# HOVERFLY NEWSLETTER

# NUMBER 27 FEBRUARY 1999





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In Hoverfly Newsletter No. 26 Ken Preston-Mafham provided an article advocating the use of English names for hoverflies and listed his proposed names for a number of species. To date I have received comments from Beatrice Gillam (verbal) and Alan Stubbs (written) on the subject of Ken's article. Both of them, while recognising the logic in Ken's proposal that Syrphidae should be known as "hover flies" (2 words) rather than "hoverflies" (a single word), argued against such a change as it would lead to cumbersome multi-word English species names. Alan Stubbs sent me a copy of a letter he wrote to Ken on the matter of English names; many readers will know that Alan is also a supporter of the introduction of English names; in his letter he has offered Ken comments on a number of his proposed names, and he has pointed out some of the difficulties involved in devising a consistent system of names to cover a family of over 275 British species. Readers who are supportive of the idea of English names for hoverflies and who would be interested in becoming involved in the process of arriving at an agreed list are invited to contact this newsletter or to contact Alan direct (Alan's address appears at the head of articles printed later in this newsletter).

Since the last newsletter two books of major importance have been published. One of these, Roger Morris's book on Surrey hoverflies, is reviewed in these pages. The other, a new Checklist of Diptera, edited by Peter Chandler, is Volume 12 of **Checklists of Insects of the British Isles** (Royal Entomological Society). As previously announced I shall aim to standardise hoverfly nomenclature used in this newsletter to conform with the species names given in the new checklist. Peter Chandler has kindly given permission for the species names which differ from those in **British Hoverflies** (**Stubbs and Falk**) to be reproduced here. They appear on page 2.

Copy for Newsletter No. 28 should be sent to me: David Iliff, Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 4HN, to reach me by 21 June 1999.

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# **HOVERFLY NAME CHANGES**

Old name	New name
Arctophila fulva	Arctophila superbiens (Nb not superabiens)
Baccha obscuripennis	Baccha <b>elongata</b>
Brachypalpoides lenta	Brachypalpoides lentus
Callicera aenea	Callicera aurata
Cheilosia honesta	Cheilosia <b>lasiopa</b>
Cheilosia intonsa	Cheilosia latifrons
Cheilosia laskai	Cheilosia <b>ahenea</b>
Cheilosia nasutula	Cheilosia <b>vicina</b>
Chrysogaster chalybeata	Chrysogaster cemiteriorum
Chrysogaster hirtella	Melanogaster hirtella
Chrysogaster macquarti	Melanogaster aerosa
Dasysyrphus lunulatus	Dasysyrphus <b>pinastri</b>
Doros conopseus	Doros <b>profuges</b>

Epistrophe (Epistrophella) euchroma Meligramma euchromum

Eristalis nemorum Eristalis interruptus

Eristalis pratorum Eristalis similis

Lejogaster splendida Lejogaster tarsata

Lejops vittatus Lejops vittatus

Megasyrphus annulipes Eriozona erratica

Melangyna guttata Meligramma guttatum

Melangyna triangulifera Meligramma trianguliferum

Metasyrphus Eupeodes

Microdon eggeri Microdon analis

Myolepta luteola Myolepta dubia

Neocnemodon Heringia (sub-genus Neocnemodon)

Orthonevra splendens Ripponensia splendens

Pipizella virens Pipizella viduata

Pyrophaena granditarsa Platycheirus granditarsus

Pyrophaena rosarum Platycheirus rosarum

Sphaerophoria abbreviata Sphaerophoria fatarum

Sphaerophoria menthastri Sphaerophoria interrupta

Sphegina kimakowiczii Sphegina elegans

Although name changes have been published for some species of *Xanthogramma* and *Chrysotoxum*, these are recognised in the checklist as erroneous. The species names for these two genera therefore remain as listed in Stubbs and Falk. The name *Platycheirus albimanus* is also retained (in preference to *P. cyaneus*).

