

***Nomada integra* Brullé, 1832 (Hym: Apidae) and *Andrena humilis* Imhoff, 1832 (Hym: Andrenidae) at Devil's Spittleful, Worcestershire.**

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On 02.06.2022 I observed an unusual looking *Nomada* cuckoo bee species along one of the well-used sandy paths at the Devil's Spittleful. I noticed that two individuals were present and flying very low across the sandy surface in a fluctuating 'jerky' manner typical of *Nomada* species. I spent at least two hours trying to take a good quality photograph of one of them before attempting to catch one for microscopic identification. Photography of aculeates can at times be infuriatingly difficult, the combination of windy conditions, high numbers of dog-walkers using the path, and the refusal of the bees to remain still for long enough all resulted in failure to achieve the desired images. However, the one I managed to collect keyed out readily as a female *Nomada integra*. This was my first record of this scarce species from the Spittleful despite me having regularly visited the site during the spring/summer months since 1998.

I made a return visit during ideal weather the following weekend on 11.06.2022 determined to obtain a good image of a specimen in its natural habitat, and also to try and collect a specimen of *Andrena humilis*; the scarce host of the cleptoparasitic *N. integra*. Now confident of being able to readily identify *N. integra* in the field I noted at least three females actively flying up and down the same sandy track (quite close to the Severn Valley Railway). Again, the shy nature of the bees and the popularity of the footpath with walkers enjoying the fine weather made photography demanding! However, after a couple of hours I managed to achieve the images I wanted. One of the females regularly took up position close to a typical *Andrena* type burrow on the edge of the path, eventually a medium-sized *Andrena* species entered the burrow and I managed to collect it as it emerged. Later at home the bee keyed out readily as a female *Andrena humilis*; the host of *N. integra*.

*Andrena humilis* is a scarce species with a conservation status of Nationally Notable B. The preferred habitats are sandy soils on heathlands, acid grasslands, sand quarries and coastal cliff-tops where nest burrows are often located on firmly-trodden sand along footpaths (Falk & Lewington, 2015). *A. humilis* is scarce in Worcestershire and seldom recorded. The NBN Atlas reveals the following records: one collected from the New Parks area in Wyre Forest by Rosemary Winnall on 08.05.2007; five records from Hartlebury Common supplied by Colin Plant between 1991 & 1997; and two records from the Devil's Spittleful by Mike Archer in 1990 and Colin Plant in 1995.

*Nomada integra* is also a scarce species, with a conservation status of Nationally Notable A. My 2022 records are the first for the Devil's Spittleful, however, nearby records of note are of one collected by Rosemary Winnall from Blissgate Meadow to the south of Wyre Forest, and two records from Hartlebury Common; one supplied by C. Plant on 01.05.1997 and one by M. Archer on 28.05.1997.

During my visit to the Devil's Spittleful on 11.06.2022 I also found single females of *N. integra* along the vehicle access track towards Dropping Well Farm, and along the track leading back towards the Blackstone Rock car-park; therefore technically alongside the Upper Blackstone Farm site. From these observations it is intriguing to understand whether *N. integra* has recently populated the Devils Spittleful complex of sites, or if it has simply been overlooked. However, I doubt that experienced entomologists such as Mike Archer and Colin Plant would have overlooked a species as distinctive as *N. integra*.



01. *Nomada integra* (female) at the Devil's Spittleful on 11.06.2022. Kevin McGee.



02. Location of *Nomada integra* and *Andrena humilis* at the Devil's Spittleful on 11.06.2022. Kevin McGee.

**References**

Falk, S. & Lewington, R. 2015. *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland*. British Wildlife Publishing, Bloomsbury.  
NBN Atlas *Species search* [on-line] <http://www.nbnatlas.org/> [Accessed 04.09.2022]

**Images**

01. *Nomada integra* (female) at the Devil's Spittleful on 11.06.2022. Kevin McGee.

02. Location of *Nomada integra* and *Andrena humilis* at the Devil's Spittleful on 11.06.2022. Kevin McGee.