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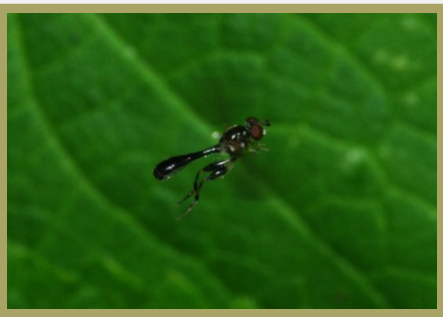

This newsletter went to press shortly before the start of the 6th International Symposium on the Syrphidae, scheduled to take place in Glasgow from 5-8 August 2011. A review of this very important event will appear in the next newsletter.

Most readers will no doubt first see this newsletters, as with other issues, when it arrives by post attached to the twice-yearly Dipterists Forum Bulletin. In that copy any colour images will appear in black and white. However the newsletter should be available sometime later as a pdf., with full colour, on the Forum's website, and in due course it will be available along with previous issues on the Hoverfly Recording Scheme website. If any readers wish to receive this newsletter in the colour pdf. version as an email attachment, would they please let me know.

Articles and illustrations (including colour images) for the next newsletter are always welcome. Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 52** (which is expected to be issued with the Spring 2012 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 November 2011.

The hoverfly illustrated at the top right of this page is *Sphegina clunipes*.

Hoverfly Recording Scheme Update - Summer 2011

Stuart Ball
255 Eastfield Road, Peterborough, PE1 4BH, stuart.ball@dsl.pipex.com
Roger Morris
7 Vine Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 1QE,
roger.morris@dsl.pipex.com

This has been one of the busiest years we can remember and 2011 promises to be a bumper year for the scheme. By the end of the year there should be a considerable number of new hoverfly products on the bookshelves and available electronically. They include a new Provisional Atlas, the long-awaited Status Review and of course the WILDGuide to *Britain's Hoverflies*. In addition, the first major conference on the Syrphidae in Britain will have taken place in Glasgow in early August. At the time this note was written there were 58 confirmed bookings for the symposium and it is anticipated that the final total will ultimately reach 80 hoverfly enthusiasts from across the world.

We have taken just over 100 advanced bookings for the WILDGuide and are very grateful for this. It is likely to be a very good deal for those who have done so because the RRP of the guide is likely to be a fair bit more than we had expected. Unfortunately, the price the publishers get from on-line bookshops is so poor that they would not have covered costs at the price we advertised. A final RRP has yet to be announced, but it will probably have to be in excess of £20 so the advance purchase price of £14+ £2p&p looks pretty good.

Much of the last year has been taken up by the WILDGuide. We are extremely pleased with the way the book looks and are certain that it will represent an important advance. It has been designed to be a companion to Stubbs and Falk as well as to provide an introduction that can be used by the relative novice. In addition to a huge number of excellent photographs of live flies, we spent a significant part of the winter photographing critical features so that species accounts could be populated with taxonomically relevant illustrations. We had hoped that the book would be printed in time for the 6th International Symposium on the Syrphidae in Glasgow (5-8 August 2011) but in the end the job proved too much for us and there has been slippage. We now think that it will be out sometime in the autumn - probably November.

The atlas will be printed by the end of July but the print run will be short as we just don't have the money to print a large number. We will provide copies to those recorders who have provided significant numbers of records (set at 75 or more records in the past ten years which suggests contributors who are actively recording hoverflies). The Biological Records Centre at Wallingford has kindly

agreed to include this atlas in their series, thus giving it an ISSN; and they will deal with the mailout to contributors. This is an immense relief to us as we are finding it difficult to raise the funds we need to support this project. We hope that the atlas will be available as a pdf on the HRS website but this possibility has still to be resolved.

The hoverfly atlas will form part of the delegates' pack for the Glasgow symposium. This is because we approached the country conservation agencies and the major societies for support for this as part of the Glasgow symposium package. Dipterists Forum, BENHS, Glasgow Natural History Society and the Malloch Society have all provided financial help. Regrettably, none of the Country Agencies could support what might be regarded as a good example of 'the big society' in action; nor were any of the largely professional societies such as the RES willing to support the symposium; several failed to even answer our letter. This is very disappointing given that hoverflies have a high profile in conservation management initiatives and as pollinators; which is a matter of widespread ecological concern. It is one of the key reasons behind our difficulties funding the atlas.