### A TEST KEY TO EUROPEAN NEOASCIA SPECIES

# Colin W Plant 14, West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3QP

On a recent trip to Hungary I was fortunate in being able to complete my "set" of European Neoascia species. Close examination of the specimens over the winter period made me wonder if at least one species, N. annexa (= floralis) was overlooked in Britain. It is superficially very similar (if you don't bother looking at the distinctive face shape) and its European distribution is very wide. It may well be lurking here in Britain awaiting discovery. Principally for my own peace of mind I have created a new version of the key to Neoascia species, including this and other European species in my collection. A further three species (not at all likely to be in Britain) are not included. In the hope that N. annexa might be sitting quietly in a museum collection somewhere I thought it might be useful to give this key an airing. It is a provisional key - and it will probably need refining when people get a chance to try it; please do let me have feedback. I am a bit concerned about N. tenur - in which leg colour is seemingly very variable, Perhaps there is another species here? There may be habitat differences between dark- and yellow-legged forms? I would welcome any comments. The need to confirm the identity of dodgy specimens by checking the male genitalia is therefore stressed and it is always a good idea to set Neoascia specimens with the genitalia hinged out for ease of later examination.



Fig 1: N annexa ♂



Fig 2: N. pavlovskii &

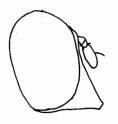


Fig 3: N. podagrica &

## EUROPEAN NEOASCIA - TEST KEY (1998 version)

l	Chitin bridge complete behind rear legs (s.g. Neoascia)	2
-	This bridge incomplete (s.g. Neoasciella)	6
2	Face more or less flat below antennae flat (Fig. 1) and only the lower lip projects forwards and then not so much as in other species (compare with other specimens). F1 more or less yellow including at base	annexa (= floralis)
-	Face more or less conically projected (Figs 2, 3) the projection involving most or all of the face below the	_
	antennae	
3	Face projection truncate (Fig 2)	pavlovskii
-	Face projection acute (Fig. 3)	4
4	Membrane of wing on each side of outer cross-veins infuscated - even if faintly. Wing <u>usually</u> with a band of shading from front to rear just basal to the yellowish stigma, this band incorporating the cross-veins in the centre of the wing. Front and mid femora yellow at the base, at least ventrally and usually quite extensively so	5
-	Membrane on either side of outer cross-veins absolutely un-shaded and wing membrane without any shading across width - membrane entirely hyaline apart from the pale yellow stigma. Front and mid femora pale or dark at the base (ie leg colour is unreliable)	tenur
5	T2 without yellow spots or bars. In $\Im$ , front margin of T2 is about two-thirds width of rear margin and the sides are only slightly concave (and may appear not at all concave in some dried specimens). Confirm with genitalia of $\Im$	unifasciata
-	T2 usually with yellow. In $\mathcal{D}$ , front margin of T2 is about one third the width of the rear margin and the sides are usually clearly and deeply concave - rarely apparently not so in dried and distorted specimens.	podagrica
6	Outer cross-veins infuscated	7
-	Outer cross-veins clear	8
7	ant. seg. 3 short. T4 often with yellow spots (not always present but no other <i>Neoascia</i> has these). Base of all femora yellow; distal tip of hind femur pale. Tergite 2 of $\Omega$ tapered to base but with sides straight (unlike <i>geniculata</i> )	interrupta
-	ant. seg. 3 longer. Front femora yellow at base; hind femora black at apex. Both sexes with oblique spots on T2 - occasionally these can join and often they fade in dead specimens, especially ♀♀; Both sexes usually with yellow spots on T3 (can fade)	obliqua
	Dom series usually with yellow spots off 13 (call fade)	оыции

ant. seg 3 more or less square. Front and mid femora black to base, except occasionally a very small area of yellow on ventral surface adjacent to the yellow coxae. Tergite 2 of ♀ constricted at base and the sides concave

..... geniculata

ant. seg. 3 elongate. Front femora appear black at base though a very narrow ring of yellow is discernible in most specimens adjacent to the yellow coxae. Hind femora narrowly yellow at apex. T2 in both sexes without yellow spots or bars. Abdomen entirely dark in  $\mathfrak{P}$ ; T3 of  $\mathfrak{P}$  usually with yellow spots but can be all dark

.....meticulosa

#### Distributions of keyed species

#### sg. Neoascia

annexa (Müller, 1776)

