

# CUCKOO BEE

(*Nomada spp.*)

Bug  
of the  
Month



**Kleptoparasites, or cuckoo bees, place their eggs inside the nest cells of host bees.** The parasite's larvae hatch and attack the host larvae. They often have enormous mandibles they use to either incapacitate the host larvae or destroy any unhatched host eggs. The larvae then eats the pollen provisions and continue to grow as any other bee. The following year the parasite emerges in sync with its host and the cycle repeats.

*Nomada*, such as the one shown here, are among the most commonly encountered kleptoparasitic bees. Their red coloration and hairless bodies give them an appearance more similar to wasps than to other bees. Most species of *Nomada* are parasites of species of *Andrena* and can be seen hovering inches above the ground in search of a nest. Interestingly, some male *Nomada*

secrete odors that smell similar to the scents emitted by female host bees. There is evidence the male's secreted scent rubs off onto the female parasitic bee, which may provide an advantage to her entering a host nest.

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