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Dipterists Forum

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During the eighteen years since these newsletters have been in existence, we have seen a dramatic growth in active interest in hoverflies. The publication of **British Hoverflies** was of course a major boost. A cynic might perhaps express the view that the success of such a publication can be judged by not only by how well it sells but by how quickly it becomes out-of-date. Certainly the book's success based on the sell-out of successive editions is unquestionable; the publication of supplements, and their inclusion in later editions, is a tribute also to the book's achievement in motivating its readers to study hoverflies and discover new facts about them. Other books have followed, both overseas, and, in this country in the form of county hoverfly surveys.

Now, at the turn of the millennium, we can look forward to the imminent publication of the recording scheme's atlas, and we can use **Syrph the Net**, described by Stuart Ball in **Hoverfly Newsletter No.** 29, and demonstrated by him at the recent Dipterists Forum meeting in Cardiff.

A very welcome development is the setting up of the first ever international workshop on hoverflies, which will take place at Stuttgart in July; see page 10 for details. At the time of writing there are still vacancies at the workshop, which has every appearance of being a most memorable event, and which has attracted hoverfly experts and enthusiasts from many countries (in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North and Central America).

Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 32** (which is expected to be issued in August **2001**) should be sent to me: **David Iliff, Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 9HN** (please note change of postcode), Email **davidiliff@talk21.com** to reach me by **21** June.

CONTENTS

THE *RHINGIA* TWINS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

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I was interested to read David iliffs note on the two *Rhingia* species (*campestris and rostrata)* in Hoverfly Newsletter No. 30 (August 2000). I am a fairly recent recruit to hoverfly world and my attention was first drawn to *Rhingia* three years ago when both species were seen visiting devil's-bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis)* flowers in Tiddesley Wood, near Pershore, Worcestershire (collected and identified by David. M. Green). Devil's-bit is of course late to flower (and very attractive to many insects) and these records were in August and September. Being more familiar with the species from that date I have kept a look out for them and find they can, with care, be readily identified in the field on flowers.

I have found both species every year in Tiddesley Wood for the last three years, both in spring and late summer. They are both most abundant late in the summer. For example both were present on 29 August 2000, again visiting devil's-bit. I also found both species visiting fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica)* on 12 August 2000 in Grafton Wood (S0971562), which is a few miles further north, and again in Wyre Forest on 26 August (S0742777 and SO 746767).

I have recorded *Rhingia campestris* at seven different sites across Worcestershire (list below) this year, several in gardens visiting *Buddleia* and one on the banks of the River Avon visiting marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris).* In late September *campestris* was a regular visitor to late *Buddleia* flowers in my garden. They probed deep into the florets with their large snouts and I wondered if they were taking pollen as the nectaries were possibly out of reach. I opened several florets and there was no pollen in some, but it was abundant in others only a short distance down the tube. Very often *campestris* landed on a *Buddleia* leaf then crawled slowly round to the back of the leaf and remained there for a long time.

Interestingly all the *rostrata* records have been from ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodlands and although I have often seen *campestris* alone both in woods

and at other sites I have (to date) never seen *rostrata* either outside woodland or without seeing *campestris* at the same time!

Campestris larvae are reported from cow-dung (Rotheray 1993, Stubbs & Falk 1996) but I don't think that *rostrata* larvae have been found, although David Miff tells me there is a suggestion that they may be associated with badger latrines. Certainly there are plenty of these in the woods where I have seen *rostrata.* I have often thought it would be interesting to investigate the entomology of badger latrines but have not yet summoned up courage to enter that zone of coprology! If anyone has references to that subject I should be pleased to hear from them.

References:

Rotheray G.E, 1993 **Colour Guide to Hoverfly Larvae.** Dipterist Digest no 9
Stubbs, A.E & Falk S.J, 1996 **British Hoverflies**. British Entomological & Natural History Society.

