Hoverfly Newsletter
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I am grateful to everyone who submitted articles and photographs for this issue in a timely manner. The closing date more or less coincided with the publication of the second volume of the new Swedish hoverfly book. Nigel Jones, who had already submitted his review of volume 1, rapidly provided a further one for the second volume. In order to avoid delay I have kept the reviews separate rather than attempting to merge them. Articles and illustrations (including colour images) for the next newsletter are always welcome. Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 49** (which is expected to be issued with the Autumn 2010 Dipterists Forum Bulletin) should be sent to me: David Iliff **Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 9HN, (telephone 01242 674398), email:davidiliff@talk21.com**, to reach me by 20 May 2010. Please note the earlier than usual date which has been changed to fit in with the new bulletin closing dates.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme update December 2009

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This has been quite a remarkable year for a variety of reasons. As reported last time, *Myolepta potens* made a surprise appearance in Gloucestershire and made everyone's year. At the same time, the year was punctuated by poor weather so it was amazing that very much was found; yet it was. There were several new records of *Eriozona syrphoides* (see later article on the autumn field meetings) and Rob Wolton, a recently recruited member, has made amazing inroads into the ecology of *Microdon myrmicae*. Hopefully Rob will describe his work in due course so we must not steal his thunder. These few snippets tell us that hoverfly recording is alive and well and hopefully greater things will emerge next year.

This newsletter marks the transition from the first to the second decade of the 21st Century, and therefore there is some merit in reviewing progress in the past ten years. The highlight is undoubtedly the level of data arriving each year. As this note goes to press, the database stands at 599,795 records and we look forward to it passing 600,000 very shortly! This is quite amazing when you look back to the provisional atlas in 2000. At that time, we had assembled 375,000 records, so (with an additional 40,000 records available from Kenn Watt's Scottish scheme) the dataset has expanded by 71% in ten years. Not all of these records come from the past ten years of course, but the graphs generally indicate that recording effort has been maintained at a similar level to the 1990s – although we have not been able to attain the levels reached in the 1980s.

There have been a few notable changes as some of the old guard such as Eileen Thorpe and Austin Brackenbury have reduced their activity and a number of newcomers have arrived. For example, there is now much more active recording in Shropshire (Nigel Jones), Northamptonshire (John Showers), Worcestershire (Harry Green *et al.*) and Bedfordshire (John O'Sullivan). Mick Parker and Ted & Dave Levy continue to supply large numbers of records for Dorset and Somerset, whilst Gloucestershire (David Iliff *et al.*) now vies with Dorset for the most detailed recording effort.

Looking at the modern maps, the level of coverage is a good deal more even, although there are still big gaps in what are now emerging as less interesting parts of the country. Our own efforts have shown that places such as Radnorshire, the Fens, the Pennines and the southern lowlands of Scotland are genuinely poor in hoverfly diversity. We have a lot more to do, however. One of the jobs we are doing is checking and identifying material for a variety of university projects. Roger recently completed examining some 10,000 dry specimens assembled by Leeds University (he has a similar number of wet specimens to do still) and over Christmas identified more than 2,500 specimens from a UCL PhD project. Hopefully these data will be forwarded to the scheme in due course, especially as the UCL project yielded records of *Eupeodes lundbecki* and *Dasysyrphus hilaris*.

Another important advance over the past ten years has been our knowledge of the fauna itself. There have been numerous additions: *Cheilosia ahenea*, *C. caerulescens*, *C. ranunculi*, *C. psilophthalma*, *Eupeodes goeldlini*, *Heringia senilis*, *Microdon myrmicae*, *Orthonevra intermedia*, *Paragus constrictus*, *Platycheirus*

aurolateralis, *Syrphus rectus* and *Trichopsomyia lucida* come immediately to mind. There have been other changes, most notably the phenomenal range changes exhibited by *Rhingia rostrata*, *Volucella inanis* and *Volucella zonaria*. Climate change is real and its impact is a matter of considerable interest both in terms of recording effort and as a way of promoting hoverflies as important environmental indicators.

The hoverfly symposium scheduled for Glasgow in 2011 offers a really important opportunity for UK hoverfly enthusiasts to show what we can do. Chris Thompson illustrated the effectiveness of the Hoverfly Recording Scheme in his talk for Dipterists Forum's AGM. In that talk he showed that we contributed around 25% of the two million Diptera records held on the GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility). This of course is based on the last time we updated the hoverfly data on the National Biodiversity Network database; and there are many more records now!

Another major change in the past ten years has been the work we have been doing to train new hoverfly enthusiasts. Prior to 2000 we ran occasional workshops for the Field Studies Council but now we travel more widely. In the next few months we will be doing courses for Glasgow Naturalists, Cardiff Museum and the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. We are also scheduled to run a three day course at Preston Montford in August. If you know of other regions who might like to host a course then let them and us know that this is a possibility.

Finally, we are still working hard on other fronts. We have linked up with WILDguides and are in the process of writing a guide to hoverflies. There are likely to be two versions: a junior guide to parks and gardens, and a more comprehensive version covering about 60% of the British fauna. Neither will replace Stubbs and Falk which remains the definitive guide, but hopefully these simpler guides will help to stimulate more interest in hoverflies amongst field naturalists. Hopefully both will be out in 2010.

Analysis of autumn field meeting data 2009

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This year we tried a different format for the autumn field meeting. Firstly we went to Scotland, which is a novelty in itself. Secondly, we went for a week; and finally we made it a split venue meeting with the first half in south-west Scotland (Newton Stewart 12-15 September 2009) and the second half in south-east Scotland (Galashiels 16-19 September). The weather mirrored this split to some extent too: fantastic sunny days for the first half of the week and largely cloudy the second half. Hoverfly recording mirrored this split but I wonder if the split was wholly down to the weather.

South-west Scotland is much wilder with comparatively little agriculture in the Galloway Forest area. Conifer forests, deciduous woodlands and moorland punctuate the landscape, whereas south-east Scotland is predominantly agricultural with much less woodland that is often confined to the steepest slopes and gills. True, there are areas of afforestation and of course the Border Mires, but my general impression is a landscape that is much harder to work for Diptera and hoverflies in particular.

