

***Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster) chambersi* Benson, 1947 at Penny Hill, Worcestershire.**

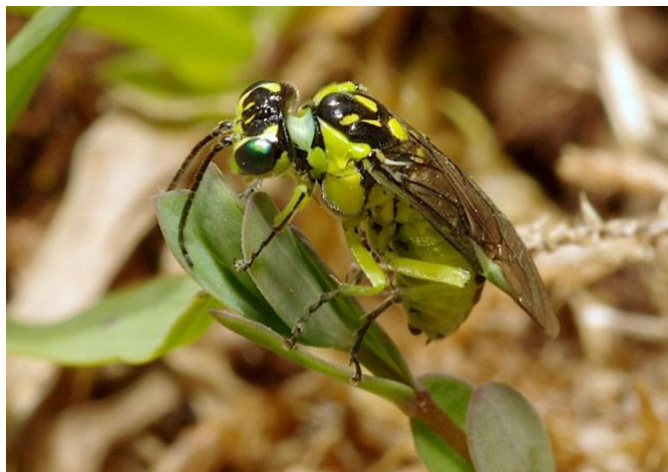
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The Fairy Flax Sawfly *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster) chambersi* (01 & 02) is reported from Penny Hill. I have one earlier record of a female collected from calcareous grassland at Highclere, Wood Norton (SP012479) on 01.06.2002. It is unknown if these are the first records for Worcestershire but there are no dots for anywhere in the English midlands on the NBN Atlas distribution map. There are only forty-four records widely scattered throughout Britain on the map, with a distinct cluster in Bedfordshire. Sawflies are generally under-recorded due to difficulties with identification, so the NBN map may be illustrating 'recorder effort' rather than true distribution.

The Fairy Flax Sawfly is considered by some authorities to belong in the genus *Cytisogaster*, and to be one of three similar species included in the *Cytisogaster picta* group (e.g.Falk); each of which have bright green and black colouration (the green quickly fades to a straw colour after death). Steven Falk has named it as *Cytisogaster* on his Flickr website and I have followed suit for my own records. The NBN Atlas uses *Rhogogaster* and the Sawflies (Symphyta) of Britain & Ireland website uses *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster)* which I have adopted for this article.



01. Female *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster) chambersi* at Penny Hill Bank on 12.05.2021. Kevin McGee.



02. Female *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster) chambersi* ovipositing on Fairy Flax at Penny Hill Quarry on 14.05.2022. Kevin McGee.

My first record of *C. chambersi* at Penny Hill was of a female collected from Penny Hill Bank on 12.05.2021. Two were observed ovipositing on Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* foliage at Penny Hill Quarry on 14.05.2022 (02). Their larvae feed on Fairy Flax (03), a small delicate plant associated with calcareous grasslands and dunes found fairly frequently throughout the British Isles.



03. Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* at Penny Hill Quarry on 16.06.2021. Kevin McGee.

The larvae of the two closely related *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster)* species feed on the foliage of either Broom *Cytisus scoparius* or Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* (05). The larvae of the Broom Sawfly *Cytisogaster genistae* (04) is most commonly associated with Broom, but they will also feed on Dyer's Greenweed (Falk, 2022 & Benson, 1952). *Cytisogaster picta* seems to be the most uncommon of the three and is thought to feed only on Broom in the UK (Falk, 2022), but it has been recorded from Dyer's Greenweed on the continent (*Plant Parasites of Europe*, 2020). Broom does not occur at Penny Hill, where Dyer's Greenweed is abundant, but I have not found either *C. genistae* or *C. picta* there. *C. genistae* does breed on Dyer's Greenweed at Mill Meadow, Drakes Broughton. I had previously identified it as *C. picta* but I now consider it far more likely to be *C. genistae*. Please refer to details of the facial markings of female *C. chambersi* and *C. genistae* showing details of the frons, one of the main diagnostic features separating the two species (06).



04. *Rhogogaster (Cytisogaster) genistae* at Mill Meadow, Drakes Broughton on 23.05.2009. Kevin McGee.

It would be interesting to establish if *C. chambersi* and *C. genistae* are both present at Penny Hill due to the abundance of their respective host plants. Careful inspection of the host plants during warm sunny weather from mid-May to early June is recommended.





05. A detail of 04 showing the frons markings of female *C. genistae*. Kevin McGee.



06. A detail of 02 showing the frons markings of female *C. chambersi*. Note the two short yellow lines in the centre of the black area. Kevin McGee.



07. Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* at Penny Hill Quarry on 16.06.2021. Kevin McGee.

#### References

- Benson, R.B. 1952. *Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects. Hymenoptera, Symphyta. Vol. VI. Part 2(b)*. RES, London.
- NBN Atlas Species search [on-line] <http://www.nbnatlas.org/> [Accessed 19.09.2022]
- Plant Parasites of Europe website. Available at: <https://bladmineerders.nl/parasites/animalia/arthropoda/insecta/hymenoptera/symphyta/tenthredinoidea/tenthredinidae/tenthredininae/rhogogaster/rhogogaster-picta/> [Accessed 11.10.2022]
- Falk, S. Flickr site. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/sets/72157712376351541/> [Accessed 11.10.2022]
- The Sawflies (Symphyta) of Britain & Ireland website. Available at: <https://www.sawflies.org.uk/cytisogaster-chambersi/> [Accessed 11.10.2022]

#### Images

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