

Identifying soldierflies and allies: soldierflies in genus *Sargus*

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

Version 1 at 9 February 2020

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

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

Other photographers included in this guide are David Gould, Ian Andrews, Janet Graham, Martin Harvey, Richard Dickson and Tim Hodge.

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

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

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

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

Records wanted!

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

The Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme is part of Dipterists Forum



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



Recognising the genus: *Sargus*

Genus *Sargus* contains four fairly large species, all of which have metallic body colours. All share a similar shape, with long, slim abdomens that are longer than the length of the head and thorax combined. There are no spines on the scutellum, which distinguishes them from genus *Chorisops*, which is also fairly long and slim but has obvious spines on the scutellum.

Identification can be tricky due to differences between the sexes, and because leg colours can vary quite a lot. Size (length) can help pick out *S. bipunctatus* (12–13mm) from the other three species (6–10.5mm).

Two of the species, *S. cuprarius* and *S. iridatus*, are very hard to distinguish for certain without dissecting specimens. As far as we know, *S. cuprarius* is very rare, while *S. iridatus* is widespread, but more specimens are needed to confirm the status of these species.

All four species can be found in mid-summer, but *S. bipunctatus* starts later than the others (from July) and can be found right the way through to November.

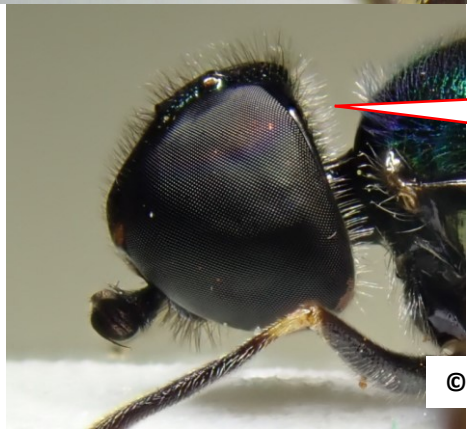
All of this genus have larvae that develop in rotting matter, including cow-pats and compost heaps, and probably also use other sources of decaying organic matter.

Both males and females have eyes that are separated on the top of the head – male eyes are a little closer together than female eyes, but males are often mistakenly identified as females, which can cause problems.



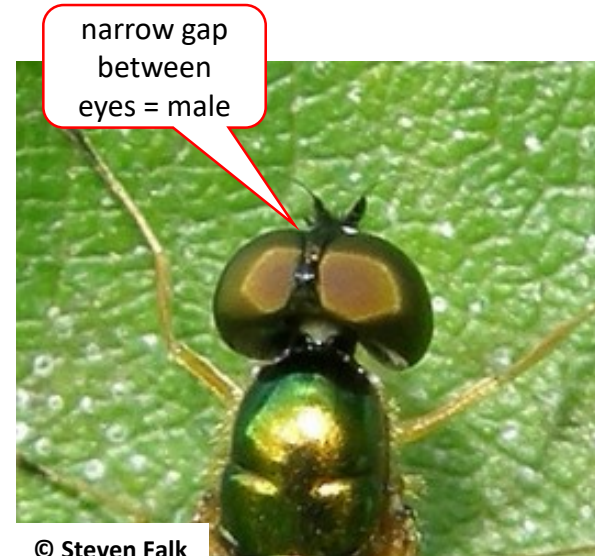
© Steven Falk

long hairs behind eyes **do not** extend to top part of head = *S. bipunctatus* and *S. flavipes*



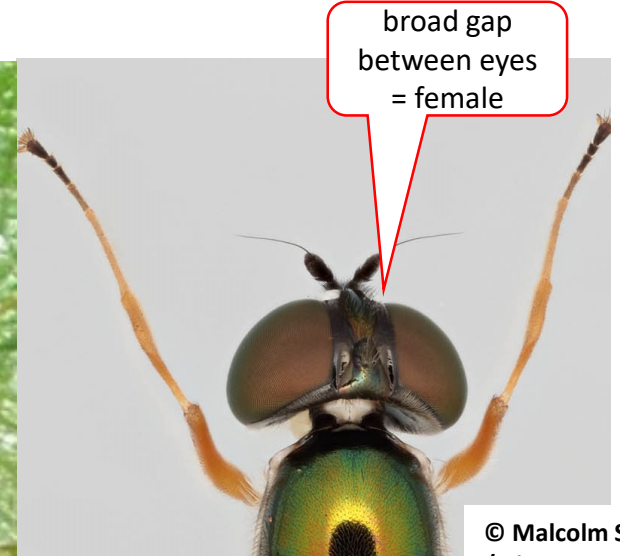
© Martin Harvey

long hairs behind eyes **do** extend to top part of head = *S. cuprarius* and *S. iridatus*



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narrow gap between eyes = male



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broad gap between eyes = female

All species of *Sargus* have a pair of white spots on the face. These are usually most obvious in *S. bipunctatus*, and are usually more distinct in females than males, but all species have them to some degree – presence of two white spots does **NOT** confirm *S. bipunctatus*!