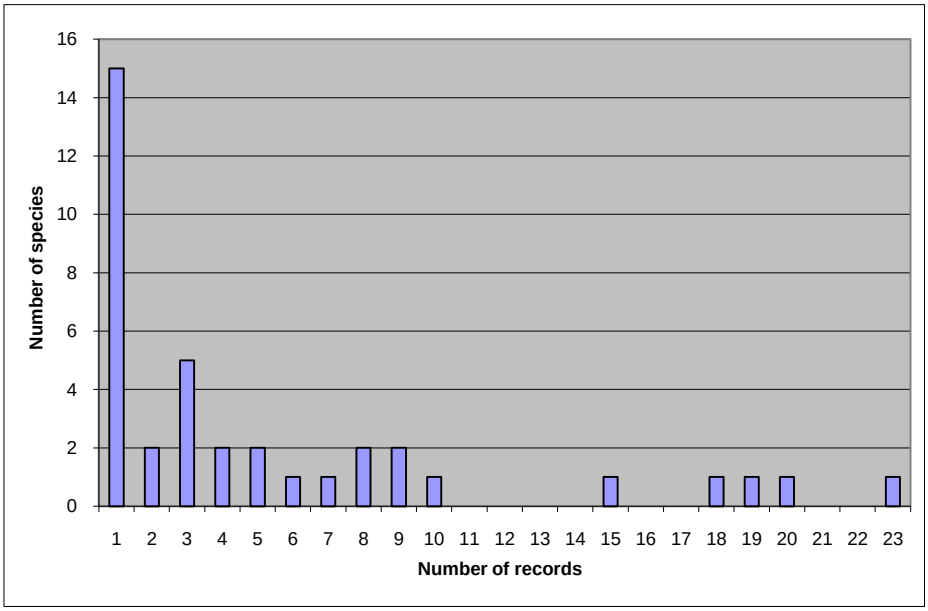

Figure 1. Numbers of records for individual species at Newton Stewart

A total of 38 species were recorded at Newton Stewart, with good numbers of commoner species but a remarkable array of species that we often regard as scarce. *Didea fasciata* was almost a "regular" and *Eriozona syrphoides* showed up on three occasions. Clearly the conifer forests of southern Scotland are a stronghold. What was more surprising was the very low number of *Arctophila superbiens*.

Species recorded at Newton Stewart:

Arctophila superbiens (3), *Baccha elongata* (1), *Cheilosia bergenstammi* (1), *Cheilosia pagana* (1), *Dasysyrphus tricinctus* (1), *Didea fasciata* (6), *Epistrophe grossulariae* (1), *Episyrphus balteatus* (19), *Eriozona syrphoides* (3), *Eristalis arbustorum* (8), *Eristalis horticola* (2), *Eristalis nemorum* (9), *Eristalis intricaria* (5), *Eristalis pertinax* (20), *Eristalis rupium* (1), *Eristalis tenax* (18), *Eupeodes latifasciatus* (2), *Eupeodes luniger* (1), *Helophilus pendulus* (15), *Lejogaster metallina* (1), *Melanostoma scalare* (23), *Meliscaeva cinctella* (1), *Neoascia podagrica* (3), *Platycheirus albimanus* (8), *Platycheirus clypeatus* (4), *Platycheirus granditarsus* (4), *Rhingia campestris* (5), *Scaeva selenitica* (1), *Sericomyia silentis* (10), *Sphaerophoria interrupta* (1), *Sphaerophoria philanthus* (1), *Sphegina clunipes* (1), *Syritta pipiens* (3), *Syrphus ribesii* (7), *Syrphus vitripennis* (1), *Volucella pellucens* (3), *Xylota jakutorum* (1), *Xylota segnis* (9).

Upon reaching Galashiels it became readily apparent that the numbers of hoverflies were much lower and less diverse. Just 16 species were recorded over the following days and lists for individual sites were extremely short. Species such as *Didea fasciata* and *Eriozona syrphoides* were absent

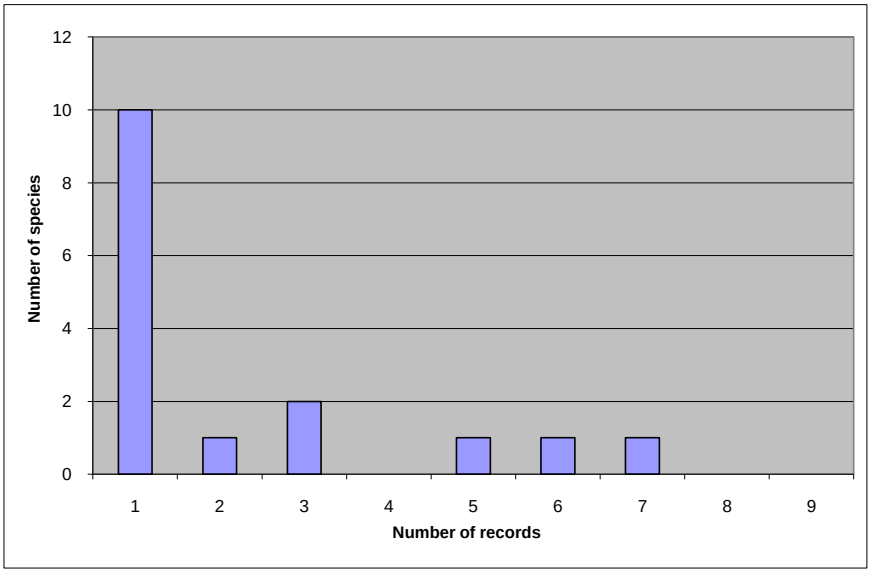

Figure 2. Numbers of records for individual species at Galashiels

Species recorded at Galashiels:

Epistrophe grossulariae (1), *Eristalis horticola* (1), *Eristalis tenax* (1), *Leucozona glaucia* (1), *Platycheirus albimanus* (1), *Platycheirus scutatus* sl (1), *Rhingia campestris* (1), *Syrphus torvus* (1), *Xylota segnis* (1), *Xylora sylvarum* (1), *Baccha elongata* (2), *Helophilus pendulus* (3), *Syrphus ribesii* (3), *Eristalis pertinax* (5), *Melanostoma scalare* (6), *Episyrphus balteatus* (7).

Changes in the weather as well as differences in the habitat type, plus of course the receding summer mean that a comparison of this nature cannot be made in any scientific way. Nonetheless the dramatic difference in the numbers of hoverflies does suggest that the Galashiels area is less rich than the area around Newton Stewart. Is this really the case, or is it more reflective of the comparative absence of suitable flowers as a lure? Perhaps a partial answer can be given by experience on 19 September when Alan Stubbs and I travelled south.

We stopped at several localities and found very little in the way of hoverflies apart from one site (Sweethope Lakes) that supported a sizeable bank of devil's bit scabious. The link between hoverfly numbers and a suitable lure seems to be borne out here as we recorded 11 species. This link is also supported by experience on one roadside verge at Kirwaugh earlier in the week where we stopped for a short look at roadside ivy and found a total of 15 species of hoverfly! This count was particularly remarkable because it was in a largely pasture landscape with little habitat.

These various experiences show that there is a good deal of scope for recording hoverflies in late summer in northern areas. It makes me think that I will have to go north in September and that I must look for areas with devil's bit scabious. Perhaps *Eriozona syrphoides* is commoner than we think?

The Internet as a source of hoverfly records

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The advent of digital photography and easy access to personal websites has led to an explosion in the numbers of wildlife records potentially available to recording schemes. Lots of wonderful photos appear on Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/) but they are rarely accompanied by data. Rather more data can be gained from "Wild About Britain" (http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/) which recently yielded 143 new records from a total of just over 5,000 insect photographs of all Orders. Personal websites (weblogs) abound and these too can be useful sources of information with much more chance of abstracting data and contacting recorders.

I regularly trawl these sites to see what data are available. My technique is to search for a range of hoverfly names and then to follow up hits that look promising. More often than not the end result is unproductive because only a small percentage of the total range of photographs can be linked to specific sites and dates. But occasionally weblogs with usable records emerge.

Common or bigger and readily identifiable hoverflies seem to be much more productive names to search for and these in turn often yield sites with other useful records of other species. In addition, quite a lot of data arise from photographs posted on the Hoverfly Recording Scheme website by comparative novices. Data from the recording scheme website are probably the best because it is possible to chase photographers and secure more accurate data on the date and place the photograph was taken.

