

# Identifying soldierflies and allies: soldierflies in genus *Beris*

*Compiled by Martin C. Harvey for the Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme*

*Version 1 at 24 May 2021*

These guides are only possible thanks to the generosity of the brilliant photographers who have allowed their images to be used. Special mention must be given to Malcolm Storey and Steven Falk, whose photo collections form the backbone for most of the species guides:

**Malcolm Storey's [BioImages website](#) – Steven Falk's [photo collections on Flickr](#)**

Other photographers included in this guide are Dick Belgers, Geoffrey Foale, Henk Soepenbergh, Ian Andrews, Jane Thomas, Janet Graham, Kevin McGee, Martin Harvey, Neil Marks, Simon Knott and Tim Hodge.

Males are shown first, one page for each species, then females. The pages for males include distribution maps taken from the recording scheme's [provisional atlas](#) (Harvey 2017).

As far as possible, these guides show features that can be seen on live insects in the field, or are likely to be visible in photographs. For comprehensive identification keys and species accounts see [British soldierflies and their allies](#), by Alan Stubbs and Martin Drake. See also the recording scheme's [additional notes](#) to accompany the Stubbs and Drake keys.

For lots more information on soldierflies and allies go to the recording scheme [website](#), [Twitter](#) page or [Facebook](#) group.

For lots more information and events, and to support the study and conservation of flies, please consider joining [Dipterists Forum](#).

## **Records wanted!**

Once you have identified your fly, please let the recording scheme have the details! Add to [iRecord](#) or send to the [recording scheme](#) so that we can share the records for conservation and research.

The Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme is part of Dipterists Forum



The Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme is supported by the UKCEH Biological Records Centre



# Recognising the genus: *Beris*

Genus *Beris* contains six fairly small species (5–6.5mm long). They have distinctive spines on the scutellum, usually six in number, and these help distinguish them from other soldierflies (genus *Chorisops* is most similar, with four spines, and some other species have two).

All *Beris* are a similar shape. The colours of the legs and abdomen usually allow the species to be recognised, but there are two very similar species (*B. fuscipes* and *B. geniculata*) which are very similar and require careful examination of the antennae, or dissection, to safely tell apart.

There are some differences in colours and markings between males (eyes meet at top of head) and females (eyes with a wide gap at top of head).

All of the species are widespread, with *B. morrisii* more frequent in the south and *B. fuscipes* in the west. *B. clavipes* is very local although still quite widespread.

The adults are often found on the leaves of trees and shrubs, and can be found by sweeping the vegetation. Larvae develop in moist decaying vegetation in terrestrial habitats; larvae of *B. clavipes* and *B. vallata* can also be found in moss at the edge of water bodies.

St Mark's flies (family Bibionidae) are sometimes confused with *Beris*. Bibionids have spines on the legs, no spines on the scutellum, and have a different head shape.



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gap between eyes = female

eyes meet on top of head = male

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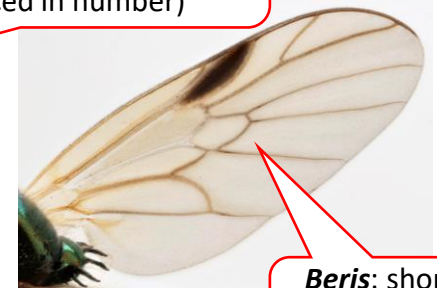


- Abdomen orange:**
  - *Beris vallata*
  - *Beris clavipes*
- Abdomen black, legs yellow or pale brownish:**
  - *Beris chalybata*
  - *Beris morrisii*
- Abdomen dark, legs mostly blackish:**
  - *Beris fuscipes*
  - *Beris geniculata*

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***Beris*:** six spines on scutellum (very occasionally reduced in number)