= bifasciata (Schrank, 1776)

= bifasciata (Zetterstedt, 1832)

= floralis (Meigen, 1822)

pavlovskii Stackelberg, 1955

Russia & Afghanistan. Included here since it is

DK, B, D, PL, CS, F, CH, A, H, I, YU, R, BG,

Considered likely to occur in Britain

also included by Van der Goot (1981) and is

readily recognised.

podagrica (Fabricius, 1775)

all of Europe

tenur (Harris,[1780])

= dispar Meigen, 1822

all of Europe

unifasciata (Strobl, 1896)

A, H probably overlooked elsewhere

sg. Neoasciella

geniculata (Meigen, 1822)

all of Europe

interrupta (Meigen, 1822)

all of Europe

meticulosa (Scopoli, 1763)

= aenea (Meigen, 1822)

ali of Europe

obliqua Coe, 1940

all of Europe

#### Western Palaearctic Species not included in the key

Neoascia (Neoascia) monticola Stackelberg

Armenia

Neoascia (Neoasciella) carinicauda Stackelberg

Kazakhstan (keyed in Van der Goot, 1981)

Neoascia (Neoasciella) petsamoensis Kanervo

Russia (keyed in Van der Goot, 1981)

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### TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR IN LEUCOZONA LUCORUM

# Alan Stubbs 181 Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 4DS

Leucozona lucorum is a familiar enough species, though rarely seen in numbers. It is the sort of species worthy of a few moments' admiration, but it tends to get just passing acknowledgement in the recording notebook whilst the hoverfly search goes on. I cannot recall observing territorial behaviour by this species before, and, even if I am in a minority of one, pen is now put to paper about this epic event.

At 10 am on 14 May 1992, on a hot sunny day under anticyclone conditions, I saw, for the first time ever, *L. lucorum* in my garden. It was doing its best to get attention. A male sat on a blackcurrant (*Ribes nigra*) leaf in full sun, within a glade formed by various trees and shrubs. It kept taking off on high speed interception flights, abruptly landing again on its favourite leaf after a few seconds. Some more prolonged absences from its leaf proved to be mid-air territorial duties. The latter mode was only a few feet above the ground in a position and general appearance similar to that of *Epistrophe eligans*. Whereas *E. eligans* has patience and stamina on station and readily takes on dog-fights, this male *L. lucorum* was far more jittery and erratic, and broke off to rest every few minutes. Tactics again changed when it took to landing on cow parsley flowers (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) where it hurriedly fed and kept making off on interception flights - definitely not good for the digestion.

These observations show such varied activity in the space of a random ten minutes that there is still a rather confused picture of the life of a male *L. lucorum*. Perhaps hovering males are easily overlooked as *Epistrophe eligans*, especially when the white markings are reduced.

## TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR IN XYLOTA SEGNIS

## Alan Stubbs 181 Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 4DS

Xylota segnis is normally found sitting in the sun on leaves, mainly the foliage of trees and shrubs. Apart from occasional erratic shuffling movement and nipping across to another leaf, and even feeding of deposits of honeydew and microscopic debris on leaves, its existence would seem to be singularly boring. However much to my surprise, the males can adopt territorial behaviour.

On 24 May 1992 a visit was made to Bonny Wood, a nature reserve owned by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. On a hot sunny day at about 2.15pm BST observations were made in a broad sunlit ride oriented NE-SW. In a normal year the rides on chalky boulder clay would have been wet, but the long-term drought had left most of the

ground dry, or at best, moist. Logs about 10-20cm in diameter had been placed across some particularly wet parts of the ride to prevent forest management vehicles sinking into the mud, only the upper surface of the logs remaining above the still moist mud, with sparse *Glyceria aquatica* grass in between.

Several male *Xylota segnis* were hovering and patrolling territories over these logs, settling on to the logs to rest at short intervals, though some periods of sustained flight lasted several minutes. Flight was generally about 20 cm above ground, rising occasionally to 50 cm. To confuse the issue, a male *Platycheirus granditarsus* (also red-belted) made more sedate flights among the *Glyceria*, the *Xylota* being very much more vigorous and engaging in fast dog-fights when encountering other members of its species.