The biggest drawback of this sort of recording is that many photos don't reveal key distinguishing characters and I find identifying species from photos rather tricky and doubtless get the odd one wrong! Even so, a small but significant number of records have entered the recording scheme database as a consequence. These are useful data and I therefore thought it might be illuminating to analyse some that I have abstracted in the last two years. This has proved to be highly informative as it illustrates the impact this type of recording can have on datasets.

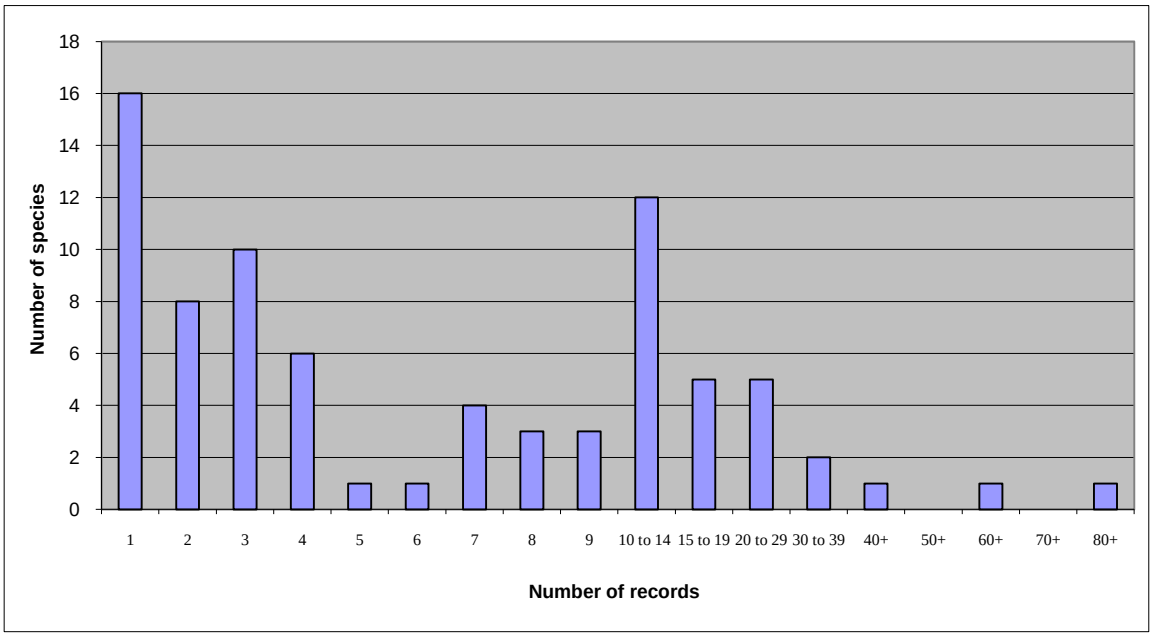

Figure 1. The relative number records attributed to individual species illustrated on websites.

A total of 848 records extracted over the last two years from the dataset analysed for this note. This is a snapshot and is not a comprehensive trawl of records specifically to undertake an analysis of this nature. These records comprise a total of 80 species with the majority of the records (672 records or 79.24%) from 28 species with ten or more records. I do not hold data on the numbers of websites visited or the numbers of records extracted from individual sites and consequently the effort involved in abstracting these data cannot be quantified. They are data that have been extracted at times of day or in inclement weather that would not otherwise have been available to the recording scheme and are therefore a useful addition from effort that is not a distraction from other work.

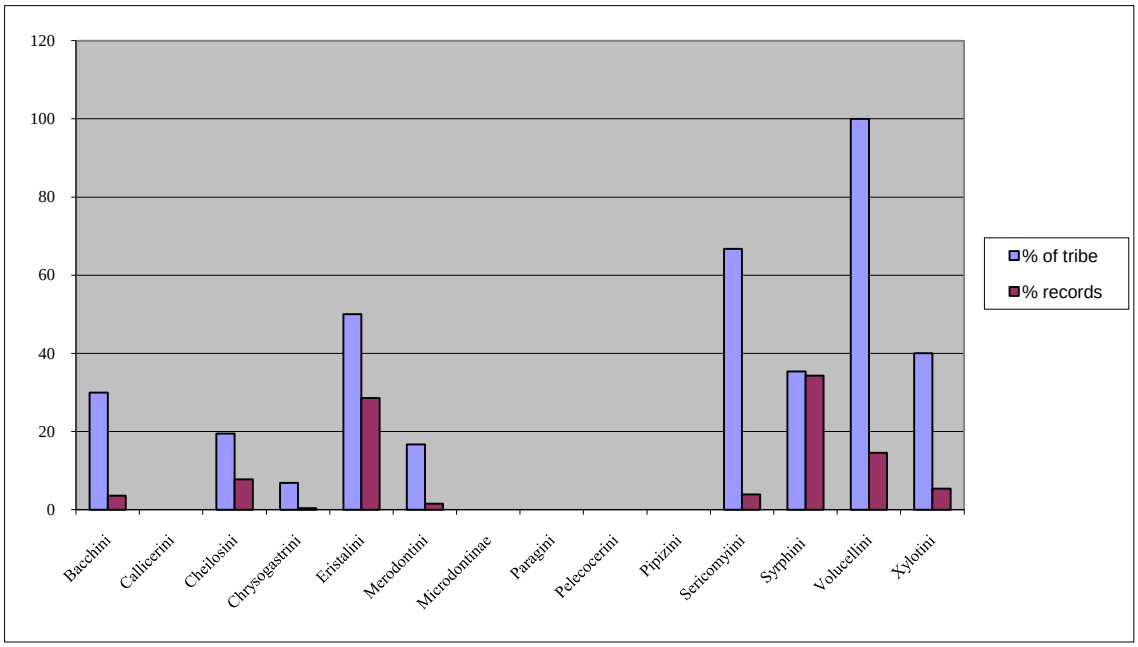

Figure 2. Numbers of species and records by tribe

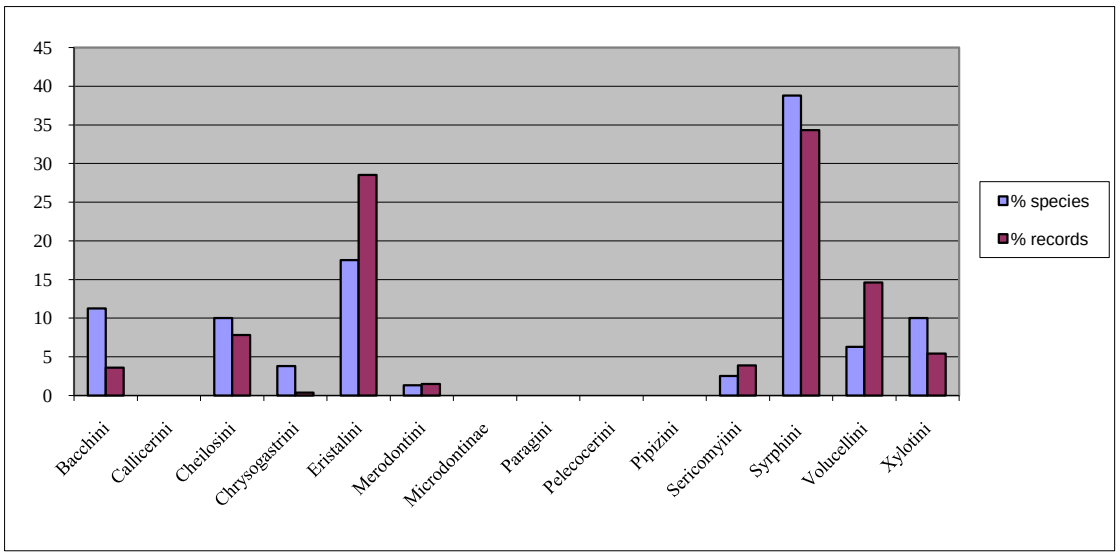

Figure 3. Comparative contributions to overall dataset: overall proportion of species within the dataset and the proportion of the overall number of records.

