



**Dipterists
Forum**

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Peter Chandler has passed on the result of OPINION 2153 (case 3259) that has just been published in the **Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature** 63(2), 146-147, which rules that the gender of the genus *Eristalis* is feminine, and confirms *Eristalis nemorum* and *Eristalis horticola* as valid names. The effect of this on the nomenclature of British species of *Eristalis* is that the names *Eristalis abusiva* (not *E. abusivus*) and *E. intricaria* (not *E. intricarius*) are the correct versions, while the name *Eristalis nemorum* is restored in place of *E. interrupta*, and *Eristalis horticola* (for which the name *E. lineata* had been recently used) is retained.

Hoverflies may have been in rather short supply in the last few years, but the situation cannot be as bad as the Interesting Recent Records section of recent newsletters would seem to suggest!. I introduced this feature some years ago in imitation of the Larger Brachycera Scheme's newsletter, but it has seldom attracted as many entries as I thought it should. However, unlike other Dipterists Forum recording schemes, where the scheme organiser is also the newsletter editor, the hoverfly scheme organisers do not edit the newsletter, and because the scheme produces so many records they do not have the time to filter out the most interesting ones from recorders' inputs for publication here. So please send the cream of your recent records directly to me for inclusion here.

Copy for **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 43** (which is expected to be issued with the Spring 2007 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 December 2006.

CONTENTS

Ted and Dave Levy	Dorset Hoverfly Report 2005	2
Ted and Dave Levy	Hoverflies at Portland in 2005	4
Roger Morris	Are there hoverflies in “the Fens” ?	5
John Phillips	A white-“tailed” <i>Eriozona syrphoides</i> In Gloucestershire	6
Nigel Jones	A dramatic increase in records for <i>Rhingia</i> <i>rostrata</i> in Welsh Marches area	8
Nigel Jones	<i>Cheilosia semifasciata</i> discovered in Shrewsbury	9
	Announcement: Fourth International Symposium on Syrphidae	10
	Interesting Recent Records	10
Roger Morris	Literature for 2001	11

DORSET HOVERFLY REPORT 2005

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2005 was a reasonably good year for Syrphids, though there were periods in mid-summer when high temperatures made finding hoverflies quite difficult. 111 species were recorded in the county during the year and again we are grateful to Mick Parker of Weymouth for his comprehensive lists. Our thanks also to Ian Cross for his contribution. The best of the year’s records are listed below:

Cheilosia antiqua: Broadmayne 2.5.2005; Ashley Chase 17.5.2005.

Cheilosia cynocephala: Ringmoor/Turnworth 7.5.2005.

Cheilosia griseiventris: Bincombe Hill 28.8.2005

Cheilosia grossa: Weston, Portland 17.4.2005.

Cheilosia lasiopa: Broadmayne 2.5.2005; Cranborne Chase 7.5.2005;
Ringmoor/Turnworth 15.5.2005.

Cheilosia ranunculi: Oakers Wood 2.4.2005.

Chrysotoxum elegans: The Grove, Portland 21.8.2005.

Chrysotoxum festivum: Ashley Chase 28.6.2005.

Criorhina floccosa: Ringmoor/Turnworth 15.5.2005.

Dasysyrphus tricinctus: Ringmoor/Turnworth 7.8.2005.

Epistrophe diaphana: Cranborne Chase 29.5.2005.

Eriozona erratica: Stubhampton Bottom 11.6.2007 (7th county record)

Eristalinus aeneus: Lower Kingcombe 9.8.2005.

Eumerus ornatus: Stubhampton Bottom 11.6.2005; Heath Bottom 12.6.2005.

Heringia pubescens: Cranborne Chase 1.5.2005.

Heringia vitripennis: Bracket's Copse 29.4.2005

Lejogaster splendida Shotover Heath 17.7.2005, Wytch Heath 17.7.2005 (4th county record).

Meliscaeva auricollis: Portland 20.11.2005. Late record

Orthonevra geniculata: Oakers Wood 2.4.2005.

Parasyrphus malinellus: Cranborne Chase 7.5.2005.

Pipiza bimaculata: Delcombe Wood 28.5.2005.

Platycheirus tarsalis: Cranborne Chase 1.5.2005.(5th county record.)

Scaeva selenitica: Cranborne Chase 29.5.2005.

Volucella inanis: Canford Heath 11.8.2005 (8th county record.)

