



I must apologise for a proof-reading failure in the last newsletter which led to an error slipping through in the list of hoverfly name changes (derived from the new checklist). The species that has been renamed *Pipizella viduata* is of course *P. varipes* not *P. virens*; this mistake hit me in the eye immediately I saw the reproduced version of the newsletter, having escaped my notice during several "final" checks. I regret any adverse consequences that might have occurred as a result of this. A corrected version of the full list of name changes appears on page 2 of this newsletter.

Despite rumours to the contrary I am not the co-ordinator of the Hoverfly Recording Scheme. Stuart Ball and Roger Morris continue as co-ordinators of the scheme. Roger tells me that progress is being made towards the publication of the atlas; this will probably take place within the next year, possibly even in the next six months.

Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 29** (which is expected to be issued in February 2000) should be sent to me: **David Iloff, Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 4HN**, to reach me by 9 December (or it may be handed to me on Dipterists' Day in November).

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HOVERFLY NAME CHANGES (CORRECTED VERSION)

Old name	New name
<i>Arctophila fulva</i>	<i>Arctophila superbiens</i> (NB not <i>superabiens</i>)
<i>Baccha obscuripennis</i>	<i>Baccha elongata</i>
<i>Brachypalpoides lenta</i>	<i>Brachypalpoides lentus</i>
<i>Callicera aenea</i>	<i>Callicera aurata</i>
<i>Cheilosia honesta</i>	<i>Cheilosia lasiopa</i>
<i>Cheilosia intonsa</i>	<i>Cheilosia latifrons</i>
<i>Cheilosia laskai</i>	<i>Cheilosia ahenea</i>
<i>Cheilosia nasutula</i>	<i>Cheilosia vicina</i>
<i>Chrysogaster chalybeata</i>	<i>Chrysogaster cemiteriorum</i>
<i>Chrysogaster hirtella</i>	<i>Melanogaster <i>hirtella</i></i>
<i>Chrysogaster macquarti</i>	<i>Melanogaster <i>aerosa</i></i>
<i>Dasysyrphus lunulatus</i>	<i>Dasysyrphus pinastri</i>
<i>Doros conopseus</i>	<i>Doros profuges</i>
<i>Epistrophe (Epistrophella) euchroma</i>	<i>Meligramma <i>euchromum</i></i>
<i>Eristalis nemorum</i>	<i>Eristalis interruptus</i>
<i>Eristalis pratorum</i>	<i>Eristalis similis</i>
<i>Lejogaster splendida</i>	<i>Lejogaster tarsata</i>
<i>Lejops vittata</i>	<i>Lejops vittatus</i>
<i>Megasyrphus annulipes</i>	<i>Eriozona <i>erratica</i></i>
<i>Melangyna guttata</i>	<i>Meligramma <i>guttatum</i></i>
<i>Melangyna triangulifera</i>	<i>Meligramma <i>trianguliferum</i></i>
<i>Metasyrphus</i>	<i>Eupeodes</i>

<i>Microdon eggeri</i>	<i>Microdon analls</i>
<i>Myolepta luteola</i>	<i>Myolepta dubia</i>
<i>Neocnemodon</i>	<i>Heringia (sub-genus <i>Neocnemodon</i>)</i>
<i>Orthonevra splendens</i>	<i>Riponnensia splendens</i>
<i>Pipizella <u>varipes</u></i>	<i>Pipizella viduata</i>
<i>Pyrophaena granditarsa</i>	<i>Platycheirus granditarsus</i>
<i>Pyrophaena rosarum</i>	<i>Platycheirus rosarum</i>
<i>Sphaerophoria abbreviata</i>	<i>Sphaerophoria fatarum</i>
<i>Sphaerophoria menthastri</i>	<i>Sphaerophoria interrupta</i>
<i>Sphegina kimakowiczii</i>	<i>Sphegina elegans</i>

Although name changes have been published for some species of *Xanthogramma* and *Chrysotoxum*, these are recognised in the checklist as erroneous. The species names for these two genera therefore remain as listed in Stubbs and Falk. The name *Platycheirus albimanus* is also retained (in preference to *P. cyaneus*).

A HOVERFLY IS A HOVERING FLY

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Newsletter 26 included a list of English names for Syrphidae prepared by Ken Preston-Mafham, most of which include 'hover fly' written as two separate words. This proposal is controversial, going against the previous usage of 'hover-fly' (dictionaries; Colyer & Hammond, *Flies of the British Isles*, 1951) and 'hoverfly' (Stubbs & Falk, *British Hoverflies*, 1983; this newsletter). It is justified as making clear that these are true flies (Diptera), unlike butterflies, dragonflies, mayflies, sawflies, etc. (names joined) which are not.