Quite clearly weblogs and posts on the recording scheme website do provide a useful addition to datasets for analysis of responses to climate change and the distribution of a proportion of the fauna and are therefore to be welcomed. However, the use of photography as an alternative to retention of voucher specimens clearly has important limitations. Firstly the range of species likely to be recorded is much narrower than the overall British fauna (29% is represented in this sample) and secondly this type of recording generally misses many of those specialist species that are associated with scarce or vulnerable habitats. For example, just one nationally scarce species (*Eriozona syrphoides*) was illustrated.

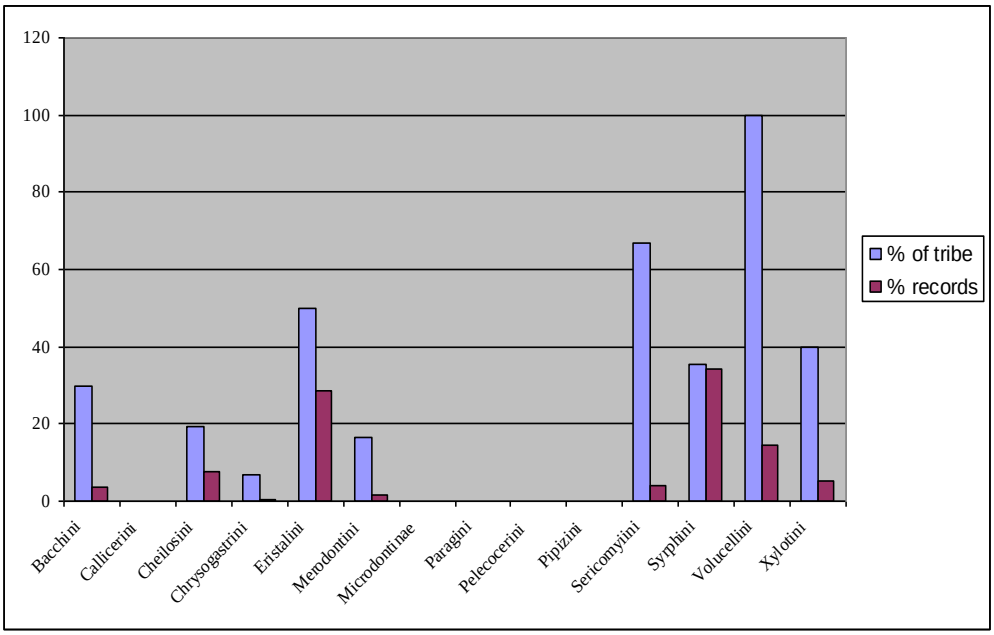

Figure 4. Proportions of tribes relative to overall contribution of records.

These data and the accompanying analysis are extremely crude and would merit more detailed investigation. They do however illustrate that only a small suite of tribes attracts the attention of this sort of recording. The tribes are particularly well represented, the Eristalini, Syrphini and Volucellini. The most noticeable absentees from the lists include those challenging taxa that cannot be identified from photographs such as *Cheilosia*, *Pipiza*, *Sphaerophoria*, and *Platycheirus*. Few of the records involve species of conservation importance and just one species, *Eriozona syrphoides*, is listed in the forthcoming revision of Syrphidae statuses (Ball & Morris in press). A further feature of this source is that it mainly seems to be southern recorders who participate: are there really so few interested naturalists in Scotland?

On the plus side, photo-recording sometimes stimulates much greater interest in hoverflies and leads to a shift from reliance on photography towards the retention of voucher specimens. I have seen this on several occasions and such shifts mean that some very competent field naturalists have started to make important contributions to our knowledge of the hoverfly fauna. Furthermore, it appeals to people who might otherwise not do any biological recording at all.

In conclusion, therefore, let us hope for a continuing interest in photography and encourage really keen proponents to go that stage further – they have huge potential to improve regional knowledge of hoverfly distribution. There are obvious limitations to this form of recording and hopefully this brief analysis will help to inform the debate about the relative merits of photography as a tool for biological recording. Meanwhile, those who don't feel happy with taking specimens but who are happy to make more limited contributions should be encouraged to do so because they will supply data that fills gaps and adds to the overall baseline of information used for conservation management and climate change studies.

Species involved in the analysis:

One record: *Platycheirus peltatus*, *Cheilosia grossa*, *Cheilosia impressa*, *Cheilosia pagana*, *Chrysogaster cemiteriorum*, *Eristalinus aeneus*, *Chrysotoxum cautum*, *Chrysotoxum elegans*, *Didea fasciata*, *Doros profuges*, *Eriozona syrphoides*, *Eupodes latifasciatus*, *Volucella inflata*, *Brachypalpoides lentus*, *Tropidia scita*, *Xylota sylvarum*, **Two records**: *Platycheirus fulviventris*, *Platycheirus manicatus*, *Platycheirus rosarum*, *Platycheirus scutatus* sl., *Chrysogaster solstitialis*, *Melangyna cincta*, *Criorhina berberina*, *Criorhina floccosa*, **Three records**: *Xanthandrus comtus*, *Cheilosia variabilis*, *Anasimyia lineata*, *Eristalinus sepulchralis*, *Helophilus hybridus*, *Dasysyrphus venustus*, *Leucozona laternaria*, *Melangyna umbellatarum*, *Scaeva selenitica*, *Criorhina ranunculi*, **Four records**: *Baccha elongata*, *Platycheirus granditarsis*, *Rhingia rostrata*, *Arctophila superbiens*, *Chrysotoxum arcuatum*, *Chrysotoxum verralli*, **Five records**: *Anasimyia contracta*, **Six records**: *Ferdinandea cuprea*, **Severn records**: *Eristalis horticola*, *Dasysyrphus albostriatus*, *Epistrophe grossulariae*, *Meliscaeva cinctella*, **Eight records**: *Eristalis arbustorum*, *Epistrophe eligans*, *Platycheirus albimanus*, **Nine records**: *Dasysyrphus tricinctus*, *Leucozona lucorum*, *Meliscaeva auricollis*, **Ten records**: *Melanostoma scalare*, *Eristalis nemorum*, *Chrysotoxum festivum*, *Leucozona glaucia*, *Syrphus ribesii*, **Eleven records**: *Eupeodes corollae*, Twelve records: *Eupeodes luniger*, Thirteen records: *Helophilus trivittatus*, *Merodon equestris*, *Sphaerophoria scripta*, **Fourteen records**: *Eristalis intricaria*, *Chrysotoxum bicinctum*, **Eighteen records**: *Syritta pipiens*, *Xylota segnis*, **Nineteen records**: *Cheilosia illustrata*, *Scaeva pyrastri*, *Xanthogramma pedissequum*, **Twenty three records**: *Volucella inanis*, **Twenty six records**: *Volucella bombylans*, **Twenty nine records**: *Sericomyia silentis*, **Thirty records**: *Eristalis tenax*, **Thirty one records**: *Rhingia campestris*, *Thirty four records*: *Volucella pellucens*, **Thirty nine records**: *Eristalis pertinax*, **Forty records**: *Volucella zonaria*, **Forty five records**: *Myathropa florea*, **Sixty one records**: *Helophilus pendulus*, **Eighty one records**: *Episyrphus balteatus*.