The atlas has led to a significant jump in the number of records on the Recording Scheme database. The atlas we produced in 2000 drew upon 375,000 records and was remarkable for its time. This new atlas is based on 720,000 records on the HRS database and has access to another 25,000 records on the NBN already. This increase includes 210,000 records since the year 2000. The data show a variety of important trends, and highlight just how many hoverflies have undergone significant declines over the past 25 years or more. If the same criteria as used for birds were applied to hoverflies, over 30% of the British fauna would have to be listed as a Biodiversity Action Plan species. The other major trend that is emerging is the loss of recorders who have the confidence and competence to tackle difficult taxa. Recording using photography is also taking over from traditional collection of specimens and this means that some of the trends are likely to have been significantly influenced by recorder effort. Part of this shift has happened because we have actively harvested data from websites. These recorders have not sought to submit records but have generated substantial blocks of data that are useful to the scheme.

We can make allowances for changing recorder trends provided the core of records come from established and competent recorders. At the moment just ten recorders have contributed 35% of the records on the database and 50% of the data have been supplied by a pool of 21 recorders. the remainder has been supplied by around 1400 recorders over the entire span of records. Our bigger problem lies in validating records and this is becoming increasingly problematic as we see more and more records generated without reference to keys and microscopy, or by lack of comparison with vouchers that would have shown what the keys actually meant.

One episode earlier this year is illustrative. This involved a specimen that was posted on one of the continental websites proposing two identities within different groups of *Cheilosia* - one in the *variabilis* group and the other in the *bergenstammi* group (using the definitions in Van Veen rather than Stubbs & Falk). This combination alone suggests that critical characters had not been taken into account and the authors were wildly stabbing at identifications. Continental observers confirmed the record within the *bergenstammi* group but Roger was not convinced. In the end, advice from Martin Speight to Roger put this species into the *grossa* group. It highlighted the need to interpret keys carefully as the specimen had vague but detectable dark marks on the hind tibiae, but the final identity made sense. Two weeks later, Roger took a specimen that bore similar features and recognised it immediately!

This episode generated a further lesson. Roger entered into correspondence with the recorder who posted the photograph and gave subsequent advice on a small dark species that might (or might not) have been a *Pipizella*. Several e-mails later had the recorder suggesting, variously, 'something close to *Triglyphus primus*', *Pipiza luteitarsis* and finally *Pipizella maculipennis* on the basis that they thought they could detect black hairs on the hypopygium - RM could not see them! The fore tarsi were only partially yellow and so *P. luteitarsis* should never have been suggested! The choice of *Pipizella maculipennis* suggested that the author had not bothered to think about what could be seen and what needed microscopic identification. Further investigation revealed that they were using those keys by Van Veen that were available on the internet and were often running to non British species as options! This experience highlights the need to follow a sequence of rational thinking that should be used to get to a correct identification:

- To which Tribe does the specimen belong? If this cannot be determined with confidence then the photo can be taken no further.
- Can the specimen be taken to genus? If not it cannot be given a name.
- At the generic level, are the features described in the key properly exposed? If so can the species be tentatively ascribed to a species? If not it should be taken no further.
- Once a specific identification has been determined, check the species account and decide whether this is a viable option. Remember that the safest rule of thumb is that specimens will normally run to a common species. If your identification immediately runs to the rarest species in the genus or to something that only occurs in another part of the country exercise concern and re-check your determination.
- If there are good grounds for a particular determination get the photo checked. If at this stage a recognised 'expert' agrees then you have

a possible identification, but if there is doubt a certain identity cannot be ascribed.

This process of thinking shows how important it is to develop a sensible approach to training new hoverfly recorders. We are hard at work developing our programme for winter 2011-2012 and have been greatly heartened by a grant from OPAL (Open Air Laboratories) to buy microscopes for use at venues that don't have access to this equipment. We ran courses at a wide variety of venues in 2010-2011, including Lerwick (Shetland), Glasgow, Preston Montford, the Natural History Museum, Ring Haw (Northamptonshire), Priory Country Park (Bedfordshire) and Whisby Nature Reserve (Lincolnshire). This next year we are hoping to expand our activities to a wider range of venues. We still have space in the itinerary and would welcome new venues. The advice we give to potential organisers is as follows:

We usually do a weekend course – timing generally to suit the venue. Our programme is focussed on indoors during the winter because we find that a field session just breaks up the time too much so our programme looks a bit along the lines of:

Morning 1

- Introductory talk - the Syrphidae (lasts about 2 hours)
- Coffee
- Talked-through run through the key to Tribes - this usually takes up the final bit of the morning.

Lunch

Afternoon 1

- Pupils work through specimens - taking a wide number through the key to tribes (duration depends upon ability of the group)
- Variable - may do a talked through run at keys to species (dependent upon ability of the group).