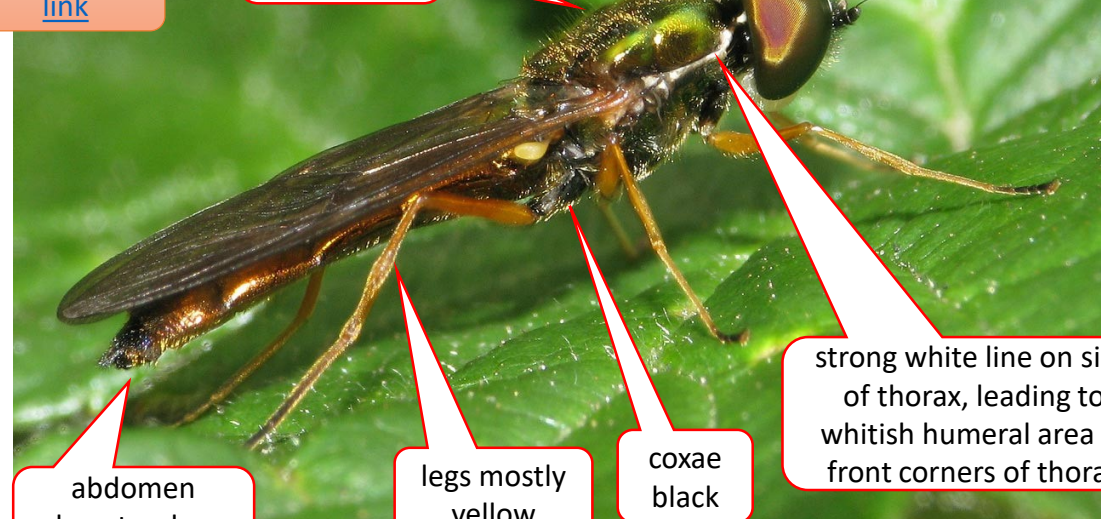


S. bipunctatus female © Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

[NatureSpot link](#)

yellow hairs over whole of thorax

S. bipunctatus is longer (12–13mm) than other *Sargus* species



abdomen almost as long as wings

legs mostly yellow

coxae black

strong white line on side of thorax, leading to whitish humeral area at front corners of thorax

hairs on lower face mostly pale



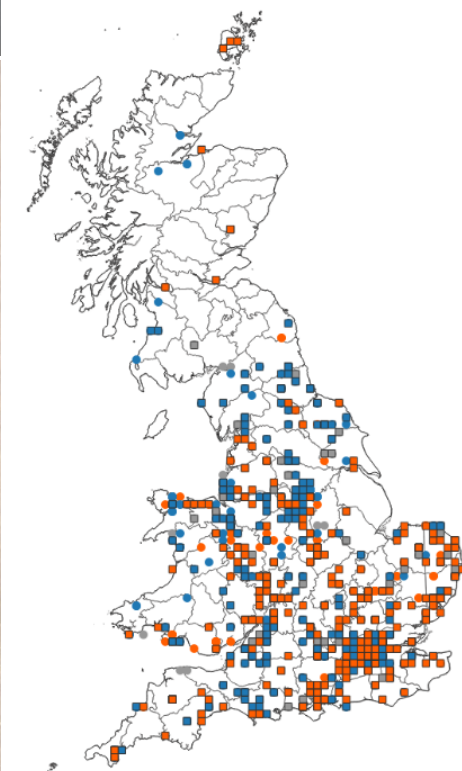
- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: early Jul to Nov, peak in Sep
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread in lowland Britain
- wood margins, hedgerows, gardens, cattle-grazed fields
- No. of records: 1015 • % since 2000: 45%

