

Aculeate Hymenoptera of note in 2023

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Nomada zonata Panzer, 1798



01. *Nomada zonata* (female) at Penny Hill Bank on 23.04.2023
© K.McGee.

A single female *Nomada zonata* was photographed at Penny Hill Bank on 23.04.2023. The image (01) was confirmed by Steven Falk via email and was probably the second Worcestershire record at that time. *N. zonata* is a recent arrival to the UK being first discovered on the British mainland in Kent in 2016 and it had reached Warwickshire by 2021 (Falk, 2023). Bees in the genus *Nomada* are cuckoos that lay their eggs within the nests of other bee species. The host species of *N. zonata* is *Andrena dorsata*, a frequent mining bee found in a range of habitats, and it can be particularly common in Worcestershire at sandy heathland sites such as the Devil's Spittleful. *A. dorsata* is double brooded with adults on the wing in late April/May and again in July. Therefore, *N. zonata* can also be found at similar times. It has not yet been given an officially recognised conservation status, but its geographical range is known to be rapidly expanding.

Females of *N. zonata* can have variable markings, but good initial and fairly constant indicators are the two large, normally red scutellar spots, the combination of orange, black, and (terminal) yellow antennal segments (01), and all parts of the undersides being reddish orange.

Nomada hirtipes Pérez, 1884



02. *Nomada hirtipes* (male) at Penny Hill Quarry on 01.05.2023.
© K.McGee.



03. *Nomada hirtipes* (female) at Penny Hill Quarry on 17/05/2023.
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The conservation status of *Nomada hirtipes* is under review, but it was previously listed as RDB3 (BWARS, 2023). My first record was at Martley churchyard on 18.05.2017 when three females were found. I obtained no further records until 07.05.2021 when a couple of females were found at Penny Hill Bank close to Martley. On 01.05.2023 six males were found to be active on a steep rocky slope at the Penny Hill Quarry landfill site (04) where a single female was present on 17.05.2023. The host of *N. hirtipes* is *Andrena bucephala*, see below.



04. The slope to the right is the location of the *Andrena bucephala* colony and its host *Nomada hirtipes* at Penny Hill Quarry. © K.McGee.

Andrena bucephala Stephens, 1846

Andrena bucephala has a conservation status of Nationally Notable A (NBN Atlas, 2023). Along with a few other solitary mining bee species (including *Andrena clarkella*, *A. flavipes* and the Ivy Bee *Colletes hederæ*), females of *A. bucephala* can form quite large aggregates in the same small niche habitats. For example, Plate 06 shows an aggregation of nesting *A. bucephala* in a south facing stone wall near Martley church on 25.04.2019.



05. *Andrena bucephala* (female) at Penny Hill Quarry on 01/05/2023. © K.McGee.



06. A nesting aggregation of *Andrena bucephala* in a stone wall at Martley church on 25.04.2019. © K.McGee.

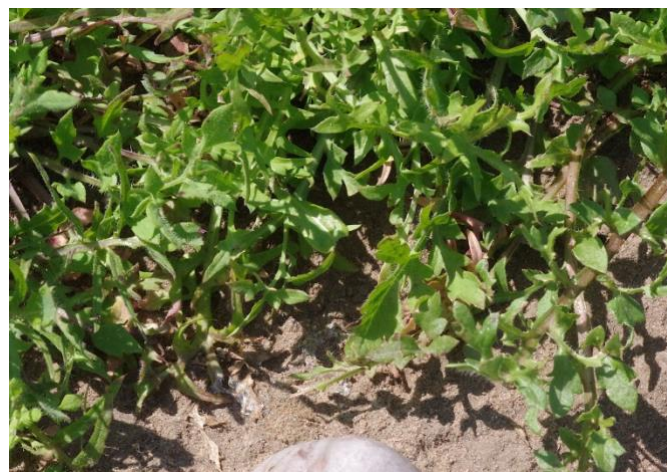
Andrena nigrospina Thomson, 1832



07. *Andrena nigrospina* (female) at Dropping Well Farm on 20.05.23. © K.McGee.