Morning 2

- Talked through run at keys to species /Pupils run specimens to species
- Session stops at various points to explain features e.g. wing venation
- Talk on preparing specimens etc

Afternoon 2

- Talk on 'finding hoverflies'
- Further specimen ID
- Talk on the Recording scheme etc.

The programme tends to be a bit fluid to take account of abilities and the need to give people a break from microscopy. We bring all ID materials etc. plus as many copies of Stubbs & Falk as possible - pupils should bring their own if they have them.

Costs etc - we charge for:

Fuel	This will depend on the distance travelled - work on 50 mpg @ £6.40 per gallon.
Overnight accommodation (two nights if more than 80 miles from Peterborough.	Work on £50 per night for a twin room + £30 per day for subsistence = £160
Cost of course handouts - a new version of the key to tribes in colour + a package of additional information - this charge will allow DF to reprint the handouts when the current supply runs out.	£6 per set per person - with a class of 12 (max) this would be £72

Field work

The demands on our time this year mean that neither of us have had much time for active field work. We had planned to go to Speyside to investigate *Microdon analis* and the scathophagid *Gonarthrus planiceps*. What is more, we had a grant from the BENHS to do this. Unfortunately, a combination of inclement weather in Scotland when we planned to go, together with prudence as we were behind schedule on the production of the atlas and WILDGguide meant that we had to cancel our plans.

We have occasionally made forays to local sites and on one of these Roger caught a specimen of a very orange-looking fly that he assumed would turn out to be *Didea fasciata*. When he examined it under the microscope he recognised it to be similar to the *Syrphus admirandus* that we had found in the Rowardennan collection in 2008. Subsequent investigations confirmed that this was the correct identity, so for yet another year the British hoverfly list has advanced. It creeps inexorably towards the 300 species mark. A detailed description will appear in Dipterists Digest.

Thinking ahead

Once we have the major jobs out of the way, we must think about how we might maintain the momentum of the Recording Scheme. The period immediately prior to the publication of the provisional atlas in 2000 and the four years that followed was a period of relative inactivity and the level of recorder effort declined substantially. We don't want this to happen this time around and we need to find ways of encouraging greater recorder effort. Part of this will be helped when we get the mapping package on the website back up and running - this is a high priority.

The first job we have scheduled is to update **British Hoverflies** (Stubbs & Falk, 2002). Hopefully a new addition will be available next spring or early summer. It is urgently needed because stocks are low and many booksellers are registering it as out of print.

Thinking further ahead, the preparation of the updated atlas has stimulated us to ask questions about the distribution and occurrence of some species. We are thinking about running meetings specifically geared at finding some species. For example, *Platycheirus melanopsis* and *Melanostoma dubium* were known from localities in the Lake District but have not been reported in recent years. A weekend meeting to climb some of the higher peaks might be a good way of getting the more active members of Dipterists Forum involved in the search for these species. Another thought is to organise a weekend in North Wales with similar objectives in mind. We also wonder whether the limestone pavements of North Yorkshire are sheltering *Paragus constrictus*? A trip to these special sites might be highly instructive. Anybody who might be interested in this should let Roger know.

Other options might include an initiative to develop long-term monitoring with the HRS equivalent of a "bioblitz". What we have in mind is to nominate two weekends in May and June and get HRS members to make a serious effort to record hovers from a chosen site, a cross between a "bioblitz" and the RSPB's "Big Garden Birdwatch". We will work on details this autumn and will put a more detailed proposal into the next issue of the Newsletter. However, expressions of interest would be really helpful - please let Roger know.

And, finally, what about a revised atlas in 2020? This would allow us to get a much clearer picture of changes in hoverfly abundance and would give sufficient time for our proposed monitoring project to generate useful data.

Astonishing discoveries of *Callicera rufa* in England

Nigel Jones
22 Oak Street, Shrewsbury, SY3 7RQ.
nipajones@tiscali.co.uk

Callicera rufa has long been known as an enigmatic and rare hoverfly, confined in the UK to Scottish ancient pine woods and older plantations. During May 2011 *C. rufa* was found at three sites in England, much to the astonishment of those making the finds!

On 7 May Keith Fowler photographed what he initially thought was a bee sitting on a tree trunk, near the Wrekin Hill in Shropshire. On closer inspection of the photograph, Keith realized the subject was in fact a fly and he suspected that it was *Callicera* species. Keith sent the photo to me and I confirmed that the image certainly showed a *Callicera*, but I could not say what species was involved. Keith revisited the site and managed to capture a specimen, which with a deal of assistance from Roger Morris and Martin Speight, we confirmed as a male *Callicera rufa*.