***Sargus bipunctatus* (Twin-spot Centurion) – MALE**

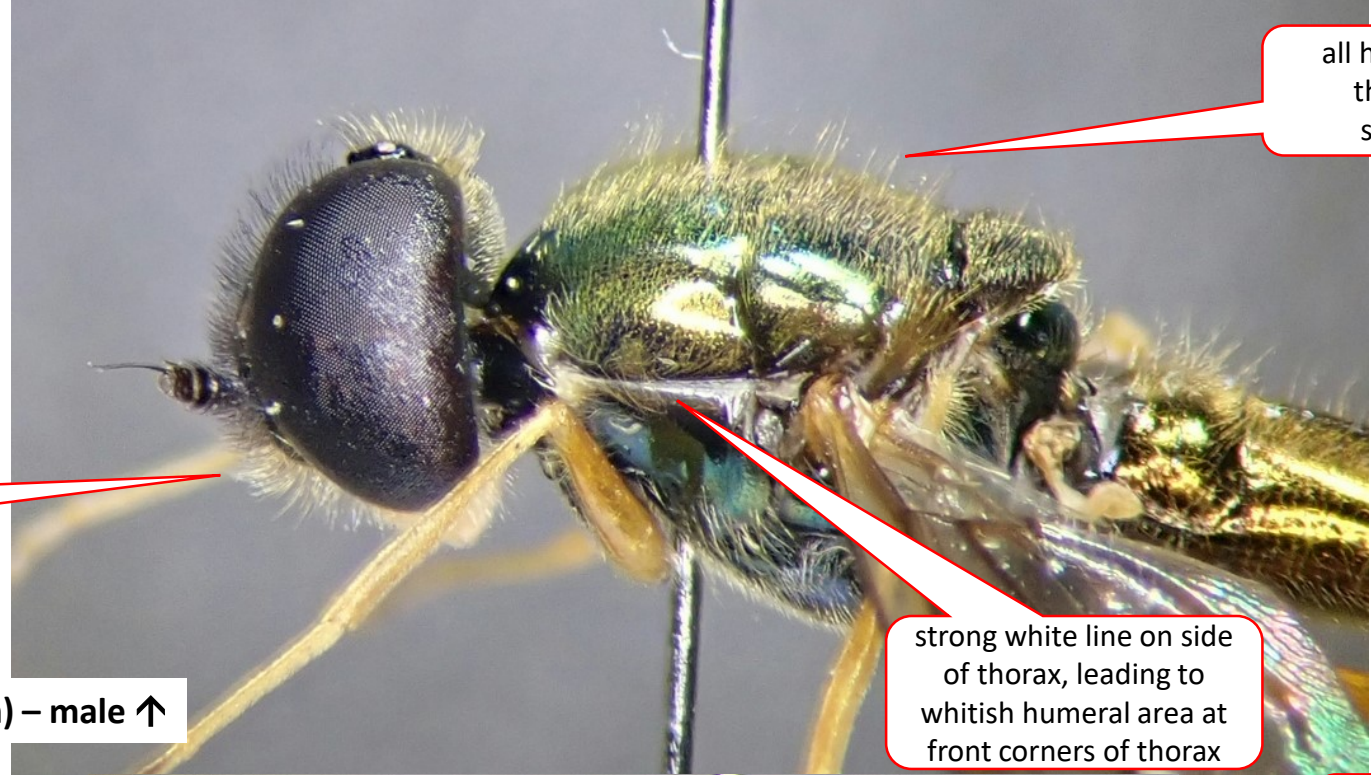


S. flavipes is similar – see the [comparison page](#)

[Steven Falk link](#)



- *S. bipunctatus* is longer (12–13mm) than other *Sargus* species
- It has legs that are orange or yellow



all hairs pale on thorax and scutellum

hairs on lower face mostly pale

abdomen almost as long as wings

strong white line on side of thorax, leading to whitish humeral area at front corners of thorax

***Sargus bipunctatus* (Twin-spot Centurion) – male ↑**

***Sargus flavipes* (Yellow-legged Centurion) – male ↓**

- *S. flavipes* is shorter (7–9mm) than *S. bipunctatus*
- Its legs are often, but not always!, darker than *S. bipunctatus*



some dark hairs on top-centre of thorax and scutellum

abdomen distinctly shorter than wings

hairs on lower face mostly dark

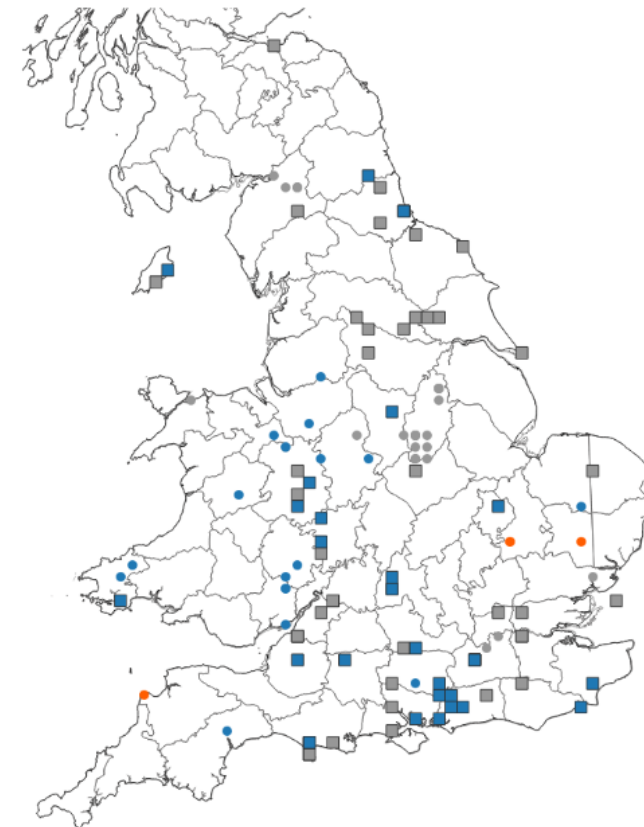
very narrow whitish line on side of thorax

I have been unable to find any photo of a confirmed male *Sargus cuprarius* – if you have one please [get in touch!](#)