Volucella zonaria: Portland Bird Observatory garden, Portland 2.10.2005.

Xanthandrus comtus: Cranborne Chase 29.5.2005; Oakers Wood 30.5.2005.

Xanthogramma citrofasciatum: Ringmoor/Turnworth 15.5.2005.

Xylota abiens: Oakers Wood 30.5.2005.

Xylota florum Oakers Wood 30.5.2005.

HOVERFLIES AT PORTLAND IN 2005

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The only find of significance this year occurred beside the footpath at the former Weston Craft Centre, Weston Street, where a specimen of *Cheilosia grossa* was taken; the insect was clinging to an old Alexanders stem in very wet weather on 17th April. This is the second Portland record of this early spring species, the first having occurred at Culverwell as long ago as 16th April 1979.

Cheilosia grossa, one of the largest members of the genus and notable for its dense, tawny pubescence, is one of the earliest members of this family to emerge each year. Its larvae develop in various thistle stems. The males are great sunshine hoverers over open spaces and will often alight on colourful clothing in mistake for flowers. Adults can be found visiting willow catkins, blackthorn blossom and lesser celandines, and on Portland would no doubt be attracted to the umbels of Alexanders. This species is relatively scarce in Dorset with only eight locality records. The nearest mainland site is Chafeys Lake, Weymouth.

All but one of the *Cheilosia* genus are shiny, black flies of varying sizes; they are difficult to identify and most need to be checked under a microscope. Of the 30 or more species on the British list, 26 have been confirmed for Dorset and eight have occurred on Portland. The larvae of the genus develop in various plant stems and roots; at least one is found in fungi and some smaller species mine the leaves of sedum; they are mainly woodland species.

(Editor's Note: the above article was originally published in the **Portland Bird Observatory Report for 2005**, and is reproduced here with the permission of the authors and the report editor. The full report is available from the Observatory bookshop).

ARE THERE HOVERFLIES IN “THE FENS”?

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A quick look at the hoverfly distribution maps in the provisional atlas (Ball & Morris, 2000) would doubtless lead the casual observer to believe that the area between Peterborough and The Wash had simply not been adequately covered, and at the time they might have been right. Since 2004, however, I have sought to address this discrepancy: it has been hard work!

The fens of Cambridgeshire and south Lincolnshire comprise some of the best agricultural land in the country and consist of a patchwork of strips of land with names like Moulton Fen and Weston Fen. The whole area is dissected with a network of drains such as North Level Main Drain and South Holland Main Drain with numerous smaller drains between individual strips. The names remind us of the original Dutch drainage engineers that were responsible for draining the fens. This period of agricultural expansion must have been accompanied by massive loss of wetland habitat and related hoverfly interest (e.g. *Anasimyia interpuncta*). But the drain-sides and roadside verges ought to support some of these hoverflies and there are numerous hamlets and villages with churches, so there are possibilities of small areas of sheltered habitat suitable for recording hoverflies. I have therefore made a number of trips out in search of the elusive fenland hoverflies and can now confirm that they do exist, but in very low numbers.

This spring I have made three separate trips out, one covering the area towards Spalding and Boston (3 May 2006), the next being towards Wisbech and Downham Market (28 May 2006), and finally towards Whittlesea and March on 30 May. Together, they have yielded some 200 records from eighteen 10km squares. On the first two occasions conditions were good although a shade blustery, whilst the last one was overcast turning to broken sunshine but blustery. From these and previous visits, it is clear that opportunities for hoverfly recording fall into four broad categories:

- Expanses of rank grassland, nettles and *Anthriscus* with patches of elderberry and other shrubs that lie between major roads and the bigger drains and rivers such as the Nene and Welland. In places, the rivers have fringes of reeds and other emergents and may be expected to yield species such as *Tropida scita*. So far, I've failed to find *Anasimyia interpuncta*.
- Deep, steep-sided secondary drains with similar rank grassland and occasional scrub, and sometimes with fringes of reeds. These can be difficult and indeed dangerous to work.

- Small patches of scrubby woodland that looks to have been planted as windbreaks and often comprises a range of unexpected species. Many are well established, however, and can be regarded as suitable for many predaceous hoverflies.
- Churchyards with windbreaks of mature trees – often horse chestnut and lime, but occasionally an ancient ash pollard. These are the best recording sites and yield a surprising assemblage of hoverflies. My records include *Criorhina berberina* and *Criorhina floccosa*, *Melangyna cincta* and *Tropida scita*, together with the usual assemblage of woodland aphid predators (*Epistrophe eligans*, *Dasysyrphus albostriatus* and *D. venustus*).