Fired by this astonishing discovery, Keith and I visited the site again on 12 May, where we witnessed three male *C. rufa* resting on the sunlit trunks and branches of two hilltop pines, from where they sallied out to other flies passing by, usually returning to the same trunk or branch. The next day Bob Kemp made a visit to the site and witnessed a male and female mating, plus a second male. Accordingly at least four *C.rufa* can be accounted for at this site. *C. rufa* adults were still present at the site on 27 June when Keith Fowler returned to check the site out.

At the Wrekin location, *C. rufa* appeared to be engaged in hill-top lekking activity. The males and female utilising fairly exposed trees near the top of a sharp hill. I was aware of similarly located pine trees on Haughmond Hill, near Shrewsbury, so I paid a visit to these on 19 May. To my utter amazement I saw three males on pine trunks, flying out to passing insects as seen at the Wrekin. Incidentally, I also saw and managed to photograph a *Ferdinandea ruficornis*, resting on a sycamore trunk, so this was a very satisfying trip!

Next, on 25 May, Stuart Roberts (of BWARS fame) emailed me to let me know that his colleague, Deepa Senapathi, had captured a lone *C. rufa* female at Byslip Wood in Bedfordshire. Here the woodland was recently cleared plantation, not at all the type of locality one would expect to encounter the species in.

Clearly, *C. rufa* must be established in English coniferous plantation woodlands and it is entirely plausible that the species could be present in many other woodlands. The purpose of this note is to alert dipterists to the distinct possibility of finding *C. rufa* adults by searching on sunlit pine (and other trees) trunks, particularly where such trees are close to hill top slopes. Interestingly though, the Bedfordshire specimen was found in an open area on low lying, level ground, so the general message is be alert for *C. rufa* whenever in coniferous woodlands. Should other dipterists encounter *C. rufa* in England and Wales I would be most interested in receiving records.

Callicera rufa pines, Wrekin (photo: Nigel Jones)

Callicera rufa lekking tree, Haughmond Hill (photo: Nigel Jones)

Availability of information on the Syrphidae of France

Martin C.D.Speight
49 Mount Eagle View, Leopardstown Heights, Dublin 18, Ireland
speightm@gmail.com

In a piece entitled "A review of extra and potential extra hoverflies", in the Spring 2011 Hoverfly Newsletter, Alan Stubbs remarked that “The big gap in modern published works on the fauna of NW Europe is NW France”. Two sources of information available to Newsletter readers, interested in discovering what is known of the syrphid fauna of NW France, are the StN Database and the SYRFID website. The former maintains lists for most European countries (there are still some without national lists, like Austria, the Ukraine etc) including France, together with lists for parts of some countries, including France. The StN list for NW France is based on the combined lists for the 26 Départements occupying roughly that part of France North of a line from the estuary of the R.Loire, to Dunkerque (with a bit of a deviation southwards, in the middle, to include the Paris basin). Départements are the French equivalent of British counties. So the StN concept of NW France is rather broad and takes in maybe 10% of the surface area of France. That means its area would be rather less than a quarter that of Great Britain (GB). The latest version of the StN database (Speight et al, 2010) includes a list of 258 species for NW

France, about the same number of species as are known from GB. 52 syrphids for which published records from GB are as yet lacking are known from this part of France (see Table 1).

Since it is neither an administrative region nor natural biogeographic entity, "NW France" can mean very different things to different people. For those who might wish to make up their own syrphid list for NW France, based on a different concept of how much of France it covers, the website SYRFID offers as many alternative possibilities as there are Départements – and there are approximately 100 Départements. SYRFID provides annually up-dated syrphid lists for each Department. Like the entries in StN, the SYRFID species lists are all based on published records, and the publications on which the records are based are all given.

If you decided that, as far as you are concerned, the Region of Brittany represents NW France, you can download from SYRFID the species lists for the 4 Départements (Côtes-d'Armor, Finistère, Morbihan, Ille-et Vilaine) which make up the region of Brittany (the lists are downloadable in Excel format), put them together and, voilà, there's your species list for NW France. Inevitably, the coverage of different French Départements is quite varied. There are a few for which published records are available for less than 10 species, while, at the opposite extreme, more than 300 species are known from Haute-Savoie. That is getting on for two thirds of the French syrphid fauna (the French syrphid list is now c. 530 species). The SYRFID list compiled from the 4 Départements of Brittany would currently comprise 157 species, 20 of which are not recorded from GB (see Table 1).