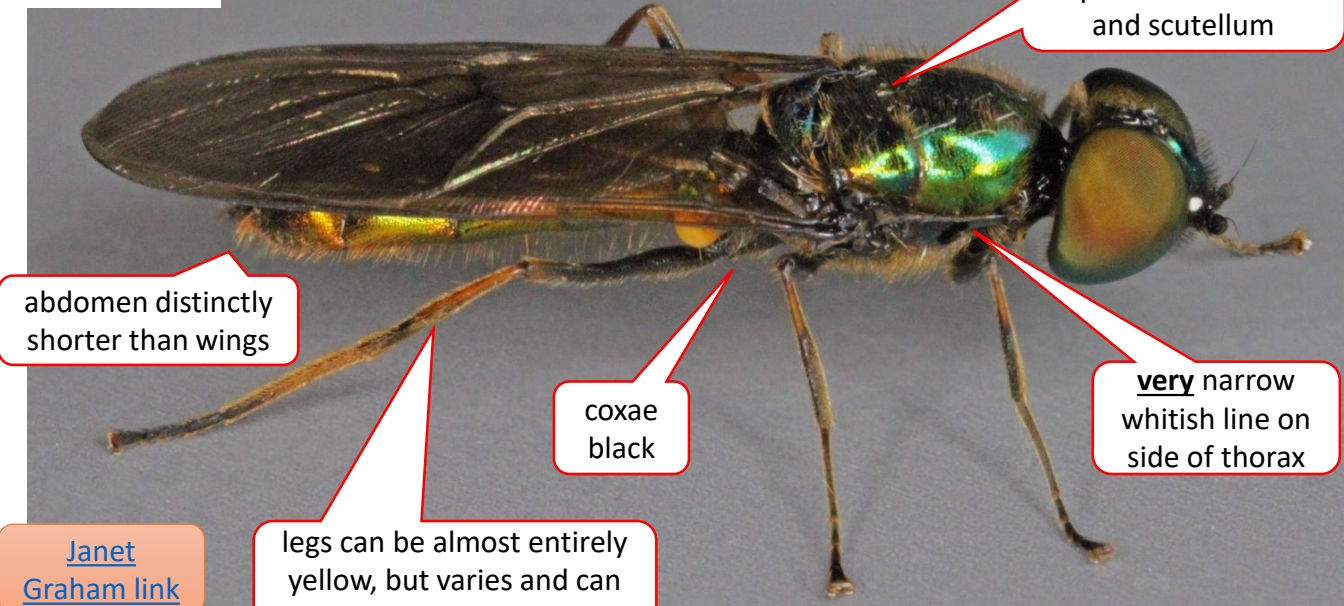
Very similar to *S. iridatus* and require dissection to confirm. May have a stronger dark wing patch than *S. iridatus*, but this distinction is not reliable.

***Sargus cuprarius* (Clouded Centurion) – MALE**

- ID difficulty: 4
- Flight period: early Jun to late Sep
- GB threat: Data Deficient • GB rarity: Nationally Rare
- Apparently widespread but few fully confirmed records
- grazing levels
- No. of records: 85 • % since 2000: 0%



© Janet Graham



some dark hairs on top-centre of thorax and scutellum

abdomen distinctly shorter than wings

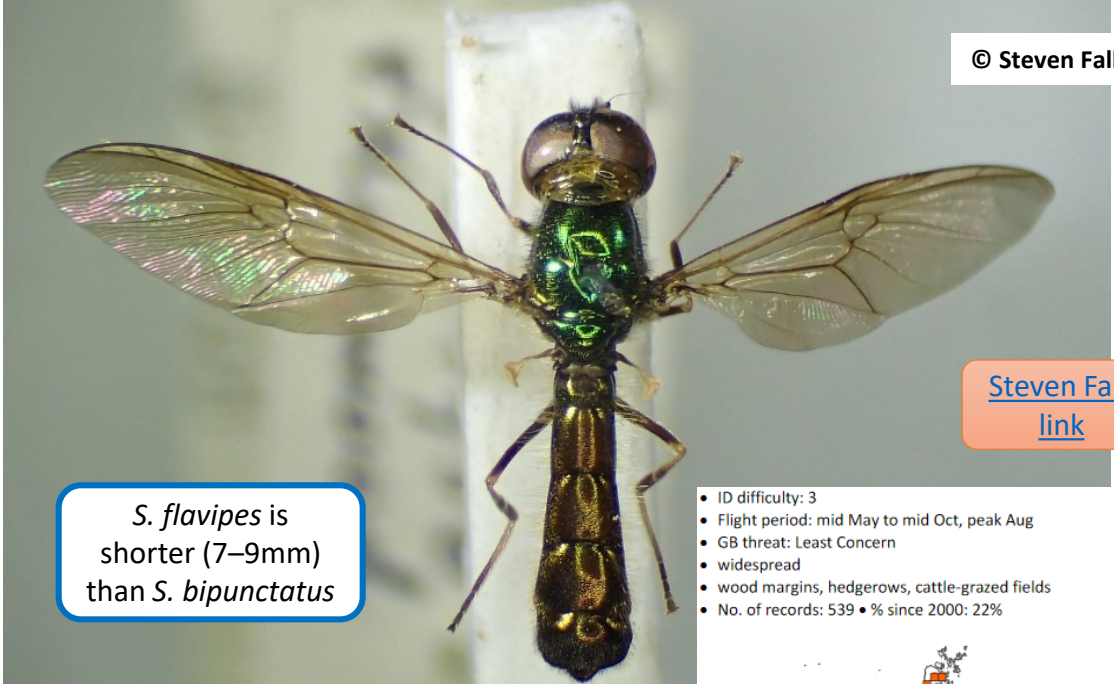
coxae black

very narrow whitish line on side of thorax

legs can be almost entirely yellow, but varies and can be extensively darkened

[Janet Graham link](#)

