

***Andrena nigrospina* Thomson, 1832 (Hym: Andrenidae) at Dropping Well Farm.**

Kevin McGee.
Gardeners Cottage, Shakenhurst, Nr Kidderminster, Worcestershire.
DY14 9AR. kevinmcgeeandrena@live.co.uk

Although this nationally very scarce species is known from the sandy Kidderminster heaths generally, including Upper Blackstone Farm near the Devil's Spittleful, it was nevertheless thrilling to encounter a female visiting White Bryony *Bryonia dioica* flowers during a recording trip to Dropping Well Farm on 12.06.2021. My last record was of one at nearby Upper Blackstone Farm on 19.06.2009.



01. *Andrena nigrospina* female) at White Bryony, Dropping Well Farm on 12.06.2021. K.McGee.



02. The field boundary at Dropping Well Farm where *A. nigrospina* was observed visiting White Bryony on 12.06.2021. K.McGee.

Dropping Well Farm is an arable farm recently acquired by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to increase the area of sandy heathland habitats already present at the adjacent Devils's Spittleful and Burlish Top and to eventually include Dropping Well Farm and Upper Blackstone Farm, linking all the sites together.

A. nigrospina is a large predominately black solitary mining bee known to nest in burrows along arable field margins and sandy tracks. Despite an almost all black appearance with dark wings, the white hairs beneath the femur and tibia of foraging females are noticeable when seen clearly (01). Females of the North Worcestershire/South Staffordshire populations are particularly associated with flowers of Wild Radish, Common Poppy, and Hogweed. However, the female I encountered was only interested in White Bryony flowers. It was present along a species-rich hedgerow on somewhat higher ground running across the centre of Dropping Well Farm during hot sunny weather (02). The fields on either side of the hedge were both still being cultivated as arable land but

despite a careful search along both sides of the hedgerow margins no evidence of nesting *A. nigrospina* was found and no further specimens of *A. nigrospina* were seen.

The best time to see this distinctive species is from late May to the beginning of July during warm sunny weather along flower-rich field boundaries. More records from anywhere on the sandy heaths of the Kidderminster region are encouraged. Unlike many bee species, reasonable images of females at flowers are adequate for identification.

References

BWARS [on-line] <https://www.bwars.com> [Accessed 17.10.2021]
Falk, S. & Lewington, R 2015. *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain & Ireland*. Bloomsbury.
NBN Atlas Species search [on-line] <http://www.nbnatlas.org/> [Accessed 17.10.2021]

Images.

- 01. *Andrena nigrospina* female) at White Bryony, Dropping Well Farm on 12.06.2021. K.McGee.
- 02. The field boundary at Dropping Well Farm where *A. nigrospina* was observed visiting White Bryony on 12.06.2021. K.McGee.