British syrphidologists curious to know which species might be lurking just the other side of the Straits of Dover could well conclude that, whatever occurs in Brittany, the species occurring around Calais might be more relevant. There are 6 Départements (Calvados, Manche, Nord, Pas de Calais, Seine Maritime, Somme) along the N coast of France, between Dunkerque and Cherbourg. For these Départements SYRFID records 194 species, 26 of which are not known from GB (see Table 1.

Another facility provided by SYRFID is maps of the French distribution of each species, at Department level. *Eumerus sogdianus*, for instance, a species whose occurrence in Great Britain would seem almost inevitable sooner or later, is shown by SYRFID to occur in 21 Départements, five of which are within NW France sensu lato, 3 of them within Brittany. Similarly, SYRFID shows that *Milesia crabroniformis* has been found in 32 Départements, 6 of them in NW France s.l., 3 of which are in Brittany.

Syrphid species known from NW France but not from GB		
NW France s.l.	Brittany	N France coast
Arctophila bombiforme (Fallen, 1810)	1	1
Brachypalpus valgus (Panzer, 1798)	1	
Callicera fagesii Guerin-Meneville, 1844		
Callicera macquarti Rondani, 1844		
Ceriana conopsoides (L., 1758)		1
Chalcosyrphus femoratus (L., 1758)	1	1
Chalcosyrphus piger (Fabricius, 1794)	1	
Chalcosyrphus valgus (Gmelin, 1790)	1	
Cheilosia canicularis (Panzer, 1801)		
Cheilosia chloris (Meigen, 1822)		1
Cheilosia lenis Becker, 1894		1
Chrysogaster rondanii Maibach & Goeldlin, 1995		1
Eumerus amoenus Loew, 1848		
Eumerus hungaricus Szilady, 1940		
Eumerus pulchellus Loew, 1848		
Eumerus ruficornis Meigen, 1822		1
Eumerus sogdianus Stackelberg, 1952	1	1
Eumerus tricolor (Fabricius, 1798)		1
Mallota fuciformis (Fabricius, 1794)	1	1
Melanogaster nuda (Macquart, 1829)	1	1
Meligramma cingulata (Egger, 1860)		
Merodon albifrons Meigen, 1822		
Merodon avidus (Rossi, 1790)	1	1
Merodon natans (Fabricius, 1794)		
Merodon trochantericus Costa, 1884	1	1

Microdon major Andries, 1912		
Milesia crabroniformis (Fabricius, 1775)	1	
Myolepta obscura Becher, 1882	1	
Myolepta vara (Panzer, 1798)		
Neoascia annexa (Muller, 1776)		1
Orthonevra elegans (Meigen, 1822)		
Orthonevra frontalis (Loew, 1843)		
Paragus bicolor (Fabricius, 1794)	1	1
Paragus constrictus Simic, 1986		1
Paragus finitimus Goeldlin, 1971		
Paragus flammeus Goeldlin, 1971		1
Paragus pecchiolii Rondani, 1857	1	1
Paragus quadrifasciatus Meigen, 1822	1	
Pipiza festiva Meigen, 1822	1	
Pipiza quadrimaculata (Panzer, 1804)		1
Pipizella annulata (Macquart, 1829)	1	
Psarus abdominalis (Fabricius, 1794)		
Scaeva dignota (Rondani, 1857)	1	
Sphiximorpha subsessilis (Illiger in Rossi, 1807)		1
Spilomyia diophthalma (L., 1758)		
Spilomyia manicata (Rondani, 1865)	1	1
Temnostoma bombylans (Fabricius, 1805)		1
Temnostoma vespiforme (L., 1758)		1
Tropidia fasciata Meigen, 1822	1	1
Xanthogramma dives (Rondani, 1857)		1
Xylota ignava (Panzer, 1798)		1
Xylota meigeniana Stackelberg,1964		

Table 1: syrphid species known to occur in Northen France but not known from Great Britain (GB).
NW France, s.l. = the Départements of Aisne, Calvados, Côtes-d'Armor (Côtes-du Nord), Essonne, Eure, Eure et Loir, Finistère, Hauts de Seine, Ille-et Vilaine, Manche, Marne, Mayenne, Morbihan, Nord, Oise (Seine et Oise), Orne, Pas de Calais, Sarthe, Seine et Marne, Seine Maritime, Seine St Denis, Somme, Val d'Oise, Val de Marne, Ville de Paris, Yvelines.
Brittany = the Départements of Côtes-d'Armor, Finistère, Morbihan, Ille et Vilaine.
N France coast = the Départements of Calvados, Manche, Nord, Pas de Calais, Seine Maritime, Somme.
1 = species present.