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S. flavipes is shorter (7–9mm) than *S. bipunctatus*

[Steven Falk link](#)

- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: mid May to mid Oct, peak Aug
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- wood margins, hedgerows, cattle-grazed fields
- No. of records: 539 • % since 2000: 22%

Sargus flavipes (Yellow-legged Centurion) – MALE

S. bipunctatus is similar – see the [comparison page](#)



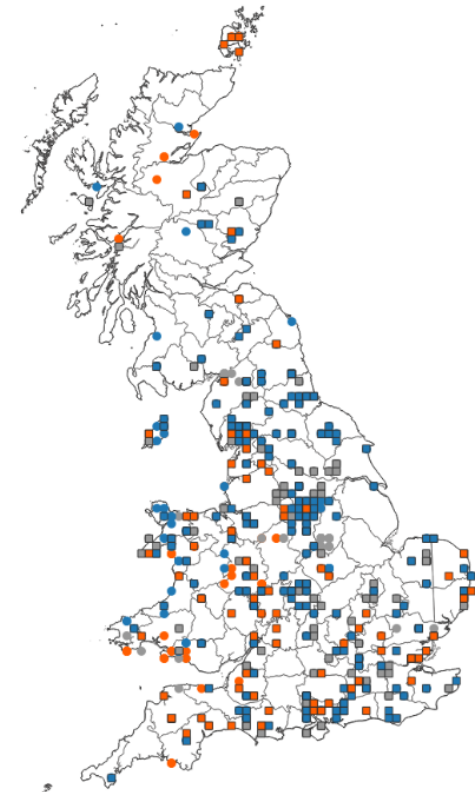
[iRecord link](#)

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hairs on lower face mostly dark

© Martin Harvey



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aedeagus tapering and pointed at tip

© Steven Falk

[Steven Falk link](#)

Very similar to *S. cuprarius* and ideally requires dissection to confirm, although since *S. iridatus* is much more widespread it is very likely that you will see this rather than *S. cuprarius*. Specimens with heavily marked wings should be retained for checking where possible.

wing with faint dark cloud in centre (not a reliable ID feature)

long hairs behind eyes do extend to top part of head

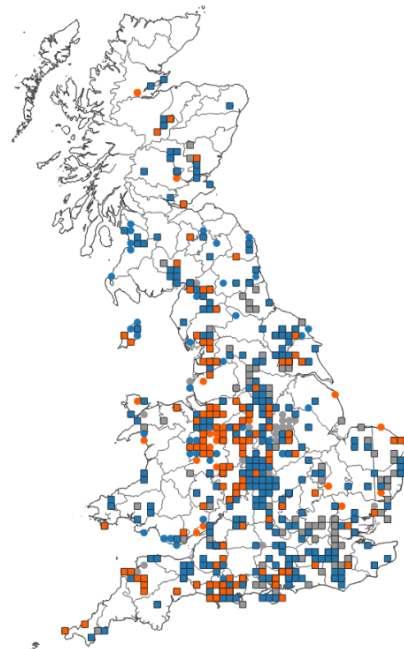
***Sargus iridatus* (Iridescent Centurion) – MALE**

- ID difficulty: 4
- Flight period: May to mid Sep, peak in mid Jun to mid Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread in lowland Britain
- wood margins, hedgerows, cattle-grazed fields
- No. of records: 964 • % since 2000: 22%

legs mostly dark

© Martin Harvey

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strong white line on side of thorax, with whitish humeral area at front corners of thorax

orange coxae (only found in female *S. bipunctatus*)

femora and tibia yellow-orange

abdomen almost as long as wings

orange on tergites 1 and 2 (only found in female *S. bipunctatus*, but can be hard to see when wings closed)