Sites where *Rhingia campestris* recorded in Worcestershire in 2000:

Grafton Flyford at Rabbit Wood S0963574 21 May
Little Comberton S0966431 23 August through to end September on *Buddleia.*
Chadbury SP026460 on banks of River Avon visiting marsh woundwort
3 September
Longdon SO828350 20 September
Netherton S0991476, 20 August
Kemerton SO950379 24 August
Lower Bitted Reservoir SP016742, 13 September

HOVERFLIES AT WIMPOLE HALL

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The 2500 acre Wimpole Estate was given to the National Trust in 1976 by Elsie Bambridge and is primarily known for its Grade One listed landscape and mansion although there is also a rare breed's farm. The core parkland covers an area of approximately 450 acres of permanent grassland with ridge and furrow, numbers of old maturing trees, 250 acres of deciduous woodland and wetland habitats. Unfortunately the parkland and estate have suffered from the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease removing around 25% of the mature tree cover and the October 1987 and other gales reducing this further. This has resulted in the loss of an extremely important habitat for deadwood and saprophytic Diptera and other Orders. Limited records exist of invertebrate species before 1980; however Ivan Perry managed to rear *Myolepta luteola* from a rot hole in the south avenue elm trees before they succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. A further survey carried out in 1986 by Keith Alexander and the biodiversity team for the National Trust recorded a number of

Coleoptera which allowed English Nature to designate Wimpole Estate Grade C on the Invertebrate Site Register. Since then there has been little recording of invertebrates but as a forester at Wimpole and keen on invertebrates I decided to tackle a number of groups, not as easy as first thought. However Alan Stubbs's book on hoverflies proved to be extremely user friendly, especially the colour plates which allowed the identification by visual means of the larger and clearly marked species. This gave a useful means of teaching oneself the characteristic features used in the keys and helped to identify other species from a known species.

After two years of surveying the list of hoverflies at Wimpole has become quite large. There are to date over 45 common species, 30 local species and 6 nationally scarce species of hoverfly. Also there was a possible siting around a sycamore rot hole of *Pocota personata* (RDB2) (May 2000) but it eluded the net and the same was true of *Callicera spinolae* (RDB1) seen on the 11 September 2000 at Wimpole on early flowering ivy; a second siting was also seen on the same day at Great Eversden church on ivy but a long way from any decent amount of woodland or old trees; however no more was seen of *Callicera* in the remaining autumn. Ivan Perry brought a pinned *Callicera spinolae* to show me and, even pinned it's a beautiful hoverfly; it's a pity I cannot pin mine to Ivan's standard. Of the nationally scarce species *Criorhina asilica* was caught but not identified as such until some C. *floccosa* and C. *berberina* species were pinned; a noticeable difference was seen and the *C. asilica* species identified. All the *Criorhina spp.* were hand netted in May when seen flying around tree boles with various amounts of rot, the vegetation in most cases being sparse allowing easy capture. Two other nationally scarce saprophytic hoverflies occurred in May 2000 and July 2000; these were *Brachyopa insensilis* and *Volucella inflata. Brachyopa insensilis* was caught by a substantial sap run on *Aesculus* 10 feet from the ground and further investigation revealed that many *Aesculus* and *Taxus* trees with sap runs harboured this species. The local *B. scutellaris* was also found, but low down on a *Taxus* sap run; there was however only one record of this species. *Volucella inflata* (August 2000) turned up in the malaise trap along a woodland edge and although it does have a similar appearance to *Volucella pellucens* this species is readily recognisable in the field. Ivan Perry was also pleased to find that for two years running *Myolepta luteola* has been caught in a malaise trap from a wet ditch near woodland and mature parkland trees; this species has obviously managed to survive the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease.

Other local species of hoverflies depending on deadwood and other saprophytic habitats were *Ferdinandea cuprea* which was fairly common in all of the woodland, and *Xylota sylvarum,* this species being most abundant around flowering ivy that was low down in the woods. A few records of *Cheilosa soror* were found and these mostly occurred on chalk W8 woodland, the larvae apparently feeding on fungi; Ivan Perry has informed me of other records in similar situations in Cambridgeshire. Also *Cheilosa scutellata* was found in the same area in August 2000, also apparently having the larvae developing in fungi. It is also interesting to note that summer truffles have also been found on the estate woodlands.

A number of local aphid-feeding hoverflies have also been recorded mostly along woodland edges adjacent to permanent grassland: *Paragus haemorrhous,* which

likes small areas of bare soil; *Dasysyrphus albostriatus,* which, although also found in August, can normally be found in spring when the days get warm; *Heringia heringi* has been recorded and would probably be using the still numerous large elms and the suckering elms left from the trees infected by Dutch Elm Disease; *Epistrophe grossulariae* has been seen in some numbers but mostly when the ivy was flowering, and *Melangyna umbellatarum* was caught near the main lake in lush vegetation. Three semi-ancient woodlands occur within the vicinity of Wimpole and one of these, Cobbs Wood, is on the estate. However this was an elm woodland and unfortunately suffered from Dutch Elm Disease. *Epistrophe nitidicollis* is an ancient woodland indicator species as are *Pipiza luteitarsis* and *Pipiza bimaculata* though the last two were very difficult to identify to species and may be erroneous; all three were caught near or in Cobbs Wood.