At the edge of the ride there was a pile of logs in the sun. Here another *Xylota segnis* male hovered close by, about one metre above ground (the log pile was about 2 metres high).

Those reading this note may respond by recalling that they have seen such behaviour in *Xylota segnis* so frequently that it hardly seems worth reporting. Perhaps it is something that I have not stopped to look at properly before. However I suspect that I am not alone in being unfamiliar with the behaviour described. Sometimes it is the common species that remain least known since there is a natural assumption that the behaviour of such species must be well documented already. I suspect that the case above is the classic example when it is possible to go out and see *X. segnis* on 99 occasions and it will be doing nothing in particular, but the main thing is to report the hundredth occasion when at last there is a chance to note what may be a common event that has rarely been observed.

### WHY ONLY PARSNIPS FOR HOVERFLIES?

John Bowden
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In Hoverfly Newsletter No. 26, page 5, Austin Brackenbury suggests planting parsnips as a lure for hoverflies. Parsnips are not the only possibility. I grow carrots and parsley in my garden and it has long been my practice to allow some carrots and most of the parsley to flower. Reprehensible garden practice, no doubt, but entomologically rewarding.

A quicker alternative is to plant the washed carrots, complete with foliage, that are now commonly available; less satisfactory are the pots of parsley also widely available. Using bought-in carrots does allow a somewhat longer succession of flowers, although in my vegetable patch I usually have carrots from seed in flower from mid-June to late

August. Carrots in flower I find reasonably pleasing; they do not look out of place in a herbaceous bed/border.

As well as carrots I allow garden mint (3 varieties/species) to run to flower. Mint flowers, especially those of *Mentha rotundifolia*, are very attractive to Diptera and provide an interesting comparison and contrast in their attendant Syrphidae to the umbellifers. Here in this part of Colchester, mint is visited by conspicuously more Syrphini, Eristalini and Volucellini, while the umbels are favoured by the Cheilosini, Chrysogastrini and Pipizini.

However it is well to remember that having flowers that are highly attractive to Syrphidae does not mean that one immediately finds either large numbers or desirable species. Even on the most favoured of flowers numbers will vary widely. For example in 1997 I took a good series (and could have taken more) of a species regarded as rare in Essex, *Triglyphus primus*, and all three species of *Pipizella* on carrot flowers, as well as other uncommon Pipizini; in 1998 I saw only one *T. primus* and a few *Pipizella virens*, summer Pipizini otherwise being conspicuous by their absence. Had 1998 been the first year of departure from garden orthodoxy, I would have wondered whether it had been worthwhile.

### HOVERFLY NEWS FROM SOMERSET AND DORSET

# Ted and Dave Levy 9 Chilton Grove, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4AN

It was quite a successful year for recording in Somerset, and we are continuing to update our maps. Since the publication of our atlas "Somerset Hoverflies" in June a new species has been added to the county list, following more intensive searching in woods near Bristol. *Eriozona syrphoides* was taken at Lords Wood visiting flowers of greater knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*) in a coniferous ride on 31 August. This species is very similar to *Volucella bombylans* in the field. It was found during both the spring and the autumn.

Recording in Dorset in 1998 was even more successful than Somerset, and thanks to Mick Parker two new species were added to the county list. Cheilosia semifasciata, a very elusive small hoverfly, was found on flowers of lesser celandine (Ranunculus ficaria) in Piddles Wood on 9 May. Following a revision of the Platycheirus scutatus complex a new species, Platycheirus splendidus was described by Graham Rotheray (See Recent Literature on final page of this newsletter). Specimens have now been recorded at Mosterton Down in May and June. It was found last year at Delcombe Wood in May, but had not at that time been officially confirmed as a new species. The county species list now totals 206.

Of especial interest was the refinding in Dorset after 50 years of *Mallota cimbiciformis*. It was taken at Puddletown Forest by Ian Cross, the warden, feeding at flowers of wood spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*) along a shaded ride on 12 June. A larva of this species was found by Mick Parker not far from this site in 1996, but it failed to rear out. The previous record for the county was in July 1948 when Phillip Harwood found a specimen at Witchampton.

