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## Vernacular names: European Micropezids & Tanypezids (Diptera, Neriioidea & Diopsoidea)

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### Keywords

NERIOIDEA; Pseudopomyzidae; Micropezidae; Micropezids; DIOPSOIDEA; Diopsideae; Tanypezidae; Strongylophthalmyiidae; Megamerinidae; Psilidae; Tanypezids; common names; vernacular names; folk taxonomy; Europe

### Summary

The current **Stilt & Stalk Fly Recording Scheme** which began as a “Small Acalypterate Families Study Group” in 1999 (announced in Dipterists Forum Bulletin #48 with short reports in most subsequent issues) has provided some identification and recording assistance via keys, workshop and reports. The rate of accumulation of records through this scheme subsequently increased as the author collected and collated species occurrences from contributors, published to NBN Gateway and finally to the NBN Atlas in April 2017. The Recording Scheme dataset contained 4,083 species occurrences in 2016.

This article constructs a folk taxonomy of common or vernacular names to members of the Neriioidea and Diopsoidea present in Europe.

### Introduction

The practise of devising common or vernacular names for insects has value, indeed the ESA (Entomological Society of America) has a system on their website whereby common names may be proposed for any insect species. Such names may have historic and cultural value, particularly amongst the more recognisable groups such as Odonata. The popular press almost insist upon them, an example being the regular reports in British Wildlife magazine. They are additionally of value in teaching, field recognition via mnemonics and in recording.

In the UK the application of common names to certain diptera species has been of considerable value. In both British Hoverflies (Stubbs & Falk) and British Soldierflies (Stubbs & Drake), common names were devised and used extensively throughout the text, helping to popularise those groups. Common names were also devised for British Craneflies in advance of publication. Discussions regarding such names took place in the pages of Dipterists Forum’s Bulletin (see Drake & Sumner (eds))

The devising of common names was also of scientific value in the UK at a time when the UK’s Biodiversity Action Plans were being developed by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in 2007 (Ismay, 2007). Vernacular names found their way into conservation guidelines & reports (Falk et.al, 2017) and subsequently into legislation.

## Terminology

Frequently dealt with together in publications such as Manual of Nearctic Diptera, the two Superfamilies of the UK's Micropezids and Tanypezids recording scheme contain only 41 species. The term **Micropezids** is used to refer to the Superfamily Neriioidea which is comprised of several Families. Similarly **Tanypezids** describes the Superfamily Diopsoidea, also with several Families. The Family within the **Tanypezids** whose members have the most striking appearance are the Diopsidae, having projections from the sides of the head with the eyes at the end. There is but one of these in Europe, unfortunately scarce (<https://tinyurl.com/yd455s66>)

## General terms

The following groups are to be found in Europe, a total of 83 species, the following common names are according to Marshall (2012):

NERIOIDEA (Micropezids)	Stilt-legged flies and Their Relatives
Pseudopomyzidae	
Micropezidae	
DIOPSOIDEA (Tanypezids)	Stalk-eyed Flies and Their Relatives
Diopsidae	Stalk-eyed flies [not UK]
Tanypezidae	
Strongylophthalmyiidae	
Megamerinidae	
Psilidae	Psilid flies and rust flies

The above terms may be found used in translation in several other languages. The term “root flies”, though sometimes seen in relation to the Psilidae is used more widely to refer to a number of Diptera groups.

The diversity increases towards the East (eastern Palaearctic), notably Micropezidae, Strongylophthalmyiidae and Psilidae with additional Families encountered in Oriental regions.

## Frequency

Diptera from these Families are not encountered very frequently. The most common is likely to be a **Spectacle fly** (*Psila sp.*) in spring in a damp woodland, followed by a **Strider** (Calobatinae) flitting about upon nettles in some damp spot. The remainder are down to either luck, location, focussed expeditions or good field work. The scarcest flies seem to elude all of these techniques. Dipterist Lazlo Papp (2007) writes of capturing several million specimens over a period of 30 years in Hungary and only ever finding a handful of *Strongylophthalmyia ustulata* (**Western Juggler**) and *Pseudopomyza atrimana* (**Scarlet-eyed Midden**).