The wetland areas of the estate have also proved to be rich in hoverfly fauna. *Anasimyia contracta* occurs near small ponds with *Typha* and a rich organic sediment, as do *Parhelophilus frutetorum. Helophilus hybridus, Helophilus trivittatus, Neoascia tenur, Platycheirus fulviventris, Platycheirus rosarum* and *Tropidia scita. Eristalinus sepulchralis* would seem to prefer larger ponds and lakes with lush vegetation. The *Helophilus spp.* do travel quite some distance from wetland areas and are caught on numerous types of flower. *Eupeodes latifasciatus* has also been recorded but mostly on wet pasture and meadowland (its larvae feed on aphids). Recent communications and help from Ivan Perry confirmed *Leucozona glaucia,* a wet woodland species that also feeds on aphids; I understand that this is the second Cambridgeshire record. *Chalcosyrphus nemorum* was fairly common in wet woodland areas, especially the main lake area of the Capability Brown landscape where there is plenty of wood left in wet areas. Lastly *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* was recorded in large numbers in 1999 almost everywhere where there was rough pasture and grasslands. One record of *Chrysotoxum verralli* (August 1999) was caught in rough grassland with wetland areas and adjacent woodland as was *Xanthogramma pedissequum.* There were two records of *Volucella inanis* (August 1999 and September 2000), the former caught on Knapweed and the latter caught on ivy near two wasp nests.

HOVERFLIES AT 1998 DORSET FIELD MEETING

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This impressive Dipterists Forum Publication No.1 being recently to hand, we would like to congratulate the organisers Mick Parker and M & E. Howe on an excellent piece of work. The 167 page report sets a high standard for future publications and certainly as far as regional recorders are concerned, is very good feedback.

The meeting, between June 27th and July 4th, was well attended, with no less than 31 participants recording 1676 species of all groups at the 107 sites visited. 116 of these were hoverflies.

With the updating of distribution maps in mind, which we have been doing annually since Dorset Hoverflies was published in 1992, the job of extracting Syrphidae records soon made us realise what a successful meeting this was.

No less than 550 site records were added to our maps, 22 localities being new and most of them SSSIs. Among the rarer species found during the week concerned, the following are of special interest:

Platycheirus immarginatus	**RDB2**	**2nd Dorset site record**
Xanthandrus comtus	**Nationally scarce**	**new site**
Paragus tibialis	**Nationally scarce**	**8 new sites**
Eupeodes latilunulatus	**Nationally scarce**	**9th county record**
Eupeodes nielseni	**Nationally scarce**	**8th county record**
Eupeodes nitens	**Nationally scarce**	**9th county record**
Sphaerophoria virgata	**Nationally scarce**	**2nd county specimen record**
Callicera aurata	**RDB3**	**2nd county specimen record**
Cheilosia cynocephala	**Nationally scarce**	**2 new sites**
Melanogaster aerosa	**Nationally scarce**	**new site**
Lejogaster tarsata	**Nationally scarce**	**2nd county specimen record**
Neoascia geniculata	**Nationally scarce**	**1st county record**
Sphegina verecunda	**Nationally scarce**	**3 new sites**
Pipizella virens	**Nationally scarce**	**3 new sites**
Pelecocera tricincta	**RDB3**	**8 new sites**
Parhelophilus consimilis	**Nationally scarce**	**2nd county site record**
Volucella inflata	**Nationally scarce**	**7 new sites**

New sites were also found for scarce Dorset species such as *Platycheirus occultus, Sphaerophoria rueppelli, Eristalis abusivus* **and** *Cheilosia praecox.* **The County List now stands at 211 species, within the boundaries used in Dorset Hoverflies. For those interested, the latter publication is still available from DERC Colliton House, Glyde Path Road, Dorchester DTI 1XJ.**