You would have to ignore the biology of the species listed in Table 1 to suggest that they are all equally likely or unlikely to turn up in GB. I don't think there are major habitat types present in NW France that are absent from GB, so reasons for the absence from GB of syrphids occurring in NW France presumably would have to be sought elsewhere, for instance in microhabitat requirements, or traits of the species. SYRFID doesn't provide biological information about the species. But, for the species it covers, the StN database does. The database spreadsheets now provide digitised information for more than 700 of Europe's syrphids, including all of the species known from NW France, *sensu lato* (as defined above). But there are still 11 species on the general French list that are not covered, most of them Mediterranean zone species in the genera *Eumerus* and *Merodon*. Using the microhabitats spreadsheet from the StN database I took a quick look at the larval microhabitat requirements of the syrphids known from NW France, in comparison with the subset of that fauna not known in GB. The result is shown in Table 2.

Larval microhabitat	**Species known from NW France s.l.**	
	All spp.	Non-GB spp.
Foliage	21%	8%
Overmature trees	20%	**35%**
Trunk cavities	10%	18%
Rot-holes	12%	**24%**
Insect workings	5%	6%

Sap runs/lesions	10%	16%
Mature trees	21%	10%
Understorey trees	17%	6%
Shrubs/bushes/saplings	21%	6%
Lianas	3%	0%
Herb-layer plants	37%	39%
On herb-layer plants	20%	16%
In herb-layer plants	19%	24%
in leaves/stems	5%	4%
in bulbs	7%	**18%**
Ground surface debris	8%	2%
Timber	8%	12%
Nests of social insects	4%	4%
Water plants	9%	2%
Submerged sediment	16%	10%
Water-sodden ground	16%	14%

Table 2: Proportional representation of species associated with different larval microhabitats, among the syrphids of NW France and the subset of NW French species not known from GB, in both cases expressed as a percentage of the number of species in the list. Note: the percentages in each column do not add up to 100% because the microhabitat categories are not completely exclusive i.e. the larva of a species found feeding on aphids on understorey trees might also occur on shrubs and/or tall herbs.
NW France s.l. = as in Table 1.

Among the syrphids not known in GB there is a distinctly higher percentage of species associated with overmature trees, especially with rot-holes and also a higher percentage with larvae living within the tissues of herbaceous plants, particularly bulbs. Conversely, the percentage of species associated with nearly every other microhabitat category is lower than in the list of all species known from NW France. This suggests that, in these two lists, there is a difference in the proportional representation of species in the different trophic groups. Using the StN Traits spreadsheet I compared the lists for this trait. Table 3 shows the result.

Larval trophic group	**Species known in NW France s.l.**	
	All spp.	Non-GB spp.
Herbivores	18%	20%
Predators	**42%**	26%
Microphages	47%	**67%**
saproxylics	22%	35%

Table 3: Proportional representation of species in different larval trophic groups, among the syrphids of NW France and the subset of NW French species not known from GB, in both cases expressed as a percentage of the number of species in the list.
NW France s.l. = as in Table 1.

There is a much higher representation of species with microphagous larvae among the syrphids not found in GB, than among the species known from NW France in general. Contrastingly, there is a much higher proportion of species with predatory larvae in the general list. Given that there is no preponderance of species with aquatic/subaquatic larvae (see Table 2) among the NW French species not found in GB, it can be concluded that this high representation of microphages among the apparently absent species relates primarily to the absence of saproxylic species, also highlighted by Table 3. While these numbers prove nothing, they do suggest that the general scarcity of over-mature tree microhabitats in GB may well be inhibiting the establishment of potentially available saproxylic syrphids. Similarly, perhaps a less diverse flora of indigenous bulbiferous herbs is retarding establishment of potentially available syrphids with plant-feeding larvae? Or is it that syrphids with aphid-feeding larvae are more willing to fly out over extensive tracts of water that act as effective barriers to the long distance movement of species with different larval feeding habits? Inevitably there are more questions than answers, but it is

intriguing to see that the part of the syrphid fauna of NW France that is absent from GB contains a disproportionally high percentage of species whose larvae are associated with rot-holes, sap runs or bulbs.

The SYRFID website can be accessed at syrfid.ensat.fr. Anyone wishing to receive the StN database can do so by contacting me at speightm@gmail.com. The database is provided free of charge, on signing of a simple software agreement.

References

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Photographing *Pocota personata*

Paul D Brock
2 Greenways Road, Brockenhurst, SO42 7RN
pauldbrock@btinternet.com

The fine weather is producing early sightings of many species in the New Forest, Hampshire. The 26and 27 April 2011 have been particularly good in Denny Wood, where I photographed practically all the bee mimic and 'goat moth' tree specialist hoverflies found in this area in spring; even better though on 5 May 2011.