## United Kingdom



The **Stilt & Stalk Fly Recording Scheme** in the UK began as a “Small Acalypterate Families Study Group” in 1999 (Dipterists Forum Bulletin #48) as a request for expressions of interest in these two Superfamilies. Following a positive response, a recording scheme was set up and a name was devised from “Stilt-legged flies” and “Stalk-eyed flies” (even though we don’t have any of the latter), losing the legs and eyes to become the **Stilt & Stalk Flies**.

The contrived nature of the name led to some humour in the pages of the Bulletin, Ken Merrifield provided this cartoon when records were published on to the UK’s then GBG, the NBN Gateway.

Figure 1. Stilton Storks on the NBN Gateway [Ken Merrifield]

## The Stilt & Stalk theme

A street performer theme is suggested by the name “stilt-legged” whilst “stalk-eyed” suggests jesters and similar comedic entertainers. This makes it possible to devise a systematic structured thematic folk taxonomy.



Figure 2. A Stilt-legged, stalk-eyed street entertainer. Lincoln 2017 [Darwyn Sumner]

This theme is applied to Micropezids and Tanypezids as follows, devised by reference to:

1. European country distribution (Sumner, 2016); the wider context permits the use of distribution terms such as “western European” or “mediterranean”;
2. Notable characteristics such as the presence of a “spectacles” pattern on the thorax of *Psila* or genitalia shapes of Calobatinae
3. Food plant or breeding site locations (though imprecisely known in many cases)
4. Pre-existing names
5. Historical characters in the field of street entertainment

### Stilts (stilt-walkers)

Sub-categories of stilt-walkers are scarce. Some terms describe specific tasks such as chandelier hanging or hop-picking and too specific for use here but three terms are of particular value:

**Striders:** Describing the shepherds who practised stilt-walking in the boggy ground in Les Landes as tchangués, Guyot-Daude (1892) also describes them as “striders”. The association with wet habitat makes it most appropriate for the Calobatinae.

**Stilter:** a trained individual who can walk on stilts.

**Échasseur:** *Jousters on stilts*. The term is of Belgian origin. This ancient tradition, currently prevalent in Belgium is practised in Namur. (<http://www.echasseurs.org/>)



Figure 3. Échasseur [Tourism Office, Namur, Belgium - <https://www.namurtourisme.be/fr/>]

*Rainieria calceata* exhibits leg-waving using its two (striped) front legs both as intraspecific communication and as mimicry of Ichneumon wasps (Denton, 2001; von Tschirnhaus, 2008), as seen in a video by Nikola Rahme (<https://tinyurl.com/yd35sxtl>) and described in a blog by Matthew (Poland, Olsztyn) at <https://tinyurl.com/y84cqsxl>

The term may be difficult to popularise but entering “échasseur” into a search engine invariably leads to articles about Namur échasseur who quite clearly learned it from the flies.

### Secondary terms

*Pseudopomyza atrimana* is not stilt-legged. The term **Scarlet-eyed Compost** arises entirely from photographs and habitat descriptions in Roháček, (2012). He tells of a mass emergence on heaps of “moderately rotten cut grass” within a woodland habitat and poses rotten vegetation as the breeding substrate, hence “compost”. It is probably under-recorded so a name with both an appearance and habitat may assist in discovering it.

The degree of dusting on the thorax of *Calobata petronella* is variable but the humeri are clear brown coloured, hence “Brown-shouldered”. The characteristic feature of *Cnodacophora* is the metathoracic process, “rudder” from aeroplane and boat terminology. In *Neria* the notable characters for most are the shapes of the accessory genitalia (though not all have ever been illustrated), in the case of *N. longiceps* the long head is its specific name and the most notable character.