ON-LINE KEY TO THE *ERISTALIS* OF WESTERN EUROPE

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Readers might like to know about the website set up by Mark van Veen in the Netherlands. This interesting site, which is still under development, includes English language keys to the Dutch and wider European Diptera fauna, the most useful of which so far is probably the above. This nice key covers all the British species and refers to several additional species which could possibly occur. There are good illustrations of genitalia and several photos. Other keys are promised as part of the Dutch Syrphid Project. The site also includes a lot of material about Asilidae and details of a new insect data recording package called 'Faunistics', which appears to be broadly similar in function to UK packages such as BioRecs or MapMate. The site can be accessed at http ://home.talkline.nl/markvanveen/

HOVERFLY NEWS FROM EAST CORNWALL

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The year 2000 seemed rather similar to the preceding couple of years – many species occurring in low numbers or not recorded at all because of poor weather, but with sufficient scarce species to keep it interesting! Chronologically, the highlights of our year were:

Eupeodes luniger at Torpoint on 13 February. I often find an early *luniger* in my garden, usually in March or early April, but this is my earliest yet.

Criorhina floccosa. Two records by Rod Belringer (RMB): At Cotehele Quay on 28 April and at Holdencombe on 30 April.

Didea fasciata, found by RMB at Sowden's Bridge on 30 April. Prior to 1999, there were only two records of this species on the Cornish list.

Chrysotoxum elegans. Recorded again at Penlee Battery CWT Reserve on 25 June and 3 July. Also found at a new site, Trethill, a couple of miles inland from its normal coastal sites on 9 July.

Brachypalpoides lentus found again at Penlee Battery Reserve on 25 June and 3 July.

Xanthandrus comtus. Occasionally found in late summer/autumn on the coast, but a male on 25 June at Penlee Battery is our first mid-summer record.

Volucella inflata. Found for the third consecutive year at Penlee Battery on 25 June. Also found at a new site, Seaton Valley on 22 July.

Scaeva selenitica. Rather like *X.comtus,* sometimes found on the coast, especially in autumn. 2000 produced two mid-summer records: One near Penlee Reserve found by RMB on 3 July and one in my garden at Torpoint on 9 August.

Volucella zonaria is still established in the Torpoint area. Seen regularly from 7 to 17 August this year – a rather reduced flight period.

Callicera aurata. On 30 September I was checking the ivy at Penlee Battery Reserve, when I noticed an unfamiliar fly. Having camera in hand, I took several pictures before it flew away. My initial thoughts were that it may be *C.spinolae*, mainly because of the late date. However, having perused the photographs and sought further advice, the identity of the fly, a female, can only be *C.aurata,* the femora being dark; not quite as rare as *spinolae,* but still new to Cornwall and possibly the first record west of Hampshire for over 80 years.

Merodon equestris. Following some October records from the Isles of Scilly in recent years and a couple of September records in Cornwall and Devon in 1999, one turned up in my garden on 6 October, a rather bright male *var. narcissi.*

CHEILOSIA PUBERA IN WILTSHIRE

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In late September 2000 I decided to identify a few hoverfly specimens which I had collected incidentally at various Wiltshire sites during the spring and summer while hunting for sawflies. As expected most of them proved to be common and predictable species, providing records for new sites, but amongst them was a small, rather insignificant, male *Cheilosia,* which on closer examination, displayed a number of distinctive characteristics. This fly had been caught on 3 May 2000 at Jones' Mill, a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserve at Pewsey. The reserve is situated near the source of the Hampshire Avon and as a former water meadow reverted to fenland is an unusual habitat in the county.

The small hoverfly had a distinctive bronze hue to its thorax and abdomen which were also liberally covered in yellow hairs. The face and eyes were bare, legs black and it had very long aristae. The sternites were heavily dusted. This set of characters enabled me to key it readily to *Cheilosia pubera* which seemed from **British Hoverflies** to be little recorded in Britain, and in the south only from the River Test in Hampshire. In view of the apparent scarcity I contacted Ted Levy who agreed to check it for me and he confirmed that he had only seen the species in the north of Britain and definitely not in Somerset and Dorset, his local patch. There was also no previous record for Wiltshire. In **British Hoverflies** there is also reference to an affinity that this species has with marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris),* a common spring flower at Jones' Mill. Formerly rated as RDB3 the species is now graded Nationally Scarce (b).

