

Cuckoo Bees

Genus: *Nomada*

Cuckoo bees have evolved over time without any pollen-carrying structure. Since they steal their pollen, they don't need to carry it on their body.

Cuckoo bees often look more like wasps than bees. They can be red, yellow, brown or black and often have spines and ridges on their bodies.

Field Notes:

Not all bees are pollinators or help make food. For example, bees in the genus **Nomada** (pronounced no-MA-da) are a type of bee called a **cleptoparasite**. **Clepto** means "to steal" and a **parasite** is a living creature that feeds off another living creature. These bees don't forage for pollen. Instead, they have found a way to steal it from others. When it comes time for a *Nomada* female to **reproduce** (have babies), she looks for a nest that is being built by a female bee closely related to her. Once she finds a nest, the *Nomada* female waits for the female bee who made the nest to go forage for pollen and nectar. When she does, the *Nomada* female sneaks inside and quickly lays her own eggs, right next to some of the other bee's eggs. Each one of her eggs will hatch into a **larva** (the immature stage of a bee that looks like a caterpillar or grub) and will destroy the offspring of the other female. The *Nomada* larvae are then free to eat up all the pollen left by the female who made the nest. As they grow, the *Nomada* bees take over the nest. **Cuckoo bees** got their name from cuckoo birds, which lay their eggs in other birds' nests.