

## Early spring Hymenoptera of note from the Devil's Spittleful, Kidderminster, 2018.

Kevin McGee. Gardeners Cottage, Shakenhurst, Nr Kidderminster, Worcestershire. DY14 9AR  
[kevinmcgeeandrena@live.co.uk](mailto:kevinmcgeeandrena@live.co.uk)  
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At long last the weather improved following the longest coldest and most depressing winter I can remember in a long time! A last-minute decision to make a quick visit to the Devil's Spittleful on 25.03.2018 proved to be productive.

***Andrena apicata*** (Hym; Andrenidae) **Notable B.** This was my first record of this species at the Devil's Spittleful. Approximately six males were encountered on 25.03.2018 resting for short periods on birch trunks (01) in-between making fast flights low across the ground in search of females. I think I observed one female at Gorse flowers but cannot be certain as it flew away before photography or capture. However, I did manage to collect one of the males to identify at home with certainty; care must be taken to inspect the shape of the projection at the end of sternite 8 (the final abdominal segment) to separate it from male *Andrena praecox*. Another important feature is the shape of the projection at the base of the mandible; this can just be seen in photograph 02.



01. *Andrena apicata* (male) at the Devil's Spittleful on 25.03.2018. K.McGee.



02. *Andrena apicata* (male) at the Devil's Spittleful on 25.03.2018. K.McGee. Note the small projection at the base of the mandible.

***Andrena bimaculata*** (Hym; Andrenidae) **Notable B.** (03) Small numbers of males of another *Andrena* species were also flying rapidly close to the ground surface in search of females. Some were occasionally seen landing on low Gorse foliage providing (very brief) opportunities for photography. One male was collected to later confirm the identification and is my first record of this species at the Devil's Spittleful. I collected a female from Goat Willow flowers at Hartlebury Common on 17.04.2008.



03. *Andrena bimaculata* (male) at the Devil's Spittleful on 25.03.2018. © K.McGee.

After a very brief taste of spring the weather cooled again for most of April until another short spell of fine weather arrived towards the end of the month. A repeat visit to the Devil's Spittleful again proved to be the correct decision!

***Andrena bucephala*** (Hym; Andrenidae) **Notable A.** (04). One female was collected from a dead birch trunk on 25.04.2018. This was my first record of the species at this site; and although listed as being Nationally Scarce it is a species I have found with more frequency in Worcestershire during the last couple of years.



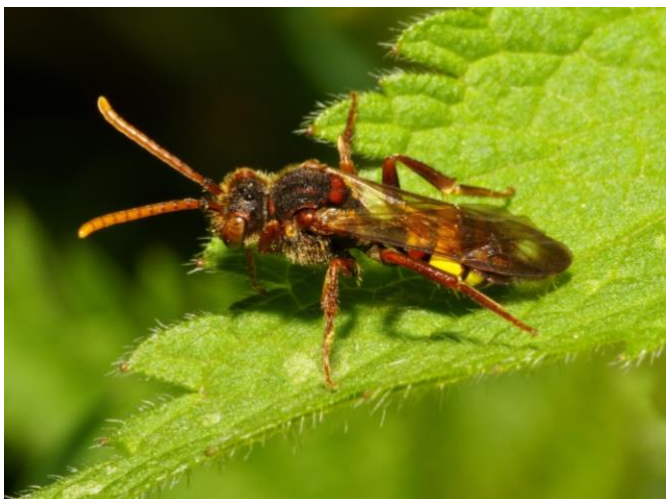
04. *Andrena bucephala* (female) at the Devil's Spittleful on 25.04.2018. © K.McGee.

*Andrena synadelpha* (Hym; Andrenidae). (05) This was my first record of this localised species at the Devil's Spittleful, and is a species I rarely encounter. One female was collected from low Brambles beneath a belt of Blackthorn shrubs in full flower on 26.04.2018.



05. *Andrena synadelpha* (female) at Devil's Spittleful on 26.04.2018. K.McGee

*Nomada signata* (Hym; Apidae) **RDB2-Vulnerable**. This was my first record of this species at the Devil's Spittleful. My only other record is of a male collected from Goat Willow flowers at Hartlebury Common on 17.04.2008. It's not often possible to photograph nervous and 'jumpy' insects such as bees and collect them too, but to achieve this successfully with a Red Data Book species is even more uncommon! The bee was taken home for later identification and keyed out readily as female *N. signata*. Note the four yellowish marks on the rear face of the propodeum (photos 06, 07, 08, 09) (lacking in female *Nomada flava*), and the distinct yellow patches on the sternites in the ventral view; these would all be an even reddish/orange colour on the similar (and common) female *Nomada flava*.



06. *Nomada signata* (female) at the Devil's Spittleful on 26.04.2018. K.McGee.



07. *Nomada signata* (female) from the Devil's Spittleful on 26.04.2018. K.McGee.

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08. *Nomada signata* (female) from the Devil's Spittleful on 26.04.2018. K.McGee. Note the four yellowish patches on the rear face of the propodeum.



09. *Nomada signata* (female) from the Devil's Spittleful on 26.04.2018. K.McGee. Ventral view, note the yellow patches on the abdominal sternites.

#### References

BWARS Species search [on-line] <http://www.bwars.com/> [Accessed 10.5.2018]

Falk, S. & Lewington, R. (2015). *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland*. Bloomsbury Publishing plc.