### Stalks (traditional & street entertainers)

**Jester:** The main theme but only one European species can claim title to this name, the Diopsidae *Sphyracephala europaea*.

**Juggler:** The word *Strongylophthalmyia* translates as “ball eyed”. Balls are the most favoured performance object for jugglers hence the choice of name. There are three species in Europe, *S. ustulata* having the most western distribution.

**Fool:** A street entertainer from the English Morris Dancing tradition. The “beard” refers to the characteristic fringe of hairs behind the eyes: *Megamerina dolium*, the **Bearded Fool**

**Tailcoat:** The dark-looking wings folded closely over the abdomen in photographs of some Chylizinae are reminiscent of the long-tailed black jackets, tailcoats, worn by magicians and carnival entertainers.



Figure 4. *Chyliza extenuata*: The Broomrape Tailcoat Fly [M.Le Masson]



Figure 5. Carnival entertainers in tailcoats. Blackburn 2014 [Darwyn Sumner]  
Plant associations are better known but still incomplete (Chandler, 1975; Bygebjerg, 2011)

**Reed:** Reedbeds are the most likely habitats to find *Loxocerini*, long slender species which breed in *Carex* and *Juncus* (reeds and rushes.) These host plants also have a link with street entertainment from the English Morris Dancing tradition, the Straw Bear Festival held in fenland's Whittlesea and Saddleworth's ancient Rushcart tradition.



Figure 6. Whittlesea's Straw Bears [Derek Law]  
, perhaps there are larvae being carried around on the Straw Bear's costume.

**Spectacles:** Many of the photographs of *Psila spp.* submitted for identification show a highly distinctive pattern on the abdomen that appears like a pair of spectacles, one lens of which is stretched out:



The depth of colour of this pattern is highly variable, few are as dark and distinctive as in this image, in many the pattern is extremely feint, sometimes absent altogether.

In *Psila fimetaria* the antenna at the base of the arista is darkened (hence **dusky spectacle**) a challenge to capture adequately in a photograph.

**Pierrot themes:** Theatrical comedy originating in France and Italy provide character names which are of value:

Harlequin costumes may be in various colours but the black and white version serves to describe *Tanypeza longimana* whose head and abdomen have bright shimmer patterns on a black background, hence **European Harlequin**

The theme continues into the Psilini, the Italian **Columbina** name being strictly correct (not the anglicised Columbine). The Commedia Dell'Arte principle of Mayhem and Madness sits well with the Psilini as these are a group in need of revision.

Plant associations would be the ideal secondary terms but these are not clear. Accordingly jester names, both historic and fictional, have been assigned to the members of the *Chamaepsila* genus:

Silvia, Caterina, Le Foi, Roland, Stańczyk, Foole, Sommers, Triboulet, João, Chico, Hudson, Fleeman, Pocket, Wamba, Dagonet, Verence, Quin, Rigoletto, Katchit, Roder, Baldwin, Pugh, Clopin, Giacomo, Peterkin, Claypole, Armstrong, Perkeo, Point, Cornelius, Eulenspiegel, Ferdyschenko, Palazzo.