***Sargus bipunctatus* (Twin-spot Centurion) – FEMALE**

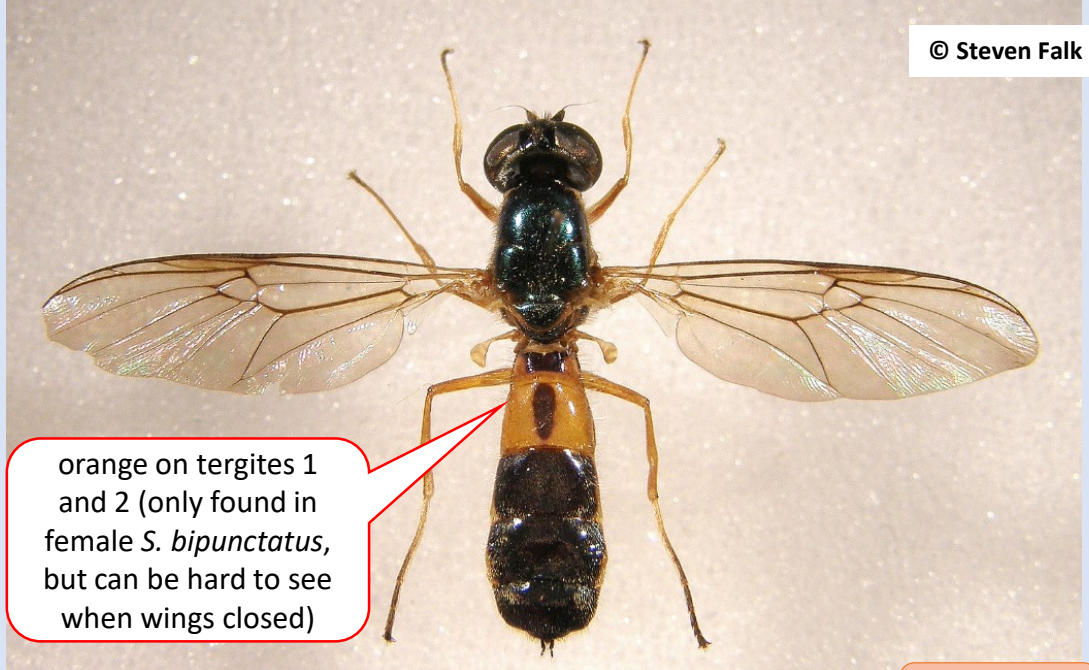
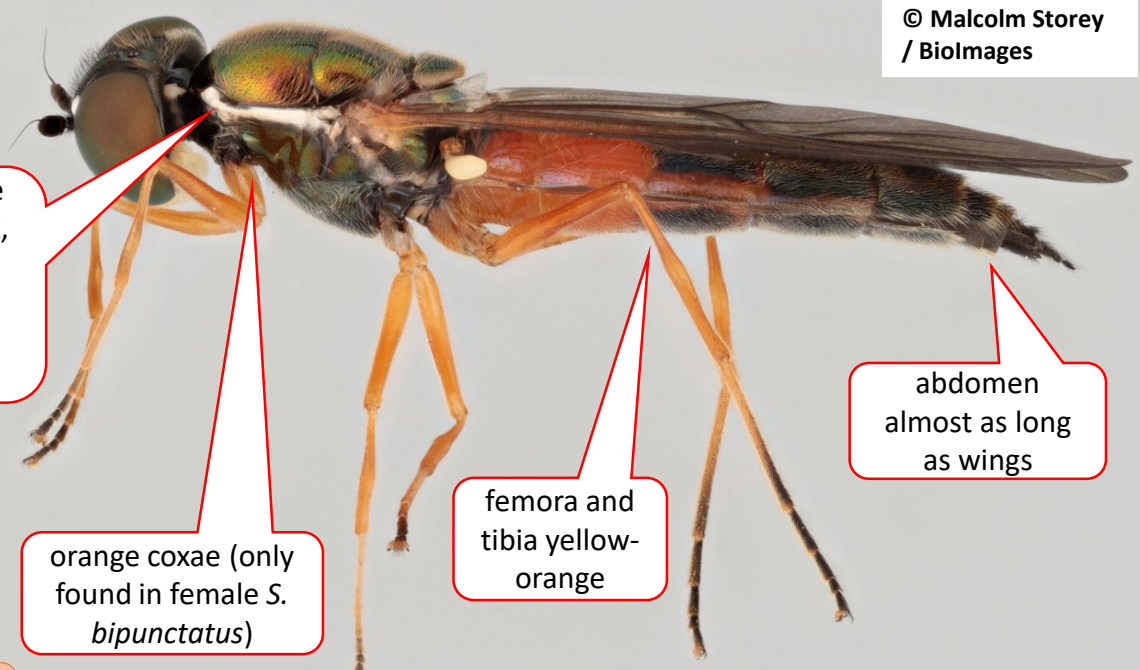
[Biolimages link](#)

[Steven Falk link](#)