Reference: Ball, S.G. & Morris, R.K.A., (in press). A review of the scarce and threatened flies of Great Britain: Part?: Syrphidae. *Species Status* **x**: 1-? Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

Hoverflies and mimicry 2

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A number of brief articles have been published discussing mimicry in hoverflies in recent issues of the Hoverfly Newsletter. In all the references on this complex subject I was amazed to discover that no-one had referred to Francis Gilbert's excellent paper on "The evolution of imperfect mimicry (in hoverflies)" published in the proceedings of the Royal Entomological Society's Symposium on Insect Evolutionary Ecology edited by Mark Fellowes, Graham Holloway and Jens Rolff (2005).

The chapter (pp 231-288) discusses poor and good mimicry, the relative abundance of mimics and predators, factors influencing resemblance based mainly on examples from the Palaearctic fauna and a lot more. All those interested in hoverflies should read this chapter - it is a classic and I highlighted it as such in a book review for British Journal of Entomology. The paper can now be downloaded as a pdf from Francis Gilbert's website (www.nottingham.ac.uk~plzfg). I should also say there were some other gems on insect evolutionary entomology published in the same proceedings (for example Mike Majerus's paper on "The Peppered moth: decline of a Darwinian disciple" which combines both science and wit in equal measure).

Rhingia rostrata on carrion in Nottinghamshire

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A single female of *Rhingia rostrata* (Linnaeus, 1758) was found on the Clifton Campus of the Nottingham University (SK547353), on 26 October 2009. The specimen, which was the first record of *R. rostrata* in Nottinghamshire, was netted from pig carrion in dense woodland on the campus which was placed for a Forensic Entomology project. Stubbs and Falk (1996) note that *R. rostrata* may be erratic in occurrence and possibly breeds in carrion. While no larvae were recovered from the carrion, the state of the carrion may offer a clue as to why the occurrences are erratic. The carrion was at the end of active Calliphorid feeding, but still had plenty of tissue on the bones (unlike in smaller carrion, such as rats in which Calliphorid feeding removes all tissue apart from the hide) and plenty of decomposition fluids had leached into the soil under the carrion which had become a nutrient rich soup, suggesting that *R. rostrata* may require at least medium sized carrion (the pigs were approximately 15kg when they were placed in the field) to breed in.

Finding Brachyopa hoverflies (Diptera Syrphidae) and some notes on behaviour

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I previously reported (Jones, 2008) that Roger Morris had provided helpful advice regarding finding *Brachyopa* (Morris, 2008), which helped me find *Brachyopa* at Attingham Park, near Shrewsbury. During 2009 I again put Roger's advice into practice - look at the base of sun-dappled trees at between 18 inches and 3 feet. This certainly proved to be sound advice. I found all four *Brachyopa* species during April and May 2009 and below I provide notes of all my finds. All records are from Shropshire unless otherwise noted.

21 April: *B pilosa* – several males flying about a dead, felled poplar (I subsequently learned that it had been felled three seasons previously) at Stanmore Park, Bridgnorth. This lends further credence to Roger Morris' proposition that cut stumps and log-piles of aspen are important for *B. pilosa.*

23 April – 16 June: *B pilosa* – on seven different days individuals were sighted landing on an oak tree, weeping copious sap, at Attingham Park, near Shrewsbury. Only on one occasion was a female seen. The flies were seen landing on the tree at various heights, to at least twenty feet.

1 May: At Stevenshill, Cound: Several *B. scutellaris* males resting on vegetation at the base of an ash tree and repeatedly rising to hover at four feet height for approximately 30 second periods, then returning to the leaves below. On one occasion a male rose, holding a female beneath it and hovered whilst apparently copulating. Also, a single *B. pilosa* was taken from the vicinity of ash trees.

7 May: Alongside the Borle Brooke near Highley, a single *B. bicolor* resting on an ash trunk. At Stanmore Park, Bridgnorth, four or five *B. pilosa* were present around the felled poplar I previously visited. The males frequently rested on nettles and other leaves close to the tree.

11 May: At Glynmorlas near Ifton, a single *B. scutellaris* hovering at the base of a sycamore.

12 May: Mary Knoll Valley, Mortimer Forest, Herefordshire – several *B. scutellaris* hovered about and landed on leaves close to the base of an ash.

23 May: Two *B. scutellaris* were seen at the base of ash and sycamore, and a *B. pilosa* at the base of an ash in Big Wood, Eaton Mascott.

28 May: Two *B. pilosa* males were still about the fallen poplar previously visited and a *B. insensilis* was taken from a sap run on sycamore.

On most occasions *Brachyopa* were found, as Roger indicated, at between 18 inches and 3 feet height. To refine this fieldcraft advice, I would add that invariably I found *Brachyopa* either going to sap runs at any height, or most frequently resting on, or hovering about leaves of plants growing right at the base of trees, and in the case of a prostrate poplar, on vegetation growing right alongside the felled tree. Sunlit conditions are particularly important, so searching for trees in sunlight, with plants at the base of such trees appears to be a very effective way to find *Brachyopa* species. Ash and sycamore are excellent trees to investigate. Finally, my experience indicates that May is the peak month for finding *Brachyopa*.

References

Jones, N., 2008. *Brachyopa* and *Ferdinandea* at Attingham Park, Shrewsbury. Hoverfly Newsletter 45: p. 6

Morris, R.K.A., A note on fieldcraft required to find *Brachyopa* (Diptera, Syrphidae). Hoverfly Newsletter 45: p. 4-5

Brachyopa pilosa (male) photos: Bob Kemp

A further observation of *Parhelophilus* patrolling trees

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In a previous edition of the Hoverfly Newsletter (Jones, 2007) I reported my observation of male *Parhelophilus versicolor* patrolling about leaves of alder trees at some distance from the nearest likely breeding station. In 2009 I again observed *Parhelophilus* males patrolling trees at about eight feet height. On this occasion the species concerned was *P. frutetorum*.