I resolved to investigate this 'etcetera' and found numerous references to caddis flies, alder flies, scorpion flies, snake flies, sponge flies and wax flies (Chinery, *A field guide to the insects of Britain and Northern Europe*, 1973; Collins guide to the insects of Britain and Western Europe, 1986; Plant, *A key to the adults of British lacewings and their allies*, 1997; Moseley, *The British Caddis Flies*, 1939). These insects belong to the Trichoptera, Neuroptera and

related orders, and are certainly not true flies. Turning away from insects and browsing through a dictionary, I found hobby-horse and rocking-horse, which are not real horses but wooden ones, and also cart-horse and racehorse, true horses of the purest pedigree. The Preston-Mafham list includes 'bulldog hover fly', but a bulldog, although written as a single word for several hundred years, is undoubtedly a real dog. In conclusion, there is no rule of the English language which states that the names of genuine members of a class should be written as separate words, whilst the names of false members should be hyphenated. We have here nothing less than an attempt to redefine the English language, perhaps coming from a committee somewhere in Oxford, Peterborough, South Kensington or even the United States, who are asking us to follow a rule of their own invention.

Why then are butterflies, dragonflies, mayflies and sawflies written as single words? I suggest that this comes from familiarity, the original 'butter fly' having been replaced, at first by 'butter-fly' and later by 'butterfly', as the insects became more familiar. Although mayflies and sawflies are not popular groups for entomologists to study, they are of great importance to fishermen, gardeners and farmers. It is Alan Stubbs' achievement to have taken the little-known group of 'hover-flies' and made them much more popular and into 'hoverflies'.

Colyer and Hammond wrote most family names as two words but put a hyphen into 'hover-fly'. This apparent anomaly can be explained since 'hover' is not an adjective but a verb, giving rise to the noun 'hoverer' and the adjective 'hovering'. In the 1940s Claude Morley used the names Hoverer, Hoverer-fly, Hovering-fly and even Syrphidae-fly, sometimes with two or three different versions on the same page. He was writing about insects for a readership of botanists, bird-watchers and other naturalists, and was clearly searching for an English name for the family (Transactions of Suffolk Naturalists Society, **4**:272-273, **5**:14-15, **6**:149-150).

It is instructive to compare the treatment of English names for wild flowers. The standard list, recommended by the Botanical Society of the British Isles, includes such names as meadow saxifrage (which is a real saxifrage) and burnet-saxifrage (which is not). This usage is not followed consistently, partly because of the rigid application of another arbitrary rule. No English name is allowed to consist of more than two words, although this leads to some anomalies. Thus bottle sedge and bladder-sedge are both real sedges and very closely related, but the latter name is given a hyphen because of the existence in Scotland of an extreme rarity, the mountain bladder-sedge. We should perhaps avoid such extremes in the English names for insects, but it seems sensible to limit the names to no more than three words. The proponents of 'hover fly' should accept that this goes against all previous and current usage, and that using a verb as an adjective in this way carries a hint of grammatical irregularity. If both 'hoverfly' and 'bumblebee' are written as single words, all names in the Preston-Mafham list come down to three words and we are left with, for instance, 'miniature bumblebee hoverfly' for *Cheilisia illustrata*, a practical name which just might catch on.

One argument in favour of English names for insects is that, unlike scientific names, they are not subject to regular change. However in the Preston-Mafham list, only one of Derek Whiteley's three names survives - the marmalade hoverfly. The Heineken fly has gone, perhaps because this reference to an advertising campaign will eventually lose its topicality, but so has the footballer hoverfly. This name was coined for hoverfly courses given in Sheffield, a city where the footballers wear shirts with vertical stripes, as do those of Stoke, Sunderland, Southampton and Brentford (please excuse any omissions). Such a reference would not be so obvious to the residents of Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and most of London, where the footballers wear shirts of a different pattern !

***EUMERUS SABULONUM* – A POTENTIAL LARVAL FOODPLANT**

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Stubbs and Falk (1983) record foodplants for two of the four British *Eumerus* species. As larvae, *E. strigatus* and *E. tuberculatus* feed on the roots of a variety of cultivated and wild plants, frequently those growing from bulbs.

The larval host of *E. ornatus* and *E. sabulonum* seem to remain a mystery but, for the latter, observations I made in August 1998 may shed some light on the matter.

