



Shaggy Spined Bee

Leioproctus (Lamprocolletes) unnamed species



Male (above) and female of the 'Shaggy Spined Bee'. One pair of spines is clearly visible protruding from the rear of the female's thorax.

The existence of this beautiful native bee, which has yet to be scientifically named and described, became known only comparatively recently. The first known specimens were found among miscellaneous insects donated to the WA Museum by two private beetle collectors. The specimen labels recorded that the bees had been collected from flowers of "mallee" in the Ravensthorpe region and in the month of February. A successful search for this species was made in late January/early February 2013 by WA Museum personnel. Both sexes of the bee were found visiting flowers of Swamp Mallett, *Eucalyptus spathulata* but only in close proximity to Ravensthorpe and on the eastern and northern fringes of Fitzgerald River National Park. They were locally abundant. The species was not found

at flowers of other eucalypt species in the region, suggesting that it may be quite plant specific.

This bee is a little larger than the honeybee and is remarkable in a number of ways. Males are clothed in dense, straw-coloured pubescence ('hair') which is particularly long on the legs, hence the term 'shaggy' in the working name given to this species. Females, by contrast, have a mostly bare body, although there is a band of rust-coloured pubescence across the front part of the thorax. Both sexes have two pairs of spines on the rear of the thorax. The function of these spines is unknown but they may deter predators.



Hind section of thorax of female (top view) showing the two pairs of spines.

There is another, closely related species of *Leioproctus* which has similar spines. It, too, is unnamed and is known from just a few male specimens which were collected at Cranbrook in 1954. Their labels indicate they were taken in early February at [flowers of] "mallee". A recent search for this species was unsuccessful.

Like most native bees, these spined bees are likely to be solitary in habits. Their nests have yet to be discovered but are likely to be in the ground. Solitary bees are not aggressive and females will sting only in self-defence (males lack a sting).

Any sightings of this species can be reported to Terry Houston: telephone 9212 3742; email Terry.Houston@museum.wa.gov.au.