

***Zaraea lonicerae* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Hymenoptera: Cimbicidae) discovered in Worcestershire.**

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A breeding population of *Zaraea lonicerae* (Linnaeus, 1758) has been discovered at the Devil's Spittleful Nature Reserve near Bewdley, Worcestershire. Grid Ref: SO 80488 74856.

On Saturday 08 April 2017 the weather forecast was for uninterrupted sunshine, a warm southerly airflow, and temperatures set to reach 20° Celcius; perfect conditions for a visit to the lowland heath reserve at the Devil's Spittleful to collect aculeate hymenoptera records (and anything else of interest). On the approach track into the reserve from the west I met Brett Westwood with two staff members from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust: Wendy Carter and Steve Bloomfield. The four of us agreed that despite the perfect weather the site seemed to be strangely quiet in terms of the variety of hymenoptera we were recording. However, good numbers of *Andrena cineraria* with their associated cleptoparasites: *Nomada lathburiana* were present along the approach track from the west, and early emerging examples of *Sphecodes pellucidus* were seen sporadically within the main reserve. The main nectar source was flowering gorse and we spent some time examining several bushes for anything that may be visiting the flowers. At approximately 11.30a.m. I noticed what was clearly an adult cimbicid sawfly resting on foliage close to the top of one particular gorse bush. My initial presumption was that this was a male *Abia sericea*; a species I am familiar with from elsewhere in the county (02). This particular male sawfly seemed to be quite happy being photographed and we all took several images. Wendy then found a pair *in-copula* on a gorse bush nearby; so we definitely recorded two males and a female. It was then that I began to wonder where the larval foodplant of *Abia sericea*, (Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*) could possibly be growing at this reserve? The arid sandy soils here are unsuitable for Devil's-bit Scabious.

On viewing the images of the male I photographed on my laptop I checked the keys in the Royal Entomological Society handbook (Benson, 1951). It immediately became apparent that this was not an *Abia*, but a *Zaraea* species because of the length and density of pubescence on the mesopleura and mesonotum (01). On *Abia* species the pubescence is very short and sparse (02). There are three species of *Zaraea* known from the UK. *Zaraea fasciata* is easily recognisable in the field with its whitish propodeum and metanotum contrasting sharply with the dark areas (03), and *Zaraea aenea* is known only from a single specimen taken in Devon in 1947. Therefore, the *Zaraea* species photographed at the Devil's Spittleful is *Z. lonicerae*, which, as its name suggests, utilises Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* foliage as the larval foodplant. There is a plentiful supply of Honeysuckle in the wooded areas clustered sporadically throughout the Devil's Spittleful.

The NBN Atlas provides eleven national records for *Z. lonicerae* but no indication of the national conservation status, probably as a result of insufficient information due to generally poor knowledge and recording effort of all sawfly species. It is interesting to note that four of the five national records since 2000 were recorded during the same period of early April; exactly in keeping with this record. Five of the eleven records on NBN Atlas are since 2000, they are: Lancashire; 2011, no date. Bristol; on 11.04.2012 and the same locality again on 13.04.2014. South-east Wales; on 11.04.2014 and the same locality again on 8.04.2015.



01. *Zaraea lonicerae*. Male on Gorse at the Devil's Spittleful, 08.04.2017. Note the long dense pubescence on the thorax compared to *Abia sericea* below (02). © K.McGee



Fig. 02. *Abia sericea*. Male at Mill Meadow, Drakes Broughton on 02.v.2009. Note the short and sparse pubescence on the thorax compared with *Z. lonicerae* (01). © K.McGee.



03. *Zaraea fasciata*. Female at Tiddesley Wood on 05.08.2002. Note the extensive white patches contrasting sharply with the dark areas. © K.McGee.

References.

Benson, R. B. (1951) *Handbooks for the identification of British Insects. Vol. VI. Part 2(a). Hymenoptera, Symphyta. Section (a).* London. Royal Entomological Society of London.
NBN Atlas (2017). *Zaraea lonicera* [online]
<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0020482575>
[Accessed 16.04.2017]

Images

01. *Zaraea lonicerae*. Male on Gorse at the Devil's Spittleful.

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02. *Abia sericea*. Male at Mill Meadow, Drakes Broughton .

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03. *Zaraea fasciata*. Female at Tiddesley Wood. K.McGee