On the morning of 31 May 2009 I visited Mousecroft Community Woodland on the eastern outskirt of Shrewsbury (OS grid reference for the centre of the site: SJ473109). The site contains a large pool, fringed by quantities of emergent vegetation, surrounded by open grass margins, behind which are extensive plantings of native deciduous trees. Both *P. versicolor* and *P. frutetorum* were present on the site, with numerous *P. versicolor* flying about at ground level, amongst lush vegetation at some distance from the pool. These were in the company of very many *Anasimyia lineata* and *Rhingia campestris*, also flying amongst the lush vegetation and nectaring at various flowers. Towards the end of the morning I noticed a few *Parhelophilus* males (later identified as *P. frutetorum*) patrolling around leaves of hazel and oak at about eight feet height, in a very similar fashion to the *P. versicolor* I had previously observed patrolling trees in 2007.

The trees concerned were about 100 metres from the pool on site, which was the most likely breeding station. The trees were at the edge of the site, facing on to a wide ride, so were effectively a woodland edge feature. On walking along the edge of these trees it soon became apparent that there were good numbers of male *P. frutetorum* engaged in this patrolling activity – mostly at about six to eight feet height. After watching this activity for some minutes, I several times noticed single leaves occupied by a single male and a single female, with one of the individuals making a jerky wing-flipping action. This was presumably the male, but unfortunately I did not write down which sex in my notebook and I cannot now be certain which sex was involved. Coincidentally I also witnessed *Parhelophilus* nectaring at elder, a flower I rarely see Syrphids nectaring from.

My observations in 2007 and 2009 indicate that males and females of both *P. frutetorum* and *P. versicolor* utilise trees at considerable distance from breeding stations. This activity appears to be associated with mate-finding, accompanied by courtship taking place on leaves of trees at around eight feet height.

Reference

Jones, N., 2007. A Note on Patrolling Behaviour of Male *Parhelophilus versicolor*. Hoverfly Newsletter 43: p.8

A memorable spring – notes and observations from Shropshire for March-May 2009

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The largely dismal weather and general lack of flies that characterised much of 2009 left me with the memory that it had been a rotten year for my favoured prey – the Syrphids. However on looking back through my notebook, I was mightily surprised to find that parts of 2009 had actually been very good for hoverflies in my home patch of Shropshire and nearby areas. In particular the early part of the season provided many interesting records. Following are some notes for the spring.

The winter dragged on interminably, and when the sun finally broke through on 14 March, I dashed out to Lyth Hill, near Shrewsbury and got the new season off to a decent start with a record of *Melangyna lasiophthalma*, which I always think of as the hoverfly equivalent of swallows returning for the spring. With a swift return to the interminable winter weather there was little more in the way of interesting hoverfly action during the rest of March, save a couple more *M. lasiophthalma* at other locations.

April dawned with the gratifying sight of *Cheilosia grossa* in the grounds of Attingham Park on the 3rd. On the 2nd and 5th unusually early sightings of *Ferdinandea cuprea* were made in the Shrewsbury area. During the first week of April, *Epistrophe eligans* and *Cheilosia pagana* had also joined the fray, along with the usual overwintering suspects. Things were getting going. I tried to get out whenever sunshine beckoned (although work too often got in the way), but on a quick lunchtime foray, travelling back from a meeting on 7 April, I was amply rewarded for my efforts by five magnificent *Criorhina ranunculi* feasting on *Salix* flowers around an old quarry, below the Wrekin. This was more like ospreys returning than swallows!

Sunshine put in good appearances for much of April, and on 11 April, in the Habberley area, to the north of the Stiperstones, I took family and friends for what was billed as a walk, but was of course a grand hoverfly hunting expedition. I think the rest of the group pretty much guessed this within ten minutes or so, as I quickly got left behind, loitering about *Salix* trees, with their tempting displays of golden flowers, buzzing with hundreds of *Eristalis tenax*. In amongst the *Eristalis* hordes were a selection of early hoverfly species – a couple of *Criorhina ranunculi*, some *Parasyrphus punctulatus*, *Melangyna lasiophthalma* and a *Cheilosia albipila*. An added bonus this day was a *Tachina lurida*, sunbathing on the ground. This was a Tachinid-fly I had never previously encountered. The season was definitely well underway and over the next few days many more species were on the wing.

On another walk, north out of Shrewsbury, on 12 April, but this time with more impatient friends (there was a real ale pub to reach for lunch), I had to snap flies up and tube them almost without breaking pace, lest valuable drinking time should be lost. Near Astley, probably out of pity for my obvious frustration, one of my friends pointed out some small flies hovering at about eight to ten feet height, close to flower-laden blackthorn bushes. These turned out to be *Platycheirus ambiguus*, a new Syrphid for me, and behaving precisely as scripted in **British Hoverflies (Stubbs & Falk, 2002)**. Later in the walk there was more treasure, as we reached Grinshill Hill and encountered several *Cheilosia semifasciata*. This is a new site for this rare species.

Over the next few weeks, whilst blackthorn remained in flower, I took every opportunity to inspect around such trees for *Platycheirus ambiguus*, but only found them (in good numbers) at one location, near Cross Houses, to the south of Shrewsbury - 15 April, indicating that *P. ambiguus* is very local across wide areas.

On 13 April, by order of the "head of household" I was confined to gardening duties, but my reward for resisting the urge to break out, was a small *Cheilosia* which I had almost ignored on the assumption that it would probably be *Cheilosia pagana*, but on subsequent closer examination it was, very surprisingly, a *C. psilophthalma*, another new hoverfly species for me.

Throughout May I encountered unusually high numbers of hoverflies associated with woodlands. Firstly, on 1 May, in woodland at Stevenshill, Cound I notched up 32 species, including, *Brachyopa pilosa*, *B scutellaris*, three *Criorhina asilica* (one of which I twice saw nectaring on bluebell flowers), numerous *Criorhina berberina*, a *Chalcosyrphus eunotus* and a *Parasyrphus nigritarsis.* On 7 May, in bright sunshine, with two fellow enthusiasts, I visited woodlands in the

Highley area, for what turned out to be a spectacularly successful day hunting for hoverflies. During the day we encountered some forty-seven species (a personal day record), including *Brachyopa bicolor*, *Brachypalpoides lentus*, *Chalcosyrphus eunotus*, *Criorhina asilica*, *C berberina* and *Heringia heringi.* To put the icing on the cake we also saw three splendid *Conops vesicularis* and later in the day we found *Meligramma euchromum* at Stanmore Park, Bridgnorth. I thought that I must surely have exhausted my full season's allowance of hoverfly joy by now, but weeks later, on 23 May, there was more! I had the opportunity to survey Big Wood, Eaton Mascott (actually a small valley woodland). This is a woodland I had long coveted a visit to, but, having no public access, I had to be satisfied for many years with dreaming about what legendary beasts might lurk within its lush, verdant and damp confines. The site lived up to my fantasies, providing unbridled excitement and my first ever record for *Cheilosia chrysocoma*, a species I had craved to see for decades! There were also nine or ten *Criorhina asilica* flying low amongst lush vegetation, a few *C. berberina*, a *C. floccosa*, *Brachyopa pilosa and B scutellaris.* Further reward presented itself in the form of the large and splendidly colourful Tipulids *Ctenophora pectinicornis* and *Tanyptera atrata.*

During May I also discovered *Chalcosyrphus eunotus* in classic streamside situations in the Habberley Valley, near Pontesbury and in Mary Knoll Valley, Mortimer Forest, (Herefordshire). *C. eunotus* is now known from at least eleven locations in Shropshire, but it is seldom seen in numbers anywhere.