I posted the fly off to Ted and Dave Levy on 29 September who received it the next day and confirmed my identification. They posted it back to me on 1 October using a rural pillar box in Dorset but the package did not reach me. The Royal Mail were not able to trace the package despite searches being instigated from source and destination post offices. At one stage it was suggested by them that it is not advisable to post things in remote post boxes on Sunday afternoons when collection would not be made until the next day. Apparently all kinds of things happen to post boxes at night. It seems that to ensure the security of precious items in the post you must use Recorded Delivery at the very minimum and don't leave mail in a box overnight. Both Ted and I attempted to obtain compensation; we were successful to the extent of one book of first class stamps for me and two for Ted (who only received the second one as a consequence of expressing dissatisfaction at the meagre value of the compensation). But how can one convince Royal Mail of the true value of a missing small black dead fly?

On 19 December, nearly three months after Ted had posted it, and after we had given up all hope of seeing the specimen again, the missing package arrived in the post, intact!

Having found the species at Jones' Mill by accident it will be interesting to revisit the reserve in early May 2001 and check any small *Cheilosia* found near marsh marigolds.

INTERESTING RECENT RECORDS

(records included elsewhere in this newsletter are not repeated here)

Malcolm Hughes (Wales):

Castell Cawr, Abergele	*Trichopsomyia flavitarsis*	10 May 2000
Gloddaeth Woods, Llandudno	*Brachyopa scutellaris*	9 May 2000
Holywell, Flintshire	*Platycheirus rosarum*	25 August 2000
Nr.Pentraeth, Anglesey	*Chrysogaster cemiteriorum*	4 August 2000
	Eupeodes latifasciatus	24 August 2000
Rhos-y-Gad, Anglesey	*Helophilus hybridus*	24 August 2000

Malcolm Hughes (Merseyside):

Formby Hills	*Cheilosia mutabilis*	18 July 2000

Malcolm Hughes (Greater Manchester):

Queen's Park, Bolton	*Heringia brevidens*	13 June 2000

Barbara Last (Wiltshire):

Berwick St. James	*Criorhina floccosa*	25 April 2000
Pitt Wood	*Criorhina floccosa*	28 June 2000
Stonedown Wood	*Criorhina floccosa*	5 May 2000
Chickengrove	*Meligramma euchromum*	26 July 2000
Alderbury	*Lejogaster metallina*	16 June 2000

Martin Matthews (Gloucestershire):

Ashchurch	*Pipizella luteitarsis*	30 April 2000
	Didea fasciata	6 May 2000
Nottingham Hill	*Rhingia rostrata*	25 June 2000
	Epistrophe diaphana	25 June 2000

John Phillips (Gloucestershire):

Poor's Allotment	*Arctophila superbiens*	6 September 1999
Pope's Hill, Newnham on Severn	*Arctophila superbiens*	10 September 1999
	Rhingia rostrata	14 August 2000

Blaisdon Wood	*Rhingia rostrata*	21 August 2000
Woorgreens	*Scaeva selenitica*	30 August 2000

David Iliff (Gloucestershire):

Pittville Park, Cheltenham	*Meligramma trianguliferum*	*2* May 2000
Woodmancote	*Didea fasciata*	19 August 2000
Wigpool	*Sphaerophoria philanthus*	12 August 2000
Cinderford Linear Park	*Scaeva selenitica*	12 August 2000
Gotherington Wood	*Epistrophe diaphana*	18 June 2000
		28 June 2000
Salmonsbury Meadows	*Epistrophe diaphana*	17 June 2000

David Iliff (Hampshire):

Denny Wood	*Scaeva selenitica*	24 June 2000

ANNOUNCEMENT: INTERNATIONAL SYRPHIDAE WORKSHOP

The First International Workshop on the Syrphidae will take place at the Staatliches Museum fur Naturkunde in Stuuttgart, Germany, from Friday 6 July to Sunday 8 July 2001. Details of the programme, a list of attendees, and a wealth of other information relevant to the workshop, including accommodation options, can be found on the website http://ibis.nott.ac.uk/~plzfq/svrphid.html.

Anyone wishing to attend the workshop should contact Francis Gilbert by post, phone or (preferably) email: Dr. Francis Gilbert, School of Environmental Science, Nottingham University, Nottingham, NG7 2RD; telephone 115 951 3215 (work); 1332 841562 (home); Fax: 115 951 3251; email francis.gilbert@ nottingham.ac.uk.