I had been warned by dipterists about the speed and elusiveness of *Pocota personata*, but along with John Walters, had the pleasure of observing at least five males at Denny Wood, New Forest on 26 April and returned on 27 April to observe more specimens. Whilst they often perch on a rot-hole margin high up, at times one flies in sunshine around an old beech trunk, settling for several seconds once it picks a spot on bark or moss. With careful movement, a series of images can be obtained low down on the trunk, or at head height, even getting as close as 3 cm if necessary. Weather appears to dictate activity; strong sun brought one out at 3.30pm on 27April and they were particularly active between 12.00am to 1.00pm on the 26th. Along with Steven Falk and Therasa Paul, we were lucky enough to observe and photograph a mating pair on an old beech trunk on 5 May, at 10.30am; c. 3 other specimens were also seen, including another likely female. George Else and others have been recording in Denny Wood and have also seen several in the vicinity around this time, including males visiting hawthorn flowers in the afternoon.

There are five plates showing a selection of hoverfly species in my book 'A photographic guide to Insects of the New Forest and surrounding area' (published May 2011, Pisces Publications). Many photographs in the Diptera section on pp. 254-279 are by Steven Falk.

Pocota personata mating pair (Photo: Paul Brock)

Hoverflies visiting damp ground

Roger Morris
7 Vine Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 1QE,
roger.morris@dsl.pipex.com

The exceptionally hot spring meant that on many days hoverflies were very difficult to find. However, on 20 April 2011 I discovered a remarkable spot in Wothorpe Woods near Stamford where a slightly damp area on the main track created an excellent lure for hoverflies. As the afternoon sun settled on this spot it became alive with flies, and there were numerous hoverflies an attendance. I patrolled a 10 metre section for about an hour until the sunlight had gone and gained a huge haul of flies; amongst which were several *Heringia pubescens*, 5 *Brachyopa scutellaris*, 10 *Parasyrphus punctulatus* and one *Dasysyrphus venustus* (agg.).

I returned to the same spot the following day and recorded an even more interesting haul that comprised *Brachyopa scutellaris*, *Cheilosia psilopthalma*, *Cheilosia vulpina*, *Dasysyrphus venustus* (agg), *Heringia pubescens, Parasyrphus punctulatus* and *Pipiza luteitarsis*.

I cannot see quite what made this patch so attractive. Clearly some sort of seepage was keeping the soil moist (at the top of a hill) but the limestone soil was just noticeably moist rather than wet. I have never previously noted this phenomenon but it seems to bear similarities to the stories of collectors in the tropics urinating on bare ground to attract butterflies. Perhaps the flies sought minerals, but I rather suspect that it had been so hot that moisture was what was sought. An experimental approach is needed.

New records of *Epistrophe diaphana* in the East Midlands

Brian Wetton
27,Appledore Avenue, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 2RL brianpat.wetton@virginmedia.com

On 3 June 2011 I visited Gamston Wood in north Nottinghamshire. My primary purpose was to photograph Greater Butterfly Orchids and Herb Paris which grow in this mixed ancient woodland owned by the Nottinghamshire Trust for Nature Conservation. Always keeping an eye open for interesting hoverflies (and finding them scarce this year), I caught a syrphid expecting it to be of the *Syrphus* genus. I quickly realised that it was not. On closer inspection and with the benefit of the keys in **British Hoverflies**, it proved to be a male *Epistrophe diaphana*, a species I had not encountered before, and one not previously recorded in Nottinghamshire. In a year when hoverflies were proving to be thin on the ground it gave me quite a thrill. Imagine my further surprise when I caught a second specimen on 8 June along a hedgerow at Long Eaton New Workings in south-east Derbyshire. It was again a male. To the best of my knowledge it is also a new species for Derbyshire. On 14 June yet a third male was discovered at Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water. I am unaware if this constitutes a new record for Leicestershire and Rutland, but it is the first I have found at this site in over 20 visits going back to 1993. I am intrigued to know if anyone else has been recording *Epistrophe diaphana* outside its normal range. Is this another species that has been expanding its range northwards?

References:

Brian Wetton. "Hoverflies (Syrphidae) of Nottinghamshire", Sorby Record No. 39, 2003

Derek Whiteley. "Hoverflies of Sheffield and North Derbyshire", Sorby Record No, 6, 1987.