**Common names of UK species****Nerioidea (Micropezids)****Pseudopomyzidae***Pseudopomyza atrimana* (Meigen, 1830)**Micropezidae****CALOBATINAE***Calobata petronella* (Linnaeus, 1761)*Cnodacophora sellata* (Meigen, 1826)*Cnodacophora stylifera* (Loew, 1870)*Neria cibaria* (Linnaeus, 1761)*Neria commutata* (Czerny, 1930)*Neria ephippium* (Fabricius, 1794)*Neria femoralis* (Meigen, 1826)**MICROPEZINAE***Micropeza corrigiolata* (Linnaeus, 1767)*Micropeza lateralis* Meigen 1826**TAENIAPTERINAE***Rainieria calceata* (Fallén, 1820)**Diopsoidea (Tanypezids)****Tanypezidae***Tanypeza longimana* Fallén, 1820**Strongylophthalmyiidae***Strongylophthalmyia ustulata* (Zetterstedt, 1847)**Megamerinidae Rondani, 1861***Megamerina dolium* (Fabricius, 1805)**Psilidae****CHYLIZINAE***Chyliza annulipes* Macquart, 1835*Chyliza extenuata* (Rossi, 1790)*Chyliza leptogaster* (Panzer, 1798)*Chyliza nova* Collin, 1944*Chyliza vittata* Meigen, 1826**PSILINAE****LOXOCERINI***Loxocera aristata* (Panzer, 1801)*Imantimyia albiseta* (Schrank, 1803)*Imantimyia fulviventris* (Meigen, 1826)*Imantimyia nigrifrons* (Macquart, 1835)*Imantimyia sylvatica* (Meigen, 1826)**Stilt-legged**

Scarlet-eyed Compost

**STRIDERS**

Brown-shouldered Strider

Dusty Ruddered Strider

Montane Ruddered Strider

Common Strider

Fingered Strider

Amber Strider

Bulbous Strider

**STILTERS**

Common Stilter

Broom Stilter

**ÉCHASSEUR (ECHASSEUR)**

Beech Échasseur

**Stalk-eyed**

European Harlequin

Western Juggler

Bearded Fool

**Rust Flies****TAILCOAT FLIES**

Conifer Tailcoat

Broomrape Tailcoat

Common Tailcoat

Sap Tailcoat

Orchid Tailcoat

**REED FLIES**

Black-faced Reed

Yellow-faced Reed

Atlantic Reed

Small Reed

Yellow-shouldered Reed

PSILINI

<i>Psila fimetaria</i> (Linnaeus, 1761)	Dusky Spectacle
<i>Psila merdaria</i> Collin, 1944	Common Spectacle
<i>Psilosoma lefebvrei</i> (Zetterstedt, 1835)	Atlantic Pierrot
<i>Chamaepsila atra</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Katchit's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila bicolor</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Roder's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila buccata</i> (Fallén, 1826)	Pugh's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila clunalis</i> (Collin, 1944)	Peterkin's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila humeralis</i> (Zetterstedt, 1847)	Claypole's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila limbatella</i> (Zetterstedt, 1847)	Sommer's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila luteola</i> (Collin, 1944)	Armstrong's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila morio</i> (Zetterstedt, 1835)	Roland's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila nigra</i> (Fallén, 1820)	Fleeman's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila nigricornis</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Verence's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila obscuritarsis</i> (Loew, 1856)	Baldwin's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila pallida</i> (Fallén, 1820)	Pocket's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila pectoralis</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Foole's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila persimilis</i> (Wakerley, 1959)	Le Foi's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila rosae</i> (Fabricius, 1794)	Carrot Rust
<i>Chamaepsila rufa</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Wamba's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila unilineata</i> (Zetterstedt, 1847)	Dagonet's Columbina

**UK Conservation status**

The names used in the next “Assessment of the Status of Acalypteratae flies in the UK” should therefore be as follows (suffixed with the word “Fly” perhaps):

<i>Pseudopomyza atrimana</i> (Meigen, 1830)	Scarlet-eyed Compost
<i>Cnodacophora stylifera</i> (Loew, 1870)	Montane Ruddered Strider
<i>Micropeza lateralis</i> Meigen 1826	Broom Stilter
<i>Rainieria calceata</i> (Fallén, 1820)	Beech Échasseur
<i>Tanypeza longimana</i> Fallén, 1820	European Harlequin
<i>Strongylophthalmyia ustulata</i> (Zetterstedt, 1847)	Western Juggler
<i>Megamerina dolium</i> (Fabricius, 1805)	Bearded Fool
<i>Chyliza annulipes</i> Macquart, 1835	Conifer Tailcoat
<i>Chyliza extenuata</i> (Rossi, 1790)	Broomrape Tailcoat
<i>Chyliza nova</i> Collin, 1944	Sap Tailcoat
<i>Chyliza vittata</i> Meigen, 1826	Orchid Tailcoat
<i>Imantimyia nigrifrons</i> (Macquart, 1835)	Small Reed
<i>Chamaepsila clunalis</i> (Collin, 1944)	Peterkin's Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila luteola</i> (Collin, 1944)	Armstrong's Columbina

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Still in draft so comments are welcome.