On the downside, the spring was noteworthy for the singular lack of *Syrphus* species, which at the time was alarming, but by late June and into July numbers recovered to more usual levels. An unexpected result of the lack of spring *Syrphus* was that I tended to capture any *Syrphus*-like hoverflies I saw, and many of these were in fact *Parasyrphus* – all of which appeared convincingly like small *Syrphus*. I recorded the scarce *Parasyrphus nigritarsis* twice, and five *P. annulatus* – a species I had only recorded once previously. This demonstrates the need to resist dismissing common looking species, but does give the dilemma of possibly having to collect large numbers of common species (when they are abundant), in order to find very similar, but apparently scarce, alternative species.

Brachypalpoides lentus photo: Bob Kemp

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Criorhina asilica (female) photo: Bob Kemp

Criorhina berberina photo: Bob Kemp

A further observation of *Sphegina sibirica* establishing in the Shropshire area

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Over the last few years I have collected the odd few *Sphegina sibirica* in each year, but during 2009 I encountered *S. sibirica* on six occasions, at four different sites. This indicates that *S. sibirica* is firmly establishing itself in the Shropshire area. It also appears to have a long flight season, between May and mid August, indicating that it is at least double brooded in England. My records of this hoverfly for 2009 are:

12 May, 2009, Overton Common, Herefordshire, SO798718

20 June, 2009, Sunny Hill, Clunton, Shropshire, SO3283

25 June, 2009, Eastridge Wood, Habberley, Shropshire, SJ3803

25 June, 2009, Maddox's Coppice, Habberley, Shropshire SJ386036

15 July, 2009, Stiperstones, Shropshire (collected Ian Cheeseborough), SO369984

18 August, 2009, Maddox's Coppice, Habberley, Shropshire, SJ3803

Book Reviews

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Nationalnyckeln till sveriges flora och fauna: Tvåvingar: Blomflugor – Vol 1: Syrphinae

Hans Bartsch, 2009, Artdatabanken, ISBN 978-91-88506-50-4 Price around £50 (clothbound edition).
(National keys to the Swedish flora and fauna: Diptera: Flowerflies – Vol 1: Syrphinae)
Text in Swedish with an English key and summaries.

Sumptuous and Diptera are not words associated with each other when describing entomological tomes, but this early volume, in the ambitious Swedish Taxonomy Initiative series, can rightly be described as sumptuous. Illustrated throughout in full colour and of coffee-table book dimensions, this is, for Dipterists, a treat of the kind normally reserved for Lepidopterists and Coleopterists. On first opening the book my eyes were agog at the magnificent paintings, around 6-7 times life-size, and one for every species! Then I alighted on the keys in full colour, which include many accurate colour paintings of some of the more difficult features that can be a struggle to recognise, particularly for beginners. As such, the keys are a huge improvement on the more usual line drawings that necessarily are the norm for Diptera keys. The team of six artists (photographers and painters) must be congratulated on the outstandingly high standard of the illustrations throughout.

The impressive level of production has been achieved probably because the Swedish Taxonomy Initiative, which aims to provide keys for ALL the Swedish multi cellular flora and fauna (an estimated 50,000 species), has been commissioned by the Swedish Parliament. Oh! If only such ambition could be matched in the UK. We must continue to be sustained via scraps of lottery and charitable trust funds combined with the unstinting efforts of unpaid authors, artists and collaborators.
This volume covers the Syrphinae, giving detailed accounts, in Swedish, of 292 species, including nearly all the known UK species. Only *Platycheirus melanopsis*, and two virtually non-existent British hoverflies - *Scaeva albomaculata* and *S mecogramma*, are missing. There are also, inevitably, a few nomenclatural differences to those we are used to in the British Isles. For instance *Melangyna cincta* is promoted to its own genus – *Fagisyrphus*, whilst *Meligramma euchromum* is *Epistrophella*.

The really positive news for UK entomologists is that the keys are in both Swedish and English, and there is also a summary of key facts for each species in English. The species accounts in Swedish average around a page per species, this includes the large illustration (around 60mm length), inset amongst the text, and for reference a

life size illustration as well. The accounts obviously cover much ground and presumably there is much interesting information contained within, but my limited ability to read Swedish means I cannot provide much insight. In each account, there is a useful etymological explanation of the scientific name, contained in a section headed *name-giving*.

In addition to the species accounts, there are introductory sections, well illustrated with colour photographs, covering life histories, and habitat preferences. There is an extremely well produced section on morphology, where most features are illustrated in full colour with the accurate paintings that are a hallmark of this volume. Apart from the key facts, all of the foregoing is in Swedish. If the Dipterists Forum has any spare funds looking for a home, then a translation of this text might be a very worthwhile exercise.

The key utilises the now tried and tested "Aidgap" format, having illustrations placed within the couplets. The inclusion of many full colour paintings makes the keys very easy to use. English text is provided down the right hand side of the page, with the Swedish on the left. Incidentally, this is a helpful arrangement for anyone who wishes to try and translate text elsewhere in the book, as it is reasonably easy to figure out the meaning and nuance of many Swedish words by comparing with the equivalent English text in the language-mirrored couplets.

Notably, the key includes a cautionary key to female *Sphaerophoria*. This is provided with a caveat that some females will fail to run to species, but encourages users to put such specimens aside and return to them later, when more practice has been gained. Unfortunately I rarely keep female *Sphaerophoria* vouchers, so I have not felt able to test this part of the key. Interestingly, where the recent Finnish volume on Syrphidae (Haarto & Kerppola, 2007) contained a key to females in the *Platycheirus scutatus/splendidus/aurolateralis* complex, Bartsch considers females to be inseparable, so perhaps we should be suspect in the use of Haarto & Kerppola's key for these females?

Bartsch has created "vernacular" names for all species, and out of interest I translated a few to English. The genus *Platycheirus* are foot-flowerflies, and *P. albimanus* is the silver-foot flowerfly, *Chrysotoxum elegans* is the splendid wasp-hoverfly, *Eupeodes corollae* is the curious flowerfly, *Scaeva pyrastri* is the white glass-flowerfly and *Syrphus ribesii* is the yellow sun-flowerfly.

The book is rounded off with a series of sixteen plates, displaying all the species at two and a half times life size, facilitating quick and easy visual comparison across the various genera.

Overall, the key is the element of this book that UK workers will find most useful and will undoubtedly provide an essential resource for anyone tackling difficult to separate species. The very well executed line drawings and large colour illustrations make this an extremely useful resource for identifying British Syrphinae. The price of about £50 (probably around £100 for two volumes) is a little off-putting, but rest assured, for hoverfly enthusiasts, hours of enjoyment will be had by simply leafing through the pages, drinking in the marvellous artwork and photos. This is truly an outstanding "five-star" work. All Syrphid enthusiasts will want to own this book and those that don't will certainly covet it!

As I write this review I eagerly await the arrival of Volume 2 (my Christmas gift from my family), which deals with the rest of the Syrphidae in the Eristalinae and Microdintinae – another 240 species. I look forward greatly to seeing how complex genera such as *Cheilosia* and *Pipiza* are dealt with.

Reference
A. Haarto & S. Kerppola, 2007, *Finnish Hoverflies and Some Species in Adjacent Countries*.