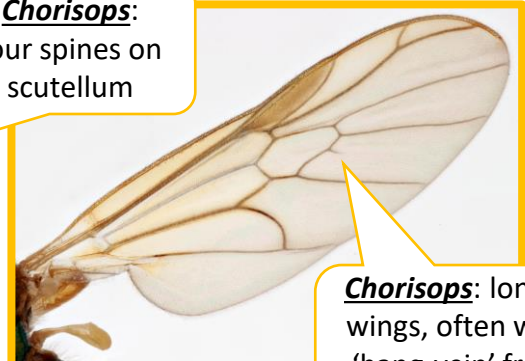


***Beris*:** shorter wings, usually no 'hang-vein'

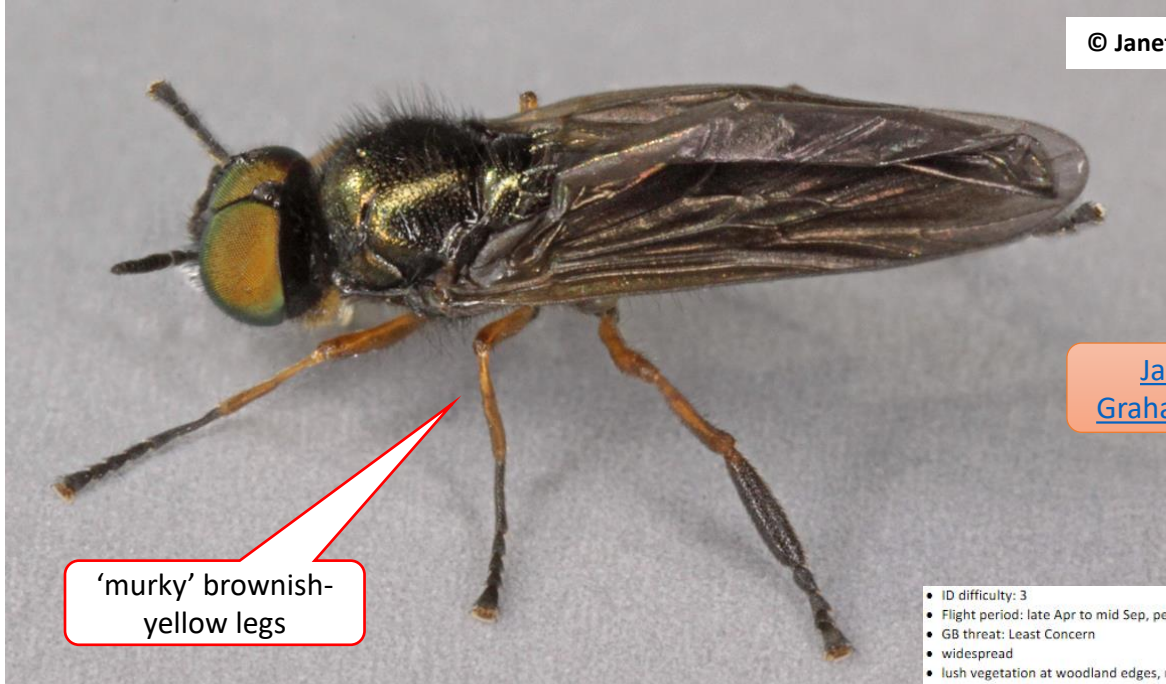


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***Chorisops*:** four spines on scutellum



***Chorisops*:** longer wings, often with 'hang-vein' from discal cell



***Beris chalybata* (Murky-legged Black Legionnaire) - male**

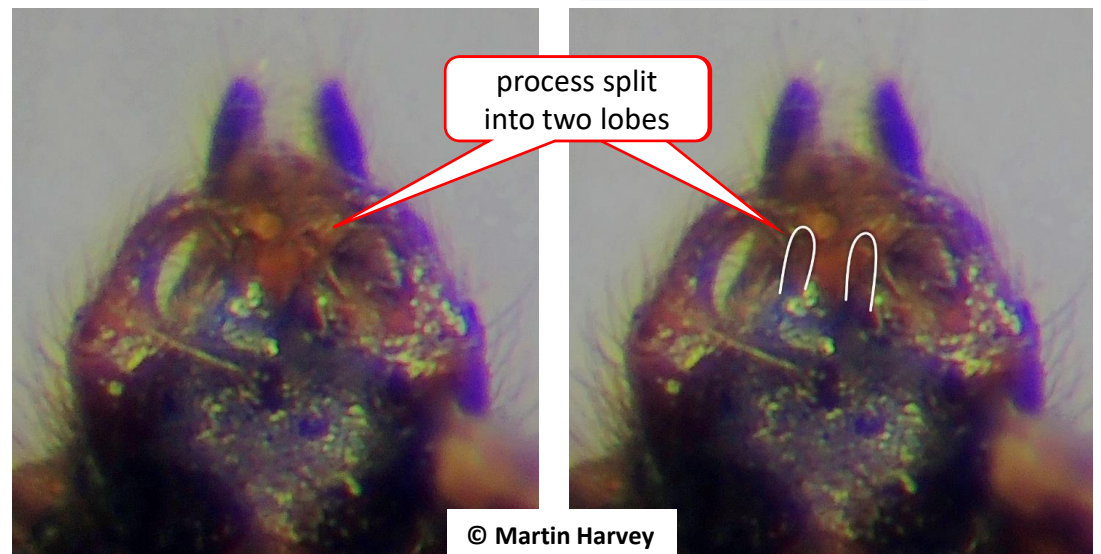
[Janet Graham link](#)

- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: late Apr to mid Sep, peak mid May to early Jun
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- lush vegetation at woodland edges, rides and hedgerows, also gardens, marshes, fens
- No. of records: 3144 • % since 2000: 43%

[Steven Falk link](#)

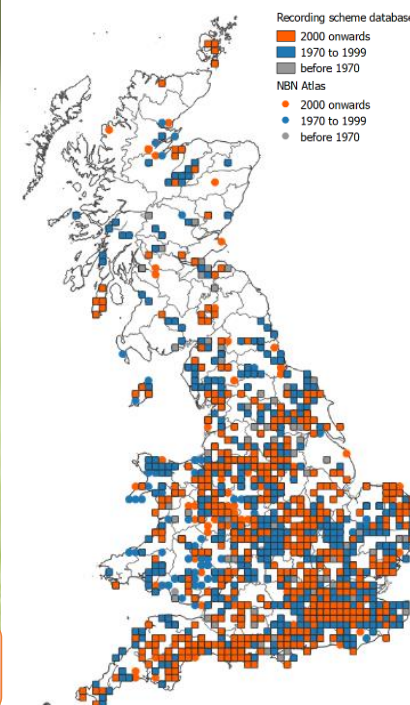
genital capsule from below (from pinned specimen)

Can usually be distinguished from *B. morrisii* but genitalia features provide additional confirmation

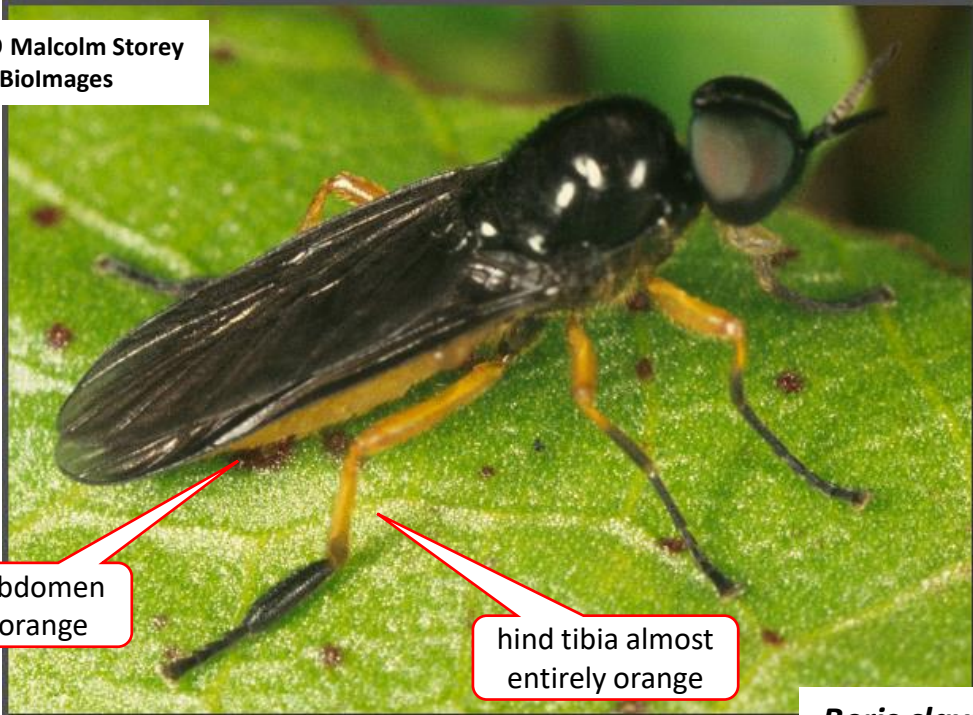


[Ian Andrews link](#)

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abdomen orange

hind tibia almost entirely orange

[Biolimages link](#)

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The abdomen colour can be hidden under the tinted wings – try to get a view from the side to confirm

*Beris clavipes* (Scarce Orange Legionnaire) - male

- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: May to late Jul, peak late May to mid Jun
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread in south, rare in Scotland
- marshes and fens
- No. of records: 330 • % since 2000: 15%

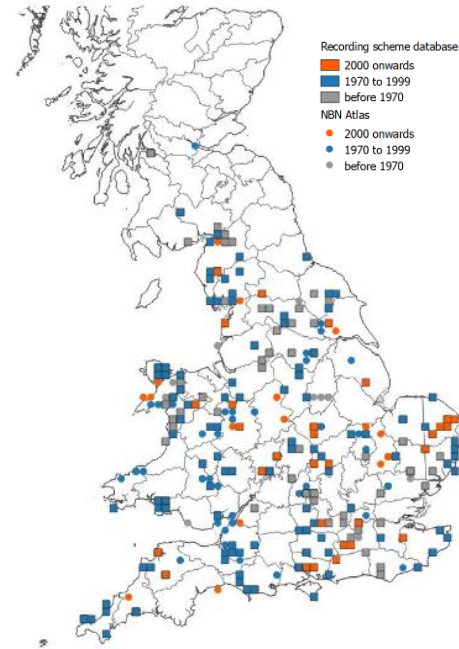
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narrow brown lines on abdomen segments

[Steven Falk link](#)

Compare with the more frequent *B. vallata* (which has the hind tibia half black)





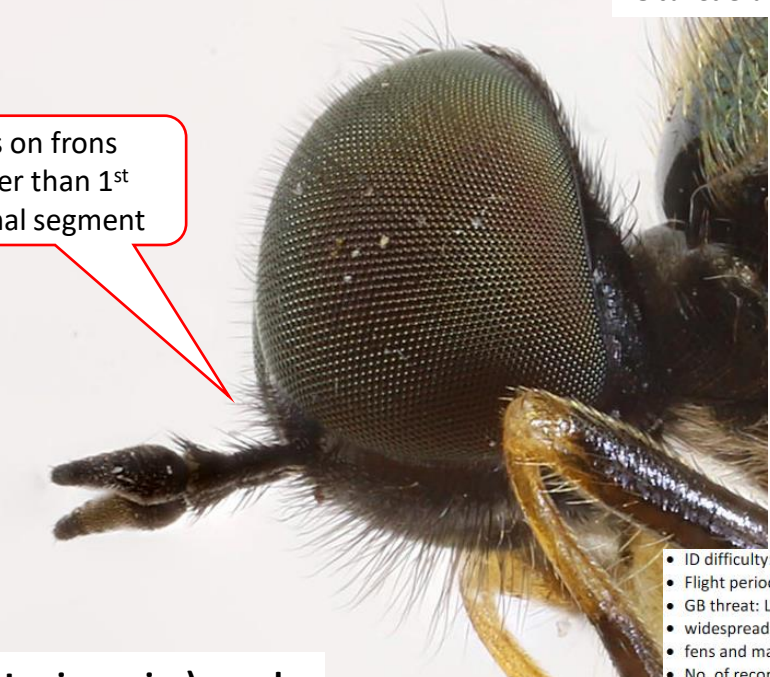
[Janet Graham link](#)

legs mostly dark, with pale 'knees'

abdomen black

Very similar to *B. geniculata* – genitalia features may be needed to confirm

hairs on frons shorter than 1<sup>st</sup> antennal segment

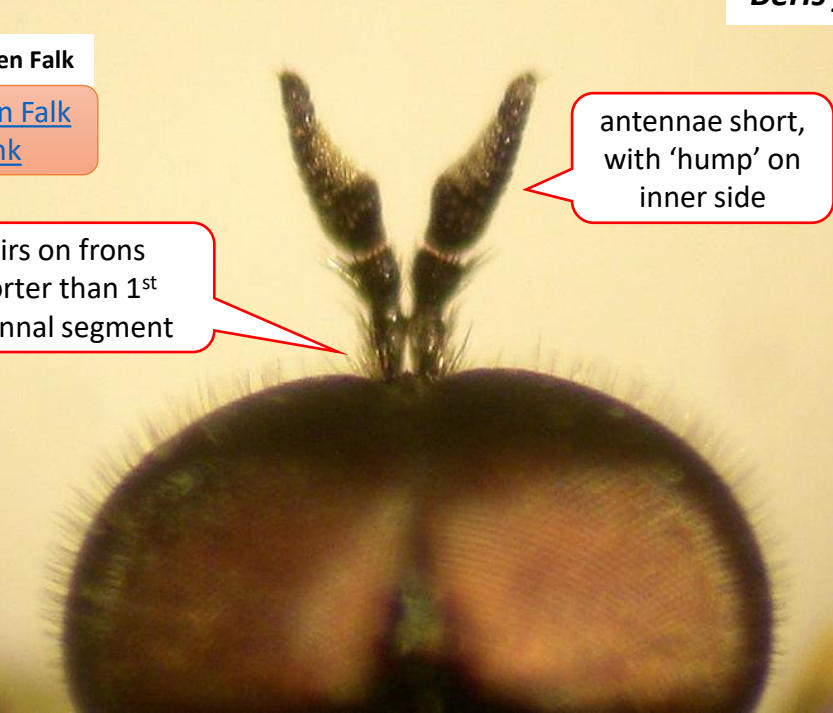


Males of *B. hauseri* (not yet found in the UK) are similar, but with slightly less thickened antennae, and distinctly different genitalia. Please keep a specimen if you suspect *B. hauseri*.

- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: mid May to Sep, peak in late Jun and early Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread, especially in west
- fens and marshes
- No. of records: 540 • % since 2000: 63%

### *Beris fuscipes* (Short-horned Black Legionnaire) - male

[Steven Falk link](#)



hairs on frons shorter than 1<sup>st</sup> antennal segment

antennae short, with 'hump' on inner side



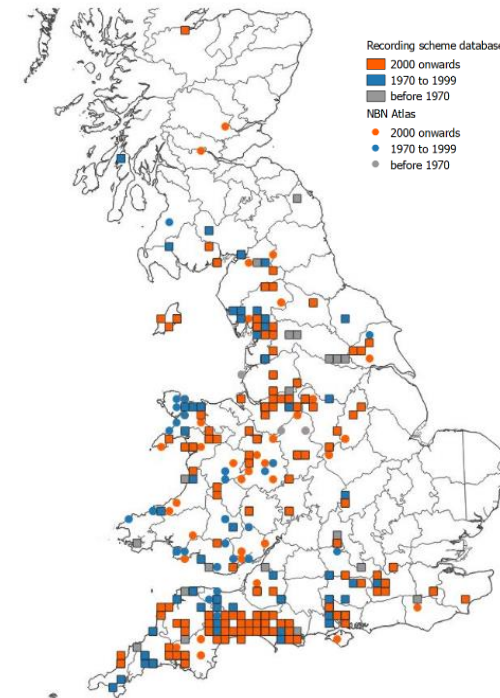
no prominent lobe

genital capsule from below  
(from dissected and cleared specimen)



aedeagus narrow and branched at tip

aedeagus from the side



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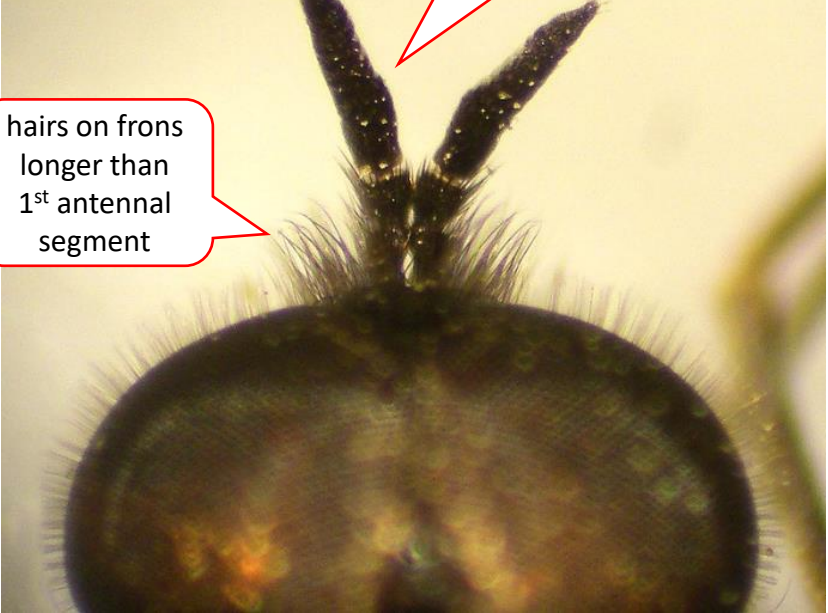


abdomen black

Very similar to *B. fuscipes* – genitalia features may be needed to confirm

[Steven Falk link](#)

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hairs on frons longer than 1<sup>st</sup> antennal segment

antennae long, without 'hump' on inner side

© Geoffrey Foale via [iRecord](#)



legs mostly dark, 'knees' a little paler

### *Beris geniculata* (Long-horned Black Legionnaire) - male

© Neil Marks via [iRecord](#)



genital capsule from below (from pinned specimen)

prominent single lobe



(from dissected and cleared specimen)

aedeagus broad with hooked lobes at tip



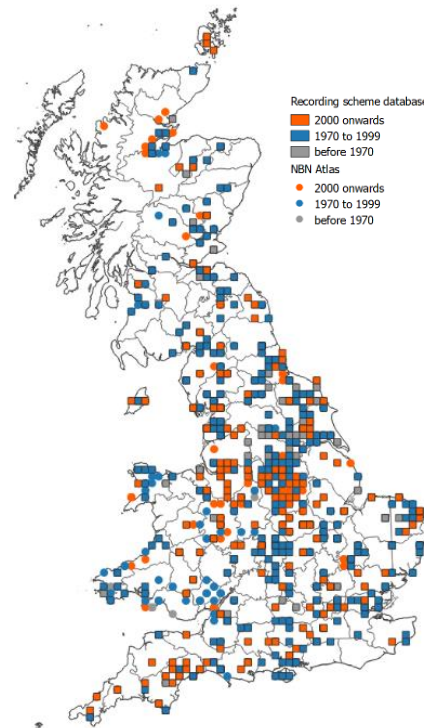
© Martin Harvey

aedeagus from above



hairs on frons longer than 1<sup>st</sup> antennal segment

- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: mid May to Sep, peak late Jun to early Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread, more frequent in north and west
- fens, marshes, wet woods, sheltered streams
- No. of records: 910 • % since 2000: 28%



© Martin Harvey

yellow hairs on top of thorax

eyes often distinctively red

legs paler than in *chalybata*



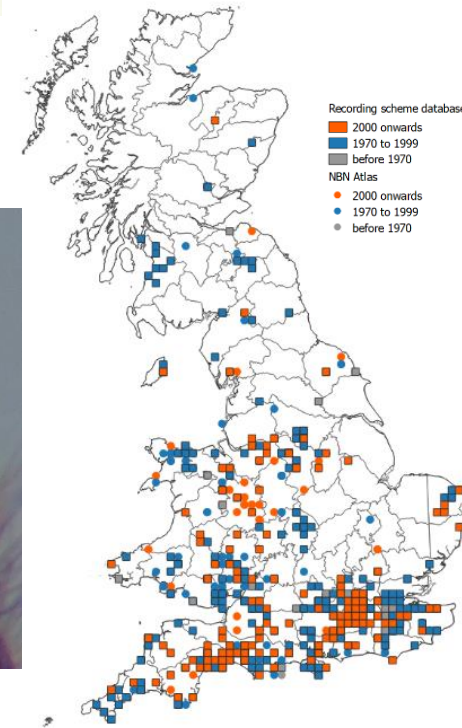
© Dick Belgers via [Waarneming](#)



- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: mid May to Sep, peak in late Jun to early Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread, more frequent in south
- damp ground at woodland edges or around trees
- No. of records: 743 • % since 2000: 42%

### *Beris morrisii* (Yellow-legged Black Legionnaire) - male

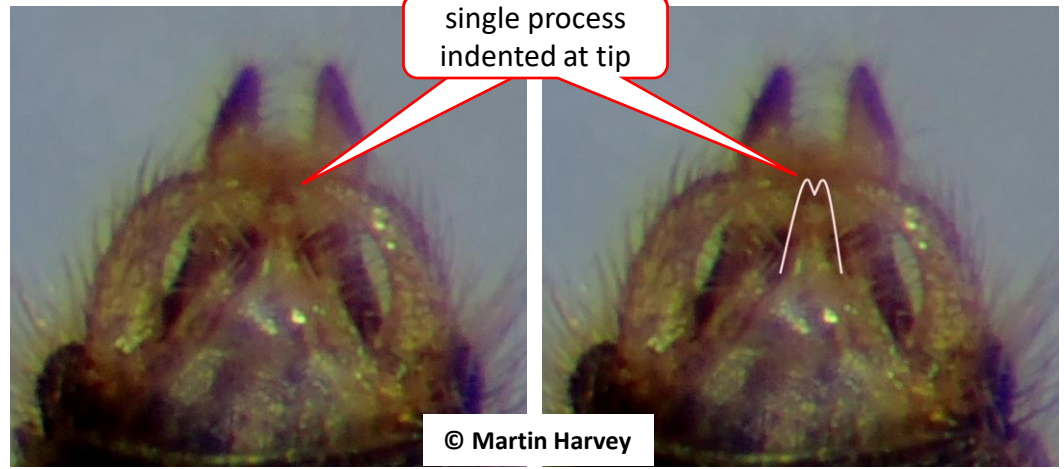
Can usually be distinguished from *B. chalybata* but genitalia features provide additional confirmation



© Steven Falk



single process indented at tip



© Martin Harvey

genital capsule from below (from pinned specimen)

[Steven Falk link](#)



[Biolimages link](#)

abdomen orange



orange and black hind tibia

© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: late Apr to early Oct, peak late Jun to early Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- fens, marshes, wet woodland, with tall vegetation or scrub
- No. of records: 4653 • % since 2000: 57%

***Beris vallata* (Common Orange Legionnaire) - male**

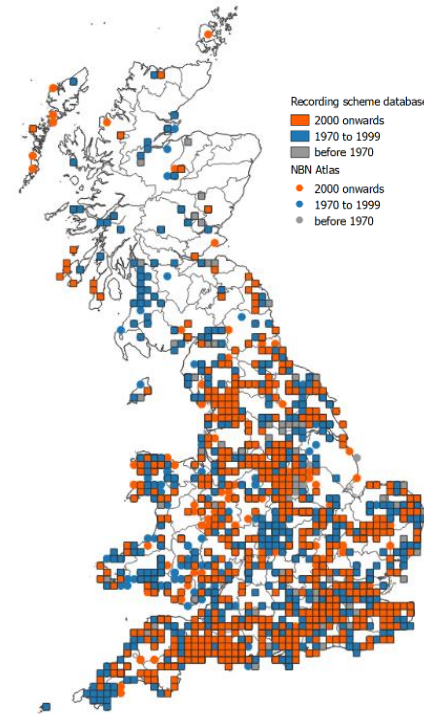
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The abdomen colour can be hidden under the tinted wings – try to get a view from the side to confirm

Compare with the rarer *B. clavipes* (which has the hind tibia entirely orange)





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**broad frons and face**

Compare with the similar *B. morrisii* (which has a narrower frons)

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***Beris chalybata* (Murky-legged Black Legionnaire) - female**

[Steven Falk link](#)

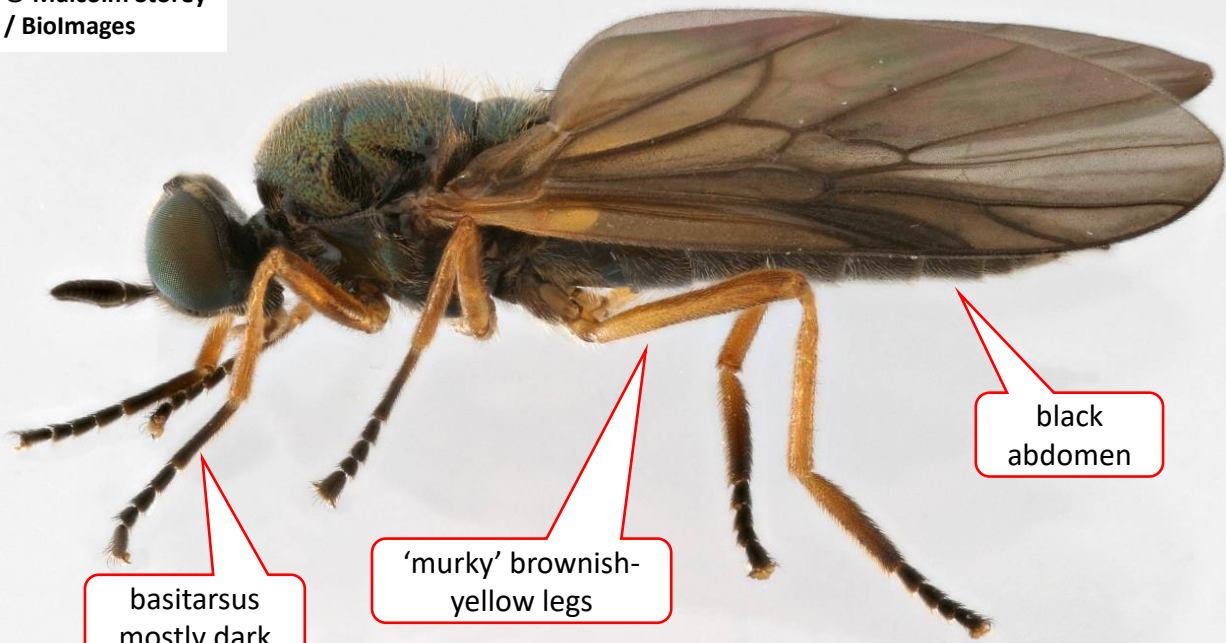
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Females of *B. hauseri* (not yet found in the UK) are similar, with a broad frons, but have yellowish basitarsi (= first tarsal segment) on all legs. Please keep a specimen if you suspect *B. hauseri*.

**basitarsus mostly dark**

**'murky' brownish-yellow legs**

**black abdomen**



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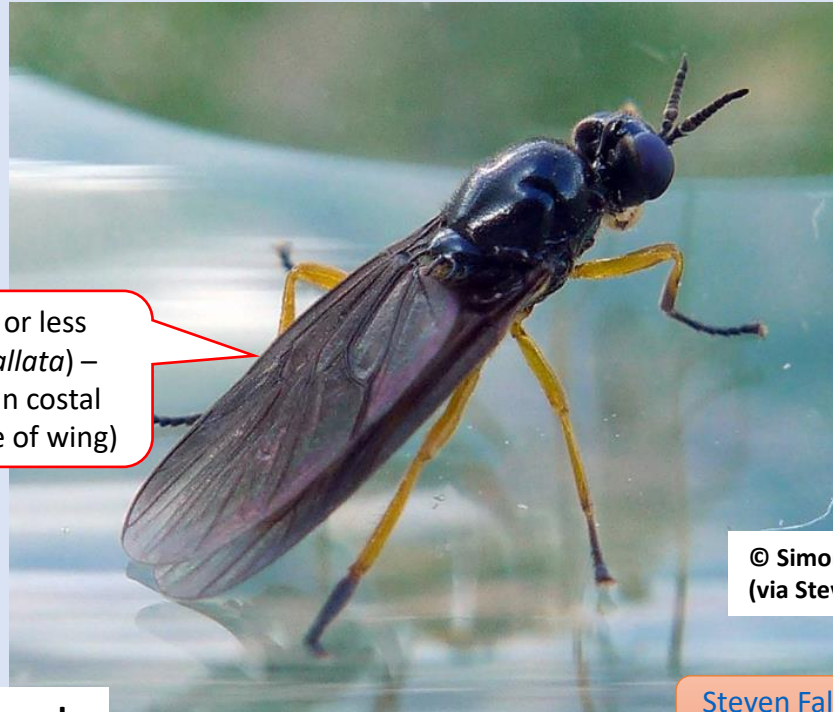
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abdomen orange

orange hind tibia

wings **shaded** (more or less transparent in ♀ *B. vallata*) – especially noticeable in costal cell (along leading edge of wing)



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[Steven Falk link](#)

***Beris clavipes* (Scarce Orange Legionnaire) - female**



narrow brown lines on abdomen segments

Compare with the more frequent *B. vallata* (which has the hind tibia half black)



The abdomen colour can be hidden under the tinted wings – try to get a view from the side to confirm



basitarsus often partly yellow

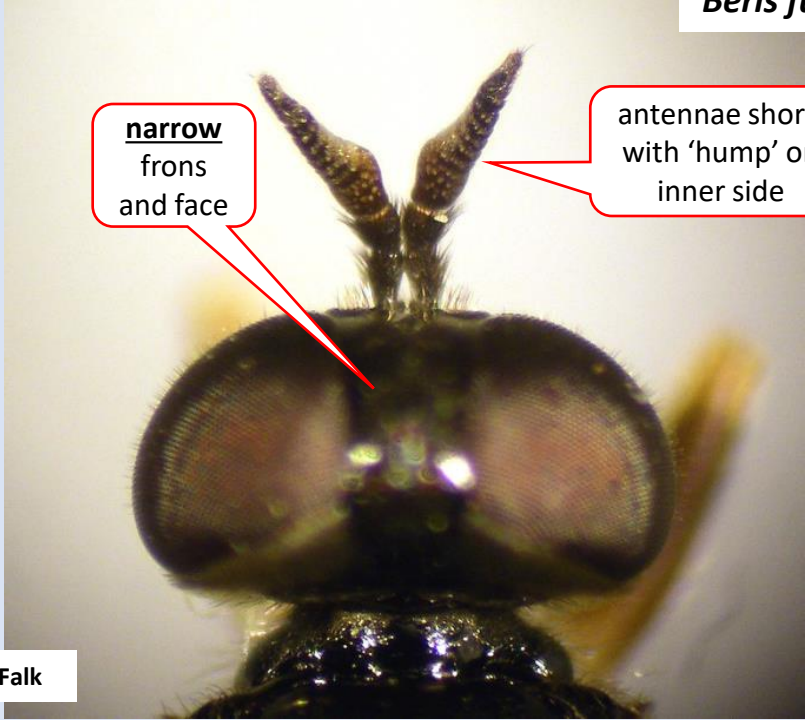
[Steven Falk link](#)



***Beris fuscipes* (Short-horned Black Legionnaire) - female**

narrow frons and face

antennae short, with 'hump' on inner side



Females of *B. hauseri* (not yet found in the UK) are similar, but with a broad frons and slightly paler legs. Please keep a specimen if you suspect *B. hauseri*.





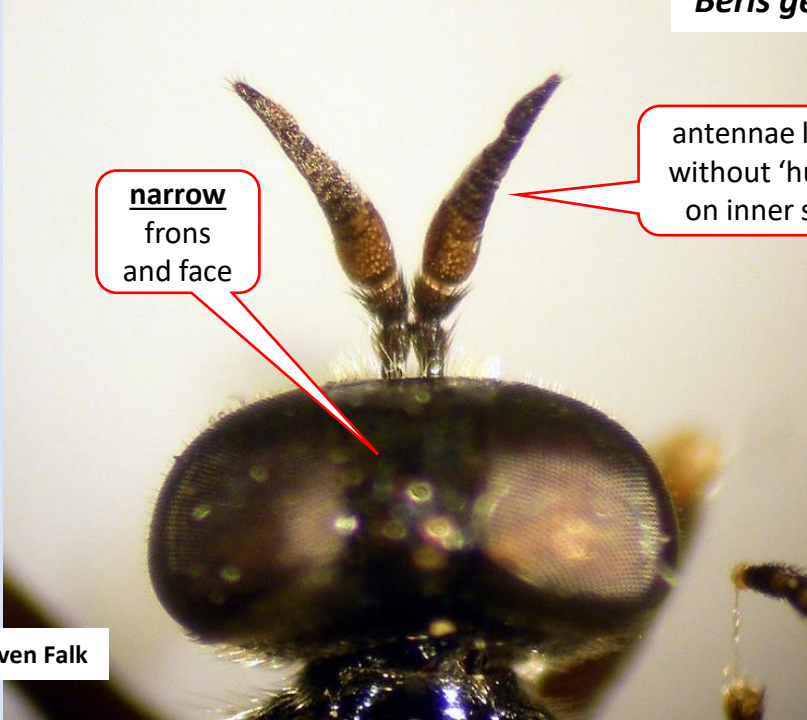
basitarsus  
almost entirely  
dark



*Beris geniculata* (Long-horned Black Legionnaire) - female

narrow  
frons  
and face

antennae long,  
without 'hump'  
on inner side

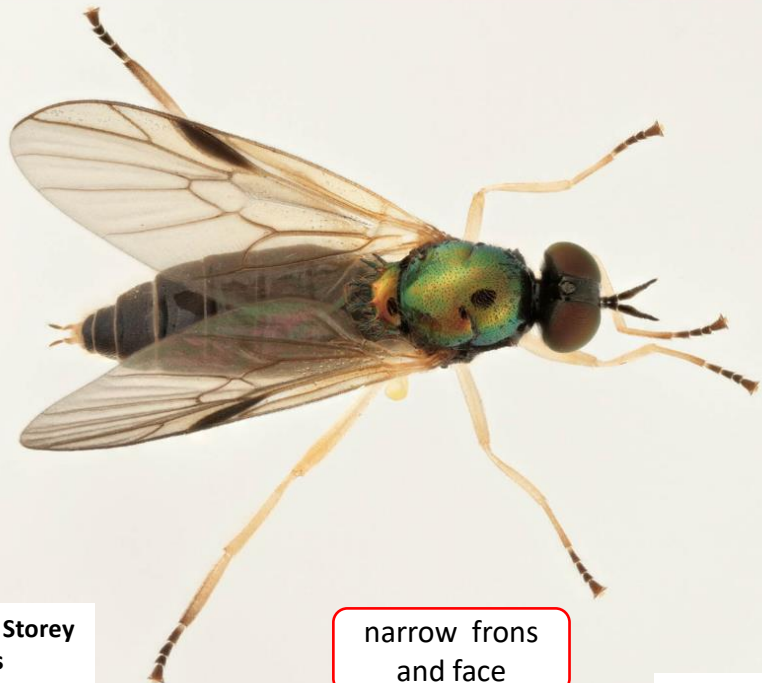


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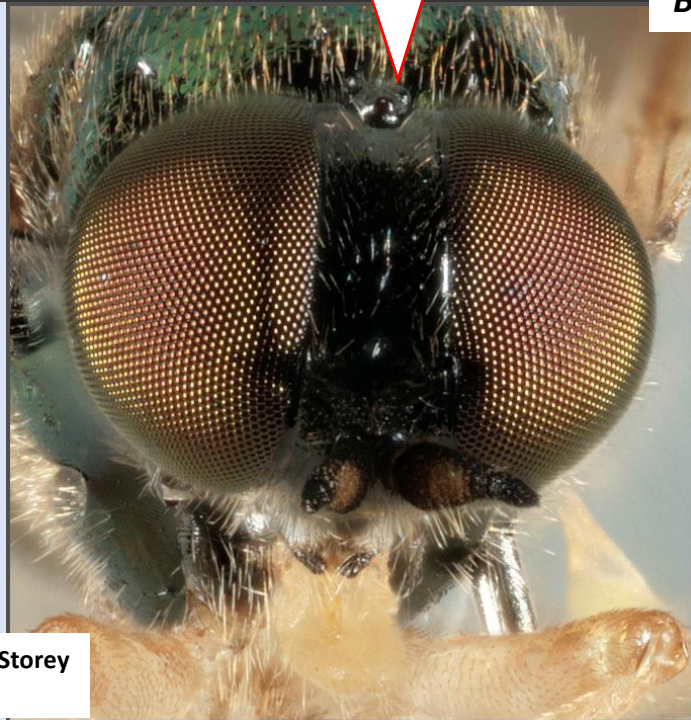


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narrow frons and face



*Beris morrisii* (Yellow-legged Black Legionnaire) - female



© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

Compare with the similar *B. chalybata* (which has a wider frons)



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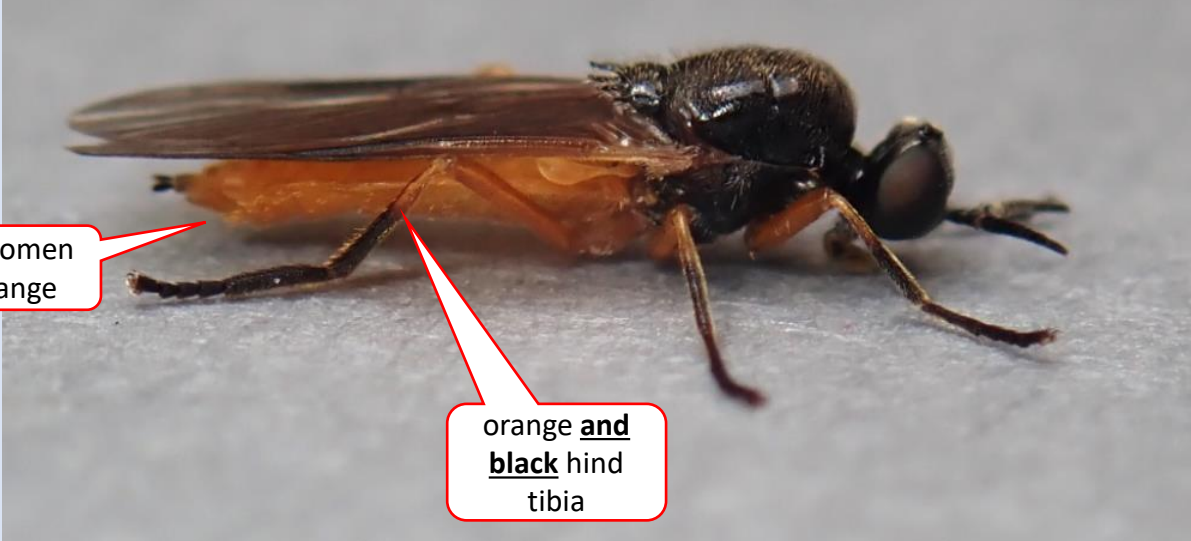
© Martin Harvey

Compare with the rarer *B. clavipes* (which has the hind tibia entirely orange)

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abdomen orange

orange and black hind tibia



wings more or less transparent (shaded in ♀ *B. clavipes*)

*Beris vallata* (Common Orange Legionnaire) - female

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