Just as exciting was the news from Mick Parker that he had relocated *Chrysotoxum octomaculatum* at two sites in Purbeck. Many readers will know from our article in **Dorset Hoverflies** the concern felt about the status of this hoverfly which had a stronghold at Studland NNR in the 1930s, Cyril Diver finding it to be the most frequent of the four *Chrysotoxum* species present. It was last recorded in Dorset over 20 years ago at Arne in 1974 by Sir Christopher Andrews. Mick will no doubt be giving more details of his and M Edwards' capture in due course.

### BOOK REVIEW: HOVERFLIES OF SURREY by ROGER K A MORRIS

# Martin Matthews 56 Stanford Road, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Glos, GL20 8QU

Before I left school and suburban South London thirty years ago I was already familiar with many of our butterflies, dragonflies and grasshoppers thanks to a childhood spent within reach of Box Hill, Bookham Common, Thursley Common, and, just five minutes' walk from home, Nonsuch Park, a rural intrusion in our urban surroundings. All these sites and many more are mentioned in Roger Morris's excellent book, bringing back happy entomological memories tinged now with regret that at that time I was not aware of the rich hoverfly fauna of my small but diverse home county. This book may well lure me back to visit old familiar places with freshly opened eyes.

Hoverflies of Surrey follows the pattern established by the previous volumes issued in connection with the Surrey Invertebrate Atlas Project. An introductory session includes brief accounts of the species associated with a range of local habitats, notes on several of the important hoverfly sites in the county, and sound practical comments on "Hoverfly Conservation" and "Hoverflies and Biodiversity", as well as the essential paragraphs describing the county itself, sources of information, etc.

The notes on individual species, accompanied by a tetrad map in every case, are tailored to reflect the extent of the information available, including points of particular local interest and observations made within the county. The extent and detail of this information is very impressive: there are, for example, lists of the flowers visited by each species, and 1 Km grid references to pinpoint records of those species which are rare nationally or locally. Only scientific names are used for the hoverflies, but, in this part of the book, English names are used for flowers.

Appendices expand the information on flower visits (including scientific names here) and include a list of hoverflies recorded from Bookham Common, a productive and well-recorded site. A glossary, bibliography and county checklist are also provided.

It would be unforgivable not to mention the sixteen colour plates and the jacket photograph which succeed in beautifying the book and augmenting its scientific value. The photographs, from several sources, are all fine examples of the art and have been reproduced superbly by the printer. Habitats, larvae and pupae are illustrated as well as an interesting selection of adult hoverflies.

I commend this book as a masterpiece of its kind. The immense amount of information it contains is printed clearly and presented in a concise, accessible, flexibly organised manner. Hoverflies of Surrey will, of course, be an essential reference book for local dipterists for many years to come. It will also provide valuable information and a stimulus to those of us who are active further afield. Roger Morris has succeeded admirably in summarising our current knowledge of the hoverflies of a crowded corner of Southern England, while leaving us with a sense that there remains plenty of scope for further research.

Hoverflies of Surrey is published by Surrey Wildlife Trust, School Lane, Pirbright, Woking, Surrey, GU24 0JN at a price of £15 plus £2.70 p&p.

#### INTERESTING RECENT RECORDS

Swillbrook Lakes	Epistrophe diaphana	19/6/98
John Grearson (Wiltshire:) Somerford Common Somerford Common	Volucella inanis Cheilosia albipila	19/8/98 31/3/98
Barbara Last (Wiltshire): Chickengrove Common WWT Grovely	Doros profuges Myolepta dubia	5/6/98 1 <i>/</i> 7/98
Ted & Dave Levy (Somerset):		
Ted & Dave Levy (Somerset): Shapwick Heath NNR	Anasymyia transfuga	16/8/98
	Anasymyia transfuga Cheilosia intonsa Chrysotoxum elegans	16/8/98 18/8/98 7/8/98

John Grearson (Gloucestershire):