Epistrophe diaphana male (photo: David Iliff)

Interesting records from the Shropshire area – Spring 2011

Nigel Jones
22 Oak Street, Shrewsbury, SY3 7RQ.
nipajones@tiscali.co.uk

2011 has proved to be a very disappointing year for Syrphids, with numbers of individuals flying being as low as I can ever remember. It has been hard work finding many species, but I have managed to garner a few interesting records, in a Shropshire context at least.

Platycheirus discimanus (Loew) has eluded me for decades, but finally on 24 March, in woodland near Cound, I came across several individuals flying about Salix flowers. This is a first vice county record for this tiny species. At the same site, on the same day, I also caught a single *Melangyna quadrimaculata* (Verrall). My first record of this hoverfly for decades.

Another member of the genus *Melangyna*, *M. arctica* (Zetterstedt), has also proved elusive, so it was very pleasing to find one at EastridgeWood, near Minsterley on 20 April.

In contrast to recent years, when *Brachyopa* species have proved tolerably frequent, I have this year only encountered a single *Brachyopa pilosa* (Collin), on alder leaves beside the River Teme at Ludlow, on 21 April.

A single *Epistrophe nitidicollis* (Meigen) was taken at Whixall Moss on 4 May.

Callicera rufa (Schummel). Two totally unexpected discoveries! See the separate item in this newsletter.

I was pleased to find *Chalcoyrphus eunotus* (Loew) at a new site at Fishpool Valley, Croft, Herefordshire on 12 May, whilst it was also confirmed as still present at Loamhole Dingle, Coalbrookdale on 17 May.

An obliging *Ferdinandea ruficornis* (Fabricius) allowed me to snap a photo of it at Haughmond Hill, near Shrewsbury on 18 May.

There are only two Shropshire records (both from malaise traps) for the scarce *Brachypalpus laphriformis* (Fallén), so a specimen that took the trouble to introduce itself to me at Bucknell Wood, on 31 May, by landing on my sandwich box as I ate lunch, was much appreciated. When I returned home from this trip I discovered that a small pipizine in my catch was the rarely recorded *Heringia verrucula* (Collin).

Trichopsomyia flavitarsis (Meigen) has been rarely recorded in Shropshire, but whilst surveying wet flushes on the upland slopes of the Long Mynd on 3 June, I took two individuals from two locations on the hill. Later, on 14 June, I took another specimen from woodland near Cound.

An impromptu visit to my favourite woodland near Cound on 9 June was well rewarded by the sight of at least five *Volucella inflata* (Fabricius) flying to hogweed flowers. This is only the second county record for this impressive fly.

I had not seen *Platycheirus fulviventris* (Macquart) in Shropshire for some twenty years, so it was gratifying to find single specimens about pond fringes at Kenley on 14 June and Alveley on 24 June.

Finally, a robust, orange-yellow fly, caught as it flew by, at Severn Valley Country Park, Alveley, on 24 June, proved to be *Epistrophe diaphana* (Zetterstedt).

Volucella inflata female (photo: Nigel Jones)

Recent records from Cornwall

Ken Preston-Mafham
Premaphotos Wildlife
Tel:44 (0)1208 78258
enquiries@premaphotos.com

On 16 May I found a single male *Brachypalpus laphriformis* perched on a fallen tree on the edge of quite a large area of woodland along the river Fowey south of Lostwithiel. There are only two previous records for Cornwall, and this is much further west than previously.

On 4 May I found *Brachypalpoides lentus* in 3 new hectads in the Camelford area. One of these was a mating pair, the first I have ever seen, and displaying the red band most spectacularly as the wings were partly parted. Interestingly enough, not far away was a mating pair of *Xylota segnis*, also the first I have ever seen, despite seeing this species constantly through the summer. Was there something special about the weather conditions that day that made it "just right" for mating in these species? Also seen nearby was a pristine *Volucella bombylans*, 12 days earlier than the previous earliest record of 16 May on at our Cornish database.

Other Interesting Recent Records

Richard Billingsley reports the finding of a dead female *Volucella zonaria* at Smethwick (SP007875) on 6 July 2011 by Jen Williets, a local beekeeper, in her garden

Arle Grove (SO9921) is an ancient wood near Cheltenham that became a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Reserve in 2009. Since the reserve opened, hoverfly species recorded here have included *Brachyopa scutellaris*, *Criorhina asilica*, *Criorhina berberina*, *Melangyna lasiophthalma*, *Pipizella maculipennis*, *Rhingia rostrata*, *Xanthogramma citrofasciatum*, and *Xylota tarda*. The *X. ctirofasciatum* was recorded by John Phillips, other species by David Iliff.

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