



We have now reached the landmark of the 30th issue of this newsletter, and have maintained our record of having at least one new contributor in every issue. I am very grateful to all who have sent me copy, both for the current and for previous newsletters. Please keep up the flow of articles, and please do not hesitate to send comments on the notes from other writers. Readers may notice the absence of the "interesting recent records" feature from this newsletter; this is because none have been sent to me. Please consider sending suitable records so that we can again include this section; records of nationally scarce (or rare) species are welcome, as are those of more common species occurring in unusual locations or at unexpected dates, or in a particular area where they have not been recorded before or for a long time.

Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 31** (which is expected to be issued in February 2001) should be sent to me: **David Iliff, Green Willows, Station Road, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 9HN** (please note change of postcode), Email davidiliff@talk21.com to reach me by 9 December (or it may be handed to me on Dipterists' Day in November).

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DIVERGING *PLATYCHEIRUS MANICATUS* FEMALES ON THE FAROE ISLANDS

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Since 1992, one of us (J-KJ) has been intensively surveying hoverflies in the Faroe Islands in order to prepare a checklist for the islands; this list is now in press. During the course of this work, an interesting anomaly has arisen within examples of *Platycheirus manicatus* (Mg.) which neither of us has, as yet, been able to resolve in a satisfactory manner.

P. manicatus is common all over the Faroes and is on the wing from 16 May to 9 September. A number of females captured from late July to 9 September are, however, atypical, and at first sight resemble *P. melanopsis* in possessing a shining, undusted frons and thoracic dorsum. These were sent to CWP for an opinion who agreed that they did not at all resemble typical *manicatus*. However, *melanopsis* does not fly this late in the year and, in any case, these specimens did not meet the criteria for that species in all details. Thoughts of a new species inevitably sprang to our excited minds!

However, all of the males taken in the Faroes appear to be typical *manicatus* and, in spite of CWP critically examining a large number of examples, we have been unable to detect even the minutest variation from the description of *manicatus*.

The opinion of the Tore Nielsen, in Norway, was sought and several of the female specimens were sent to him for examination. He concurred with our shared view that these were certainly atypical specimens and that they differed from *P. melanopsis* in a number of characters which are summarised as follows:

- Scutum undusted on dorsum, but clearly dusted on sides (*melanopsis* entirely undusted: *manicatus* entirely dusted);
- Occiput just behind ocellar triangle shining and undusted, then dusted at the sides (*melanopsis* entirely shining: *manicatus* entirely dusted);

Jowls and mouth edge dusted (*melanopsis* shining: *manicatus* dusted);

- Central prominence of face obviously less protruding than upper mouth edge as in *manicatus* (more or less equally protruding in *melanopsis*);

Hind margin of scutellum with long and short hairs like *manicatus* (*melanopsis* only with short hairs).

Dr Nielsen's conclusion is that these are probably atypical *manicatus*. However, we feel that they are so unlike typical *manicatus* that they warrant drawing to the attention of a wider audience.

Of course, genetic isolation frequently creates "races" of insects in island situations, and it may be that this is the case with Faroese *P. manicatus*. But it is odd that only females appear to be involved. In the absence of a male it is unwise, if not impossible, to say with any certainty what these hoverflies truly are. However, we would be interested to hear from anyone who may have encountered such insects, perhaps in Scotland, perhaps elsewhere, and we would also suggest that examples of *melanopsis* identified on the basis of a shiny thoracic dorsum and frons are re-examined carefully against the characters listed above. If this variant form is found away from the Faroe Islands we will at least be able to rule out the suggestion that this is a unique island race. We would be very keen to examine and return examples of specimens that conform to the description of these unusual Faroese examples; please send them to either of us if any turn up.

DARK LEGGED FEMALE *EUPEODES LUNIGER*

David Gibbs

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Early this spring I collected one of several *Eupeodes* flying in my back garden. In Stubbs and Falk 1983 it keyed to *luniger* as expected. However, on checking the second supplement it clearly keyed to *E. lundbecki*, having a black basal half to the hind femora and rather small yellow spots on tergite two. As my specimen was no larger than an average *luniger* and my garden is a highly unlikely site for the former species, I collected some males when the sun next came out. They were all typical *luniger* although a little on the dark side, not surprising for March individuals. I have subsequently seen other *luniger* females with black hind femora and two other collectors have seen such specimens.

**ARE THERE TWO SPECIES CONFUSED UNDER *CHEILOSIA*
ALBITARSIS?**

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In 1999 I collected several male *Cheilosia* of the *albitarsis* group that approached in size *C. mutabilis*. They even have rather dusky halteres and differed in the details of the surstyli so I provisionally determined them as *mutabilis*. However I soon found rather larger individuals which agreed with these specimens in all respects so decided to dissect all my specimens and seek expert advice. They appear to fall into two distinct groups differing in average size, colour and type of hairs on front of thoracic dorsum, sides of tergite two and on dorsum of tergite four and shape of fifth protarsal segment. Differences in the surstyli seem apparent, in the larger form they are more elongate and with a lower ridge, but this seems variable and much more material is required.

I took my specimens to the Dipterists Forum meeting where Alan Stubbs told me that workers on the continent are already aware that there is more than one species confused under *albitarsis*. Nothing is published yet but it seems likely that at least two species also occur in Britain. So we'll all have to start collecting them again!

The following table is based on two specimens of form A and six specimens of form B, all males.