S. bipunctatus is longer (12–13mm) than other *Sargus* species

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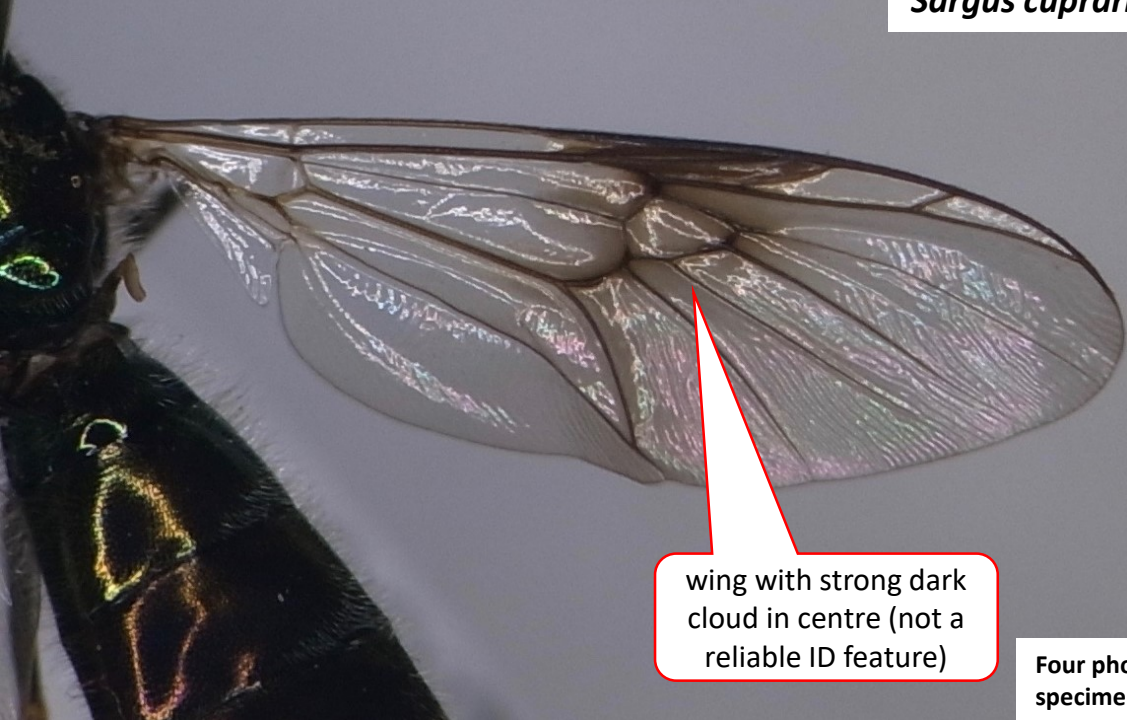


legs mostly dark

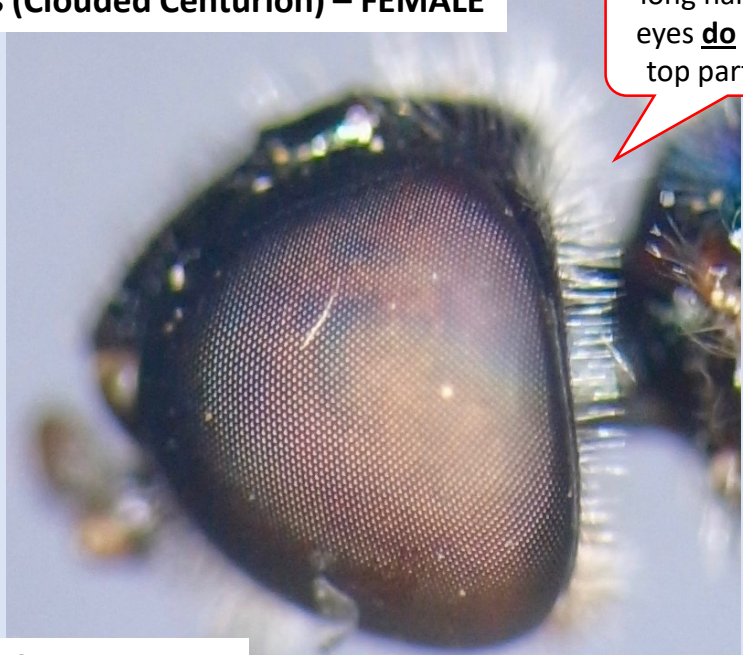


Very similar to *S. iridatus* and requires dissection to confirm.

***Sargus cuprarius* (Clouded Centurion) – FEMALE**



wing with strong dark cloud in centre (not a reliable ID feature)



long hairs behind eyes do extend to top part of head



furca with rounded opening

furca with pointed tip

© Steven Falk



[Steven Falk link](#)

(ovipositor can be extended beyond wings)