## European Common names

### Nerioida (Micropezids)

#### Pseudopomyzidae

*Pseudopomyza atrimana* (Meigen, 1830)

### Stilt-legged Flies

Scarlet-eyed Compost

#### Micropezidae [Stilt-legged Flies s. str.]

##### CALOBATINAE

*Calobata petronella* (Linnaeus, 1761)

*Cnodacophora sellata* (Meigen, 1826)

*Cnodacophora stylifera* (Loew, 1870)

*Neria cibaria* (Linnaeus, 1761)

*Neria commutata* (Czerny, 1930)

*Neria dentigera* (Loew, 1854)

*Neria ephippium* (Fabricius, 1794)

*Neria femoralis* (Meigen, 1826)

*Neria longiceps* (Loew, 1870)

*Neria nigricornis* (Zetterstedt, 1838)

*Neria octoannulata* (Strobl, 1899)

##### STRIDERS

Brown-shouldered Strider

Dusty Ruddered Strider

Montane Ruddered Strider

Common Strider

Fingered Strider

Scarce Strider

Amber Strider

Bulbous Strider

Long-headed Strider

East European Strider

Mediterranean Amber Strider

##### MICROPEZINAE

*Micropeza angustipennis* Loew, 1868

*Micropeza atripes* Bezzi, 1895 (*species inquirenda*)

*Micropeza brevipennis* von Roser, 1840

*Micropeza cingulata* Loew, 1868

*Micropeza corrigiolata* (Linnaeus, 1767)

*Micropeza grallatrix* Loew, 1868

*Micropeza hispanica* Bigot, 1886

*Micropeza kawalii* Gimmerthal, 1847

*Micropeza lateralis* Meigen 1826

*Micropeza nigra* (Loew, 1873)

##### STILTERS

Pale Stilter

Italian Stilter

Lucerne Stilter

Black-legged Stilter

Common Stilter

Mediterranean Stilter

Spanish Stilter

Scarce Stilter

Broom Stilter

Black Stilter

##### TAENIAPTERINAE

*Rainieria calceata* (Fallén, 1820)

*Rainieria latifrons* (Loew, 1870)

##### ÉCHASSEUR

Beech Échasseur

Eastern European Échasseur

### Diopsoidea (Tanypezids)

#### Diopsidae

*Sphyracephala europaea* Papp & Foldvari, 1997

European Jester

#### Tanypezidae

*Tanypeza longimana* Fallén, 1820

European Harlequin

#### Strongylophthalmyiidae

*Strongylophthalmyia paula* Shatalkin, 1993

Scarce Juggler

*Strongylophthalmyia pictipes* Frey, 1935

Northern Juggler

*Strongylophthalmyia ustulata* (Zetterstedt, 1847)

