

Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis* at Eastham SO66696850

Tony Simpson

Since buying Steven Falk's Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland (Falk 2018) I have been trying to record bees, mainly in and around my rural garden in Eastham. I often find identification challenging and greatly appreciate the help of Kevin McGee and Geoff Trevis who have put me right on many occasions. This is not helped sometimes by my reluctance to kill bees, though I do keep some specimens for reference, and I find it illogically easier to kill males and brood parasites.

In 2023 I have also been doing a bit of bee "twitching" elsewhere in Worcestershire, mostly following the advice and directions of Kevin and looking at species mainly on sandy soils, so very unlike the habitat around my home in the Teme Valley. I have managed to see Early Colletes *Colletes cunicularius*, Clarke's Mining Bee *Andrena clarkella*, Scarce Black Mining Bee *Andrena nigrospina*, Long-horned Bee *Eucera longicornis*, and Pantaloon Bee *Dasypoda hirtipes*. Great stuff!

I am lucky in having a garden with a lot of Nettle-leaved Bellflower *Campanula trachelium* on the sloping bank around the house with a good population of Campanula Pug *Eupithecia denotata* moths. Reading in Falk's bee book that there were two species associated with bellflowers, I had been looking out for them. I soon found the tiny, black Small Scissor Bee *Chelostoma campanularum* usually to be found deep inside the flower bells. In 2022 in the garden, I caught a Blunthorn Nomad Bee *Nomada flavopicta* which was said to be a brood parasite of *Melitta* bees, so I was on the lookout for the *Melitta* bee associated with bellflowers. I had no luck that year, but on 16th July 2023 I saw a 'possible' flying near and then entering a bellflower, so I quickly put a glass tube over the open end of the flower and to my surprise not one but two bees shot out into the tube. They were a male and female Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis* (01 & 02) and they began mating immediately. After they had separated, I put them in the fridge for half an hour to cool off. I then took them out and placed them on the bellflowers and was able to get some photos before they warmed up and flew away.

Unusually Geoff and Kevin had apparently not seen this species in VC37 Worcestershire so these may be the first records of a mainly more southern species, which is probably spreading north due to climate change like so many other insects.



01. Male Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis*, Eastham 16.07.23. Tony Simpson.



02. Female Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis*, Eastham 16.07.23. Tony Simpson.

References

Falk, S. 2018. *Field Guide to the Bees of Great Britain and Ireland*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

Images

01. Male Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis*, Eastham 16.07.23. Tony Simpson.

02. Female Gold-tailed Melitta *Melitta haemorrhoidalis*, Eastham 16.07.23. Tony Simpson.