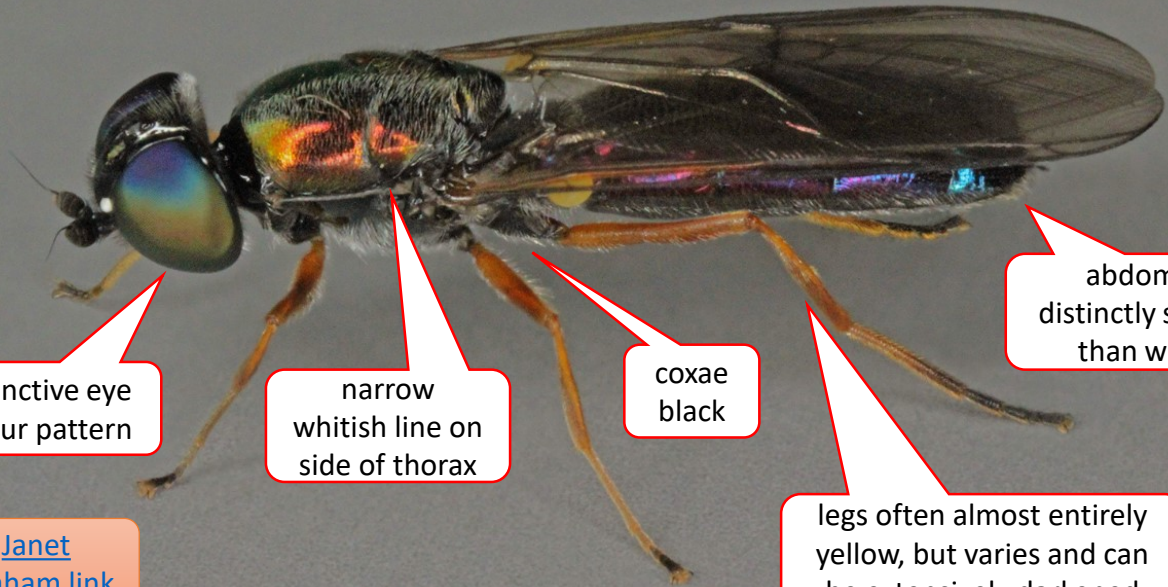
S. flavipes is shorter (7–9mm) than *S. bipunctatus*

© Steven Falk



***Sargus flavipes* (Yellow-legged Centurion) – FEMALE**

© Janet Graham



distinctive eye colour pattern

narrow whitish line on side of thorax

coxae black

abdomen distinctly shorter than wings

legs often almost entirely yellow, but varies and can be extensively darkened

[Janet Graham link](#)



[iRecord link](#)

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distinctive eye colour pattern

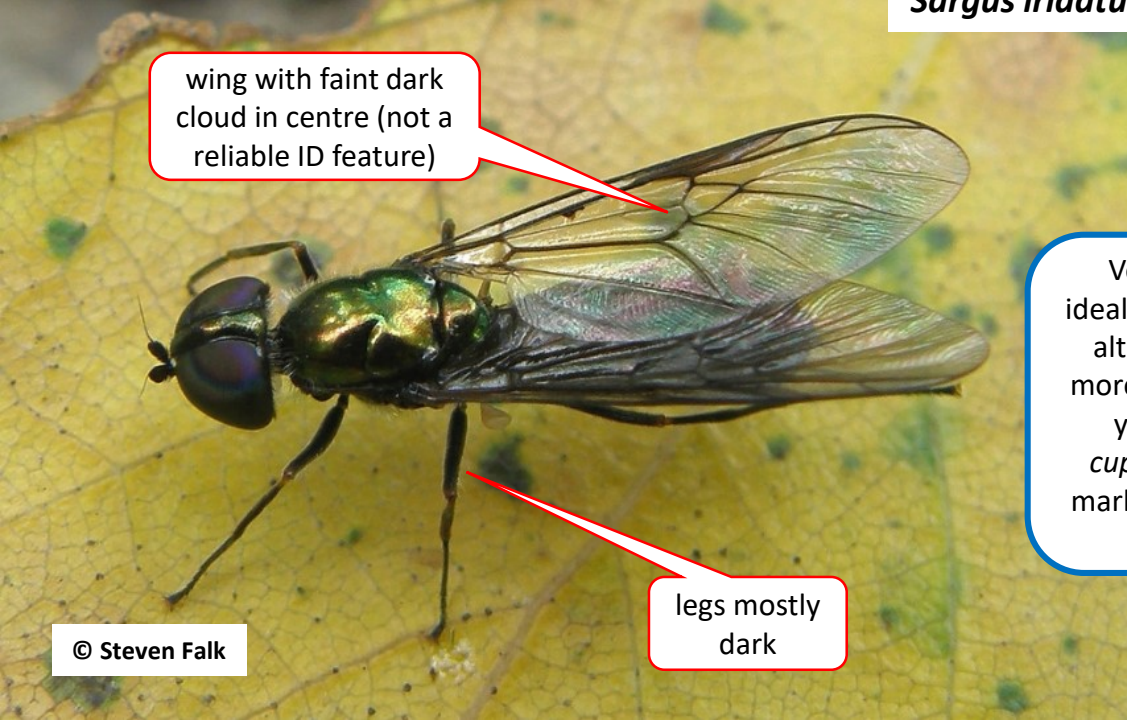


long hairs behind eyes do extend to top part of head

© Ian Andrews

[Ian Andrews link](#)

***Sargus iridatus* (Iridescent Centurion) – FEMALE**



wing with faint dark cloud in centre (not a reliable ID feature)

legs mostly dark

© Steven Falk

Very similar to [S. cuprarius](#) and ideally requires dissection to confirm, although since *S. iridatus* is much more widespread it is very likely that you will see this rather than *S. cuprarius*. Specimens with heavily marked wings should be retained for checking where possible.

[Steven Falk link](#)



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