On a visit to the Studland dune system in Dorset I had an opportunity to observe this species, which was frequent on the dunes themselves and on bare, sandy patches among the heather. Individuals of both sexes flew over the open ground, frequently describing tight circles in the air or settling on the bare soil or sparse vegetation.

They seemed to be associated with areas where sheep's bit (*Jasione montanum*) grew as scattered rosettes on open sand. A female was observed reversing in and under a tiny rosette, only 12mm across, an action strongly suggesting oviposition, though I could not confirm this.

The use of sheep's bit as a host would explain the distribution of *E. sabulonum*, in Dorset at least. In this county, according to Levy et al., it is confined to heaths, and above all, an area where sheep's bit is perhaps more frequent than elsewhere.

FLOWERY FLIES FROM SANDWELL (SP09)

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The Sandwell Valley site is probably the only one that has been visited by all the dipterists, albeit unwittingly and unwillingly in that they have possibly had to spend half an hour or so marooned in their stationary vehicles, enduring one of the infamous traffic snarl-ups on the M5 motorway at the junction with the M6. All this is Sandwell hoverfly territory and the pretty creatures (about 130 different species) go about their business within a few hundred metres of the chaos and exhaust fumes with apparent unconcern. Flowers obviously cheer them up enormously and a quick look at the EcoRecord database in Birmingham (where the records are centrally stored) reveals that we have 79 species recorded from flowers. Not too much can be read into the statistics presented here because no plan lay behind the observations, which are casual ones (the *Heracleum* total probably reflects the fact that umbels are big, showy and tall enough to be observed without undue difficulty) .

Flowers and Hoverfly Species Recorded on them:

Acer campestre

Dasysyrphus venustus
Eupeodes latilunulatus
Neoascia meticulosa

Angelica sylvestris

Cheilosia impressa
Cheilosia scutellata
Meligramma guttatum
Melangyna umbellatarum

Aster novi-belgii

Didea fasciata
Helophilus hybridus
Helophilus trivittatus
Pipiza austriaca
Platycheirus albimanus

Cirsium arvense

Dasysyrphus tricinctus
Volucella inanis

Crataegus monogyna

Dasysyrphus albostriatus
Dasysyrphus pinastris
Dasysyrphus tricinctus
Dasysyrphus venustus
Epistrophe eligans
Epistrophe nitidicollis
Heringia heringi
Leucozona lucorum
Melangyna cincta
Meligramma trianguliferum
Meliscaeva auricollis

Cytisus scoparius

Triglyphus primus

Fallopia japonica

Cheilosia pagana

Foeniculum vulgare

Cheilosia impressa
Cheilosia velutina
Episyrphus balteatus
Myathropa florea
Scaeva pyrastris
Triglyphus primus

Heracleum sphondylium

Cheilosia illustrata
Cheilosia impressa
Cheilosia pagana
Cheilosia proxima
Cheilosia scutellata
Cheilosia velutina
Cheilosia vernalis
Chrysogaster solstitialis
Chrysotoxum bicinctum
Dasysyrphus albostriatus
Dasysyrphus tricinctus
Dasysyrphus venustus
Epistrophe grossulariae
Eristalis interruptus
Eupodes latifasciatus
Heringia heringi
Heringia vitripennis
Lejogaster metallina
Leucozona glaucia
Leucozona laternaria
Leucozona lucorum
Melangyna compositarum/labiatarum
Melangyna umbellatarum
Meligramma guttatum
Meligramma trianguliferum
Meliscaeva auricollis
Meliscaeva cinctella
Neoascia podagrica
Platycheirus clypeatus sens. str.
Platycheirus manicatus
Platycheirus scutatus
Pipiza austriaca
Ripponensia splendens
Spegina clunipes
Spegina elegans
Triglyphus primus

Hieracium sp.

Sphaerophoria batava

Impatiens glandulifera

Meliscaeva auricollis
Xylota tarda

Ligustrum ovalifolium

Ferdinandea cuprea
Meligramma trianguliferum
Parasyrphus punctulatus

Mentha aquatica

Neoascia tenur
Platycheirus clypeatus agg.

Prunus spinosa

Platycheirus albimanus

Ranunculus ficaria

Chalcosyrphus nemorum

Ranunculus repens

Chalcosyrphus nemorum
Cheilosia variabilis
Dasysyrphus pinastri
Melanogaster hirtella
Meliscaeva auricollis
Pipizella viduata

Rhododendron ponticum

Dasysyrphus tricinctus
Melangyna cincta
Meligramma trianguliferum

Rubus fruticosus agg.

Helophilus hybridus
Leucozona laternaria
Mallota cimbiciformis
Syrphus torvus
Triglyphus primus
Volucella bombylans

Salix caprea

Cheilosia albipila
Cheilosia grossa
Melangyna lasiophthalma
Melangyna quadrimaculata
Meliscaeva auricollis
Parasyrphus punctulatus
Syrphus torvus

Senecio jacobaea

Cheilosia bergenstammi

Silene dioica

Rhingia campestris

Solidago canadensis

Cheilosia pagana
Triglyphus primus

Sonchus oleraceus

Xanthandrus comtus

Taraxacum officinale agg.

Platycheirus ambiguus

Tussilago farfara

Eupeodes luniger

General notes

The importance of trees especially in the early part of the year when little else is happening is illustrated, with *Cheilosia albipila*, *C.grossa*, *Melangyna quadrimaculata* and *M. lasiophthalma* found on *Salix caprea* flowers. Hawthorn is nearly always a magnet for hoverflies and the eleven recorded include *Meligramma trianguliferum* - infrequently seen here. Examination of the much less showy field maple flowers have also enabled the discovery of a male *Eupeodes latilunulatus*. The more conspicuous flowers of summer vary greatly in their appeal to hoverflies. Flowers such as dandelion have not been particularly productive locally but did provide a solitary *Platycheirus ambiguus*. Hogweed with its 36 visiting species is a banker for gauging the state of the hoverfly season - plenty of familiar species visit it, but here it has also provided us with *Meligramma guttatum* records. Versatile flies like it also; two species (*Meliscaeva auricollis* and *Triglyphus primus*) have also been found on four different flower species. *Sonchus oleraceus* has normally escaped without inspection but a single late summer flower provided our only *Xanthandrus comtus* specimen.

Some species seem to be very selective, *Cheilosia bergenstammi* having been taken only on *Senecio jacobea*. It is nice to end with a mention of another selective species not found. We have searched our extensive ramsons patches by the river Tame for *Portevinia maculata*, without success, yet it is commonly found in Walsall woodlands close at hand. One advantage of study in urban areas is that habitats are often well delineated and it may well be possible to more easily tease out key factors accounting for little ecological puzzles like this one. Perhaps someone will take it on. I am getting older and find myself continually distracted into study of other flies by a certain organisation which is going to be mildly chided and saddled with the responsibility for my lack of focus!

MELANOSTOMA SCALARE: COLOUR OF HALTERES

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In **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 25** (February 1998) Bernard Verdcourt commented on the red colour of the underside of the abdomen of female *Baccha* in life, a colour that fades after death and does not appear to be mentioned anywhere in the literature. My subsequent sightings of female *Baccha elongata* (I use the specific name now that it has been accepted that there is only one British species) continue to confirm that this red colour is normal in living specimens; I have not yet had an opportunity to examine a

living male sufficiently closely to establish whether this colour is present on the underside of both sexes.

Another unusual colour in a British hoverfly that fades after death and appears to be unmentioned in the literature is that of the halteres of many specimens (both male and female) of *Melanostoma scalare*: they are bright pea-green, a colour not normally associated with British hoverflies. Some examples of the species have yellow halteres (the colour that persists in dead specimens), but the occurrence of *M. scalare* with vivid green halteres seems to be quite frequent. I mentioned this recently to Robin Williams who told me that he had also observed this colour in live specimens. I have not so far observed this colour in the case of *M. mellinum*.

XYLOTA SEGNIS ON BUTTERCUPS: NOT UNUSUAL AT ALL (APPARENTLY)

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In **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 19** (November 1994) I included a note entitled "*Xylota segnis* on buttercups – not so unusual perhaps". This note was written in response to Alan Stubbs's statement in **British Hoverflies** that a report by Ian McLean of *X. segnis* on buttercups represented a highly unusual occurrence; in the note I described that I had observed this association on a number of occasions, including twice on the same day.

This year I visited three sites at Kielder Water (Tower Knowe, Leaplish and Kielder Castle) on 15 June 1999. At all three locations I saw numerous *X. segnis*. Although some were perched on foliage there were many on buttercup flowers; indeed the species seemed to be more numerous on these flowers than the buttercup specialist species that I saw that day, such as *X. coeruleiventris*, *Cheilosia fraterna* and *Melanogaster hirtella*.