Nationalnyckeln till sveriges flora och fauna: Tvåvingar: Blomflugor – Vol 2: Eristalinae & Microdontinae

Hans Bartsch, 2009, Artdatabanken, ISBN 978-91-88506-70-2 Price around £50 (clothbound edition). (National keys to the Swedish flora and fauna: Diptera: Flowerflies – Vol 2: Eristalinae & Microdontinae)

A week after I completed the review of Volume 1, the second volume arrived in the post, so here is a hasty review of the second volume.

The second part of this impressive work is even more of a visual feast than the first, as it contains many of the more spectacular looking hoverflies.

The first of the species accounts deals with *Callicera*, where the paintings admirably convey the lustrous beauty of flies in this genus. Elsewhere there are mouth watering representations of unfamiliar genera such as *Sphiximorpha* (even the name sounds exotic), *Spilomyia* and *Temnostoma*, as well as more familiar genera such as *Criorhina*, *Xylota* and *Chalcosyrphus.* Unlike the first volume and perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the largely amorphous looking genus *Cheilosia* occurs here, not all species are illustrated. This in no way diminishes the value of the book as a visual guide to hoverflies, as all the species displaying significant differentiating characters are illustrated. It is amongst the *Cheilosia* that the only disappointing art work is found. I feel that the illustrations of the orange haired species, such as *C. chrysocoma*, *C. grossa* and *C. bergenstammi* do not quite capture the bright vibrancy of these flies in the manner that Steven Falk did with his paintings for *British Hoverflies* (Stubbs & Falk 1983). However this is the most minor of quibbles and the paintings of these species are still a helpful representation of the flies in life.

Apart from the artwork, the excellent photographic work of Krister Hall really shines through with the wonderful subjects, varying much in form and colours, which this volume covers. I am really struck by Hall's achievement in obtaining first class photos, in life, of several uncommon species. These include *Blera fallax, Hammerschmidtia ferruginea*, *Microdon* (adult, larva and pupa), and *Chalcosyrphus valgus*. Elsewhere there are excellent photos of commoner species and I particularly admired photos of *Eumerus flavitarsis* (showing its white hind tarsi to splendid effect) and a really clear and attractive capture of *Sphegina sibirica*.

The keys will be the element of this book that most British Syrphid workers will find valuable. Most of the British species are again represented, but there are some notable absentees from the Scandinavian fauna, including for example *Eristalis horticola* and *Chalcosyrphus eunotus.* I have not had time to fully compare the two checklists, but on a pre-emptory scan through, there are few omissions. There are of course many non-British species and this work may well prove valuable in alerting British workers to potential new UK species. There are good illustrations of genitalia for *Sphegina*, *Eristalis* and three *Pipiza* species – *austriaca, fenestrata* and *lugubris*. These should make a useful additional aid for separating what can be difficult species complexes. I was particularly interested in seeing how Bartsch would treat the large genus *Cheilosia*, as this is a genus I always relish collecting and I usually enjoy the challenge of running specimens down to species. Bartsch adopts the now familiar approach of lumping species carrying similar features into groups, before further dividing them down to species level.

Bartsch's groups are based on different characters to those we are used to in Stubbs & Falk and there are just four groups:

A. Bare eyed *Cheilosia*

B. Hairy-faced *Cheilosia*

C. *Cheilosia* with only thin hairs around the rim of the scutellum

D. *Cheilosia* with both thin hairs and bristles around the rim of the scutellum

In amongst the detailed key, I noted the regular use of a new character - not referred to in British *Cheilosia* keys - the pattern of "hair spots" on the katepisternum. I'll be interested to see how well this key works when I start determining new specimens in 2010. The high quality illustrations within the keys should again prove to be an invaluable determination aid.

I can only repeat my advice given for the first volume that this is a work that all Syrphid enthusiasts will wish to own. It will be coveted for its magnificent presentation and will often be a first point of reference when confronted by critical species.

In conclusion, and by way of entertainment, here are a few more translations (courtesy of Google's translating tool) of the vernacular names awarded to some hoverflies: *Cheilosia illustrata* – spotted herb-flowerfly, *Cheilosia semifasciata* – bold leaf-hoverfly, *Ferdinandea cuprea* – gold sap-flowerfly, *Chrysogaster solstitialis* – sorrow (mourning?) flowerfly, *Volucella pellucens* – window flowerfly and *Rhingia* are beak-flowerflies.

Reference: Stubbs, A., & Falk, S., 1983, *British Hoverflies*

Interesting Recent Records

Peter Follett:

Chrysotoxum verralli 2 females 16 July 2009, Holmwood
Didea fasciata 1 male 31 July 2009, Holmwood; 1 female 20 September 2009, Beare Green; 1 female 21 September 2009 Holmwood; 1 male 8 October 2009, Holmwood.
Epistrophe melanostoma 1 female 13 June 2009 Holmwood.
Scaeva selenitica 1 female 11 August 2009, 1 male 15 August 2009, both Beare Green.
Cheilosia albipila 1 female 1 April 2009 Capel.
Cheilosia caerulescens 1 female 7 July 2009 Beare Green.
Cheilosia fraterna 3 males 26 April 2009 Oakwoodhill.
Cheilosia soror 1 female 20 July 2009, 2 females, 25 July 2009, 3 females 31 July 2009, all Holmwood.
Rhingia rostrata 1 female 14 August 2009 Holmwood.
Brachyopa bicolor 1 male 6 May 2009 Holmwood
Myolepta dubia 1 male 22 July 2009 Holmwood.
Pipizella virens 1 female 22 July 2009 Holmwood.
Volucella inanis 2 males 22 July, 1 male 14 August 2009 both Holmwood.
Eupeodes bucculatus 1 female on 22 August 2009 Capel Surrey

Leon Truscott:

Chrysotoxum elegans Penlee Battery and Penlee Point, near Rame Head (SX44), eight records between 5th June and 5th July, plus another on 21 September 2009.
Criorhina berberina Keveral Wood, Seaton (SX2955), two on 12 May 2009.
Criorhina ranunculi Two records, both in June. One at Seaton (SX3054) on 2nd and one at Penlee Battery (SX4349) on 5 June 2009.
Leucozona lucorum A second-brood specimen at Penlee Battery on 2 August 2009.
Microdon myrmicae One in the Seaton Valley (SX3055) on 29 May 2009. A new site.
Sericomyia lappona Most Cornish records come from the moors, with a few, such as the following from damp woodlands. One found at Keveral Wood on 12 May 2009: not a new site, but this is the first record from there for several years.
Xanthogramma citrofasciatum Recorded at Penlee Battery on 26 May 2009 - the fifth consecutive year at this site.

David Iliff:

Dasysyrphus friuliensis 1 female 13 May 2009 Storrs Hall, Cumbria (SD391941)
Brachyopa scutellaris 1 female 14 May 2009 Storrs Hall, Cumbria (SD391941)
Meligramma guttatum 1 female 16 August 2009 Lower Mill**,** Gloucestershire (SU026944)

Dasysyrphus friuliensis (female) photo: David Iliff

Meligramma guttatum (female) photo: David Iliff

Erratum: The final word of the first sentence of the article on *Myolepta potens* on page 2 of **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 47** should read "Gloucester" (not "Gloucestershire")