of the mining bee *Andrena labiata*. It is much rarer than its host, however, and this is only the second record for the county according to records from Worcestershire Biological

Records Centre (WBRC). Records held by WBRC show that five of the 11 Worcestershire locations for *A. labiata* are in south Worcestershire. Until this year, the nearest record to mine was three miles away in Drakes Broughton. The week before my sighting of *N. guttulata*, however, a male *A. labiata* was sighted at Besford (Jean Young, pers. comm.), less than a mile from my garden as the bee flies.

Have both species been overlooked locally before now or are they both expanding their ranges? Steven Falk commented in an email to me that *N. guttulata* seems to be expanding with more records coming in from gardens and urban green spaces – is this a result of more recorders or a genuine expansion?

*N. guttulata* is on the wing from May into early June. Its host, *A. labiata*, prefers unimproved grasslands, open woodland, heathland edges and occasionally urban green spaces. There are still relatively few records for both species in Worcestershire and there is just enough time in their flight seasons to see if you can add to our understanding of their distribution.

### Reference

Falk, S, 2015, *Field Guide to the bees of Great Britain and Ireland*, Bloomsbury Publishing.

### Images

01. *Nomada guttulata* Defford 10 May 2018. Wendy Carter.

02. *Nomada guttulata* Defford 10 May 2018. Wendy Carter