		0.17.100
Ninesprings, Yeovil	Criorhina floccosa	8/5/98
Westhay Moor	Didea fasciata	23/9/98
Loxley Wood	Myolepta dubia	21/6/98
Lords Wood	Brachyopa insensilis Chalcosyrphus nemorum Criorhina asilica Criorhina ranunculi Didea fasciata Xanthandrus comtus Xylota abiens Xylota florum Xylota tarda	20/6/98 28/6/98 10/5/98 6/5/98 May-Sept 98 28/6/98 28/6/98 28/6/98 May-July 98 May, July, Aug 98
Little Norton	Platycheirus tarsalis	11/5/98
Great Breach Wood	Sphegina verecunda	21/9/98
Kingsdon Wood	Xanthogramma citrofasciatum	23/5/98
lan Cross (Dorset):		
Horse Lynch Plantation, Weymouth	Epistrophe diaphana	23/6/96
Alan Stubbs (Dorset):		
Holt Heath	Callicera aurata	June 98
Mick Parker (Dorset):		
Powerstock Common DWT	Arctophila superbiens Cheilosia cynocephala	11/9/98 25/8/98
Grange Heath	Cheilosia carbonaria	16/8/98
Warmwell Heath	Cheilosia cynocephala Xylota abiens Xylota florum	21/6/98 21/6/98 21/6/98
Bowden Hill	Cheilosia cynocephala	1/7/98
Wether Hill	Cheilosia lasiopa	23/5/98

Bere Heath Wood	Cheilosia longula	4/7/98
Studland NNR	Eumerus sabulonum	2/8/98
Newton Bay	Eupeodes latilunulatus Platycheirus immarginatus Sericomyia lappona Xanthandrus comtus	8/8/98 26/7/98 15/8/98 17/10/98
Heath Bottom	Eupeodes nitens	13/7/98
Brackett's Copse DNT	Eriozona erratica	8/5/98
Wytch Heath	Sericomyia lappona	1/8/98
Oakers Bog	Trichopsomyia flavitarsis	5/7/98
Poundbury	Volucella zonaria	8/7/98
Lyscombe Hill	Xanthogramma citrofasciatum	30/5/98
4 new sites	Pelecocera tricincta	July/Aug 98
David lliff (Hampshire):		
Wootton Coppice	Cheilosia carbonaria	10/9/98

#### RECENT LITERATURE

## Kenneth R Watt 64 Hilton Drive, Aberdeen, Scotland, AB24 4NP

Allen, A.A. 1998 *Didea fasciata* Macq (Diptera, Syrphidae) in south-east London garden. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **134**: 270

Bland, K.P. & Rotheray, G.E. 1998 *Xanthandrus comtus* (Harris) (Diptera, Syrphidae) apparently resident in Scotland. *Dipterists Digest.* **5(1)**: 17

Kassebeer, C., Maibach, A. & Rotheray, G.E. 1998 The third (=final) stage larva of *Psilota anthracina* Meigen and *Psilota decessa* (Hutton) (Diptera, Syrphidae) *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **134**: 39-43

Perry, I. 1998 Sphegina siberica Stackleberg (Diptera, Syrphidae) in the Central Highlands of Scotland Dipterists Digest. **5(1)**: 8-9

Rotheray, G.E. & Stuke, J-H 1998 Third stage larvae of four species of saproxylic Syrphidae (Diptera), with a key to the larvae of British *Criorhina* species. *Entomologist's Gazette* **49**: 209-217

Rotheray, G.E. 1998 *Platycheirus splendidus* sp.n. from Britain, formerly confused with *Platycheirus scutatus* (Diptera, Syrphidae) *Entomologist's Gazette* **49**: 271-276

Rotheray, G.E., Hancock, E.G. & Maier, C.T. 1998 The larvae of two *Ceriana* species (Diptera, Syrphidae) breeding in exuded tree sap *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **134**: 223-228

Watt, K.R. & The Malloch Society 1998 Aspen Hoverfly, *Hammerschmidtia ferruginea* (Diptera, Syrphidae): An action plan North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plans Publ. Aberdeen City Council 87pp

Wynn, I.R. 1998 Hertfordshire hoverflies (Diptera, Syrphidae): a request for further records and information *Dipterists Digest.* **5(2)**: 74