Andrena nigrospina does not have a conservation status, though, BWARS (2023) suggests "it is clear that this should be reviewed". The population of this nationally rare species in the Upper Blackstone Farm & Dropping Well Farm complex of arable fields near Bewdley is well known and well documented. However, it is never common here and remains difficult to find even during ideal weather. The best times to visit are from mid-May to the end of June during warm sunny conditions and to search for large black bees visiting Wild Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* flowers, although they also regularly visit Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, bramble

Rubus fruticosus agg., and Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*. I once photographed a female here visiting flowers of White Bryony *Bryonia dioica* in a hedgerow. Perfect conditions prevailed during the Worcestershire Recorders field visit to Dropping Well Farm on 20.05.2023. While walking along the edge of a field I observed a single *A. nigrospina* land on the dry sandy soils just ahead. It remained stationary just long enough for a single photograph to be taken (07) before crawling forward into an unseen burrow hidden beneath low growing Wild Radish foliage (08). Despite my waiting for a considerable time the bee did not re-emerge. I also waited just in case the elusive cuckoo *Nomada subcornuta* turned up; a species I have yet to find, but no luck! The handle of the net shown in Plate 09 is pointing towards the location of the nest burrow along the field edge. Note that this is on the eastern side of the hedgerow and therefore sheltered from the prevailing wind.



08. The *Andrena nigrospina* nest entrance burrow is just beneath the (mainly) Wild Radish foliage in the centre of the image. © K.McGee.



09. The net handle is pointing towards the nest entrance found at Dropping Well Farm on 20.05.2023. © K.McGee.

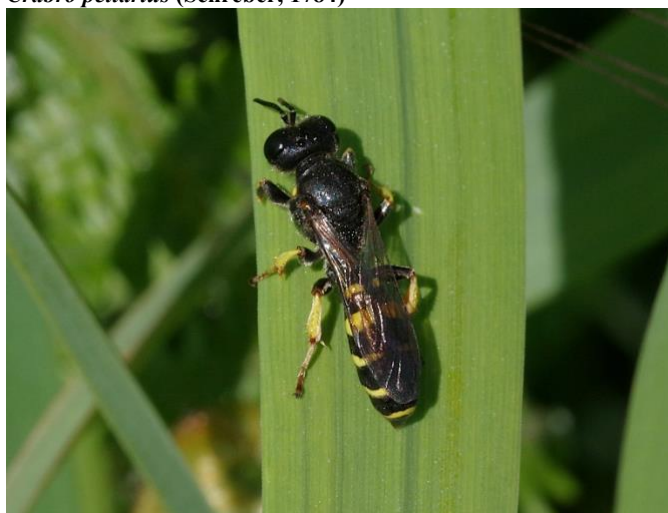
Hoplitis claviventris (Thomson, 1872)

Two females were observed visiting Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* flowers at the Penny Hill Quarry landfill site on 11.06.2023 (10). *Hoplitis claviventris* has a widespread distribution but is never common. It has a preference for sites containing large amounts of Bird's-foot Trefoil which is the main source of nectar (Falk, 2023). I have only recorded it in Worcestershire in very low numbers at the Devil's Spittleful and Penny Hill. It should be searched for between June and early August wherever dense stands of Bird's-foot Trefoil are flowering.



10. *Hoplitiscus claviventris* (female) visiting Bird's-foot-trefoil at Penny Hill Quarry on 11.06.2023. © K.McGee.

Crabro peltarius (Schreber, 1784)



11. *Crabro peltarius* (female) at Dropping Well Farm on 20.05.2023. © K.McGee.

At least two *Crabro peltarius* were observed entering nest entrance holes in firm sandy soil alongside the vehicle access track at Dropping Well Farm during the Worcestershire Recorders field visit on 20.05.2023. Photography was found to be impossible while insects were entering nests due to their speed, but eventually a female remained stationary on nearby foliage just long enough! A female was collected to determine the identification. *C. peltarius* has been recorded frequently on the sandy heaths in north Worcestershire, but in my experience it is never common and can be hard to find.

References

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Images

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