My suspicion is that with diligent working the fens may be expected to yield between twenty and thirty species in each ten kilometre square, most of which will comprise common migrants, various *Platycheirus* and *Melanostoma* and ubiquitous species such as *Xylota segnis* and *Neoascia podagrica*. There may be surprises, however, as my captures on 28 May 2006 included *Heringia heringi*, *Pipizella virens*, and *Cheilosia variabilis*. Where there are settlements with churches, greater variation can be expected and although my lists do not cover a full season's recording I suspect that many will yield perhaps 40 species. In many cases the churchyards are of considerable antiquity as the church architecture clearly shows (some date back in part to the 12th Century and possibly earlier). They are clearly important refugia for small populations of woodland species and must be regarded as "hot spots" in an otherwise barren landscape. Where else in the country do churchyards support such biodiversity and is there any merit in developing a project to look specifically at churchyard hoverfly faunas? Answers on a postcard or by logging into the hoverfly recording scheme website www.hoverfly.org.uk.

A WHITE-"TAILED" *ERIOZONA SYRPHOIDES* IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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On 18 May 2006, during sunny intervals between rain showers, at least fifteen species of hoverflies including *Criorhina berberina* (both colour forms), *Portevinia maculata* and *Rhingia rostrata* were taking nectar from flowering Ramsons *Allium ursinum* on the edge of Flaxley Woods, West Gloucestershire (SO6816). This is a heavily coniferised ancient woodland, with the plantations now reaching economic maturity. My attention was attracted by a large "black and white" looking hoverfly in flight, which fortunately settled nearby and began nectaring, allowing me to identify it as a female *E. syrphoides* and to take a few photographs. The large size and elongated shape, yellow face and fairly long

antennae were conspicuous in the field, as were the pale “shoulders” (sides of anterior thoracic dorsum), a feature which is shown in Plate 4, though not specifically mentioned in the text, in Stubbs & Falk (2002).

This is the third record for Gloucestershire, the previous sightings being in 2005 at Pope’s Hill (SO6814) which is only about 1km from Flaxley Woods, and in 1982 in the same 10km square in the Forest of Dean (SO6012). The Dean is well-provided with maturing conifer plantations, including Spruces *Picea* which are favoured by *E. syrphoides* in former Czechoslovakia (Ball & Morris 2000), and it could well prove to be quite widespread here.

An interesting feature of this individual was that it was of a white -“tailed” form, with the posterior tergite largely white with just a faint yellowish or buffish tinge near the anterior edge - the same shade as the scutellum and sides of the anterior thoracic dorsum. Neither Stubbs & Falk (2002) nor van Veen (2004) mention the existence of a white-tailed form, though it is illustrated in Kormann (1988). The tail hairs of British and Continental specimens of *E. syrphoides* in the Natural History Museum (NHM) vary from red through buff to nearly white, with the ground colour red (in specimens with red tail hairs) or black. Red tail hairs tend to be found more in males than in females. The three British specimens in the NHM are all at the paler end of the range, though there is the possibility that there may have been some colour fading after death.

Thanks to David Iliff for providing this information, and to Nigel Wyatt at the NHM for checking the specimens there.

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A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN RECORDS FOR *RHINGIA ROSTRATA* IN WELSH MARCHES AREA

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In some twenty years of searching for hoverflies I had never seen *Rhingia rostrata*. Then, on 24 April 2005 I came across a single *R. rostrata* in woodland beneath the Wrekin Hill in Shropshire and a few weeks later I found two more at the same location. This was followed by a further record for woodland near Shrewsbury on 29 May. I later heard from Harry Green in Worcestershire that the species had been turning up "all over the place" in that county. Harry and Kevin McGee have recorded *R. rostrata* at thirteen Worcestershire sites, on forty-two separate occasions since 2000. The majority of these records have been made since 2003, indicating that the population of this species has increased dramatically in the last three years.

In early 2006 more locations have been discovered, with three additional Shropshire sites - near Highley, Crickheath and Chirbury, plus three for Herefordshire, where first Roger Morris found one at Haugh Wood prior to the spring Dipterists Forum field meeting and I found a singleton at Croft