Western Juggler

**Megamerinidae Rondani, 1861***Megamerina dolium* (Fabricius, 1805)**Psilidae****CHYLIZINAE***Chyliza annulipes* Macquart, 1835*Chyliza extenuata* (Rossi, 1790)*Chyliza leguminicola* Melander, 1920*Chyliza leptogaster* (Panzer, 1798)*Chyliza nova* Collin, 1944*Chyliza vittata* Meigen, 1826**PSILINAE****LOXOCERINI***Loxocera aristata* (Panzer, 1801)*Loxocera hoffmannseggi* Meigen, 1826*Loxocera maculata* Rondani, 1876*Imantimyia albiseta* (Schrank, 1803)*Imantimyia fulviventris* (Meigen, 1826)*Imantimyia nigrifrons* (Macquart, 1835)*Imantimyia sylvatica* (Meigen, 1826)**PSILINI***Psila (Oxypsila) abdominalis* Schummel, 1844*Psila fimetaria* (Linnaeus, 1761)*Psila helvetica* Shatalkin & Merz, 2010*Psila merdaria* Collin, 1944*Psila sibirica* (Frey, 1925) *incertae sedis**Psilosoma audouini* (Zetterstedt, 1835)*Psilosoma lefebvrei* (Zetterstedt, 1835)*Chamaepsila andreji* (Shatalkin, 1996)*Chamaepsila atra* (Meigen, 1826)*Chamaepsila bicolor* (Meigen, 1826)*Chamaepsila buccata* (Fallén, 1826)*Chamaepsila clunalis* (Collin, 1944)*Chamaepsila confusa* Shatalkin & Merz, 2010*Chamaepsila ephippium* (Zetterstedt, 1847)*Chamaepsila gracilis* (Meigen, 1826) *incertae sedis* (see Pugh's Columbina)*Chamaepsila humeralis* (Zetterstedt, 1847)*Chamaepsila kaszabi* (Soós, 1974)*Chamaepsila limbatella* (Zetterstedt, 1847)*Chamaepsila longipennis* (Seguy, 1936)*Chamaepsila luteola* (Collin, 1944)*Chamaepsila martineki* Carles-Tolra, 1993*Chamaepsila morio* (Zetterstedt, 1835)

Bearded Fool

**Rust Flies****TAILCOAT FLIES**

Conifer Tailcoat

Broomrape Tailcoat

Lupin Tailcoat

Common Tailcoat

Sap Tailcoat

Orchid Tailcoat

**REED FLIES**

Black-faced Reed

Continental Reed

Black Reed

Yellow-faced Reed

Atlantic Reed

Small Reed

Yellow-shouldered Reed

European Spectacle

Dusky Spectacle

Montane Spectacle

Common Spectacle

Boreal Spectacle

European Pierrot

Atlantic Pierrot

Quin's Columbina

Katchit's Columbina

Roder's Columbina

Pugh's Columbina

Peterkin's Columbina

Chico's Columbina

Silvia's Columbina

(see Pugh's Columbina)

Claypole's Columbina

Stańczyk's Columbina

Sommer's Columbina

Caterina's Columbina

Armstrong's Columbina

Rigoletto's Columbina

Roland's Columbina

<i>Chamaepsila nigra</i> (Fallén, 1820)	Fleeman’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila nigricornis</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Verence’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila nigrosetosa</i> Frey, 1925	Clopin’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila nigrotaeniata</i> (Strobl, 1899)	Hudson’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila obscuritarsis</i> (Loew, 1856)	Baldwin’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila pallida</i> (Fallén, 1820)	Pocket’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila pectoralis</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Foole’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila persimilis</i> (Wakerley, 1959)	Le Foi’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila problematica</i> Hennig, 1941	Eulenspiegel’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila pseudobicolor</i> Soós, 1985	Giacomo’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila quadrilineata</i> (Strobl, 1898)	Perkeo’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila rosae</i> (Fabricius, 1794)	Carrot Rust
<i>Chamaepsila rozkosnyi</i> Carles-Tolra, 1993	João’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila rufa</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Wamba’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila sardoa</i> (Rondani, 1876)	Triboulet’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila setalba</i> Freidberg & Shatalkin, 2008	Point’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila strigata</i> (Collin, 1959)	Cornelius’ Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila tenebrica</i> (Shatalkin, 1986)	Ferdyschenko’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila unilineata</i> (Zetterstedt, 1847)	Dagonet’s Columbina
<i>Chamaepsila villosula</i> (Meigen, 1826)	Palazzo’s Columbina