Species/character	Form A	Form B
Size, wing length mm	Larger, 9-9.5 mm	Smaller 7.5-9 mm
Dorsal thoracic hairs	Mixture of black and pale yellow anteriorly	Entirely black
Anterolateral hairs on tergite two	Entirely pale yellow	At least some black (can be difficult to see)
Hairs on axis of tergite four	Both erect and recumbent* golden hairs	All hairs erect except apical margin
Fifth protarsal segment	Trapezoidal narrowing anteriorly	Parallel sided
Surstyli	More elongate with lower ridge	Shorter with higher, more robust ridge

* here recumbent means leaning at an angle of more than 45 degrees from the vertical, but not adpressed to tergite. Erect hairs are usually perpendicular but can be reclined at an angle of less than 45 degrees from the vertical.

Form A Form B
Fifth protarsal segment

Form A Form B
Lateral view of ridge on surstyli

RHINGIA ROSTRATA FOUND ON THE COTSWOLDS

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In the editorial for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 17** (November 1993) I wrote of the dilemma faced by collectors and recorders in the situations where there is a close resemblance between a common or very common hoverfly and a rarity; do we pay little attention to specimens of what appears to be a common species, and thus risk missing the rarity; or do we catch, and perhaps kill large numbers of the common species in the hope that we might find the rarity among them? The examples of pairs of common and rare look-alikes that I cited were *Xylota segnis*/*X. tarda*, *Xylota sylvarum*/*Xylota xanthocnema* and *Rhingia campestris*/*R. rostrata*. In each of these cases it is probably true that the correct species can be determined in the field with the naked eye (just about), but it is probably also true that the recorder should be familiar with both species in life to be confident of doing so.

Until this year I had never found *R. rostrata* in spite of having examined numerous *Rhingia* in the field, of which all that I was able to examine closely

enough proved to be *R. campestris*, as evidenced by the presence of the distinct black margin round the tergites. As county hoverfly recorder for Gloucestershire I am interested in learning the distribution within the county of both *Rhingia* species, and as a photographer I am always hoping to find further species to add to my collection of hoverfly photographs.

Until this year the only Gloucestershire records of *R. rostrata* have been from Staunton in the Forest of Dean (in 1991 and 1992) and from Brockweir in the Wye Valley, in the garden of Andy Purcell, where the species has been present since 1998, in a spot not far from a badger latrine. Both locations are in the far west of the county, in VC34. There were no known records for VC33 (East Gloucestershire), which includes the Cotswolds. Being something of an entomological “twitcher” and anxious for an opportunity to photograph the species, I was planning to seek an invitation to the Brockweir site in the hope of finding it. However I do not now need to do so.

On 3 June 2000 I was on Nottingham Hill on the Cotswolds. There were not many hoverflies to be seen, but I came across several *Rhingia* which were immediately identifiable as *R. campestris*. My walk took me into Gotherington Wood, along a short ride running through coppiced broad-leaved woodland. At the side of the path I noticed two *Rhingia* feeding on the blooms of red campion (*Silene dioica*) and herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*); the abdomens of both appeared seemed to be of a brighter orange colour than typical *R. campestris*; I concentrated my attention on one of them, a female, and could not discern with the naked eye any sign of a black margin to the tergites. I took three photographs, and I noticed no sign of the black margin when looking through the camera lens, and I was fairly sure that there were no black markings on the tergites further back than the front half of tergite 2. I then caught the specimen. By this time the other *Rhingia* had vanished, but I was left with the strong impression that it belonged to the same species. When I reached home I was able to confirm that it was a *R. rostrata*; in addition to the features that I had observed in the field, the hoverfly had entirely orange legs, and the thorax and frons were distinctly dusted.

On 7 June I had an opportunity to revisit the site, and I did so with two objectives: to catch a female *R. campestris* with a view to comparing it with my specimen of a female *R. rostrata*, and to try to find a male *R. rostrata*. I accomplished the first, and subsequent examination of the females of the two species has convinced me that I can separate them with confidence in the field. When I reached Gotherington Wood I found several more *Rhingia rostrata*, mostly females, but eventually I found two males, one of which I photographed, and caught for examination. As before the *R. rostrata* were found on the blooms of red campion and herb robert. The abdomen in each case was bright orange (as opposed to brownish orange) and I had the impression that on average the *R. rostrata* were slightly smaller than typical *R. campestris*. The species was still present in small numbers on 10 and 28 June, while on 16 June I found a female *R. rostrata* feeding on hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale*) on a laneside verge adjacent to a small wood about a kilometre from Gotherington Wood.

The site is close to my home so I shall visit it later in the year, and at appropriate times in future years. It will be interesting to discover whether the presence there of this species is an example of its erratic occurrence as described by Alan Stubbs in **British Hoverflies** (appearing in abundance in certain woods, and not being seen again for several years) or whether Gotherington Wood (which is also close to an area frequented by badgers) will prove to house a colony of the species like the one at Brockweir.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Colin Plant has been investigating the ecology of *Doros profuges* again this year, and would be grateful if anyone who has encountered this species in the U.K but has not already told him about it would contact him immediately (e-mail preferred) giving a grid reference to at least 6 figures (8 figures if possible). He has no intention of collecting adults, and will not be disclosing any secret locations. He may however wish to excavate ant nests to see if he can find larvae or pupae, so would appreciate contact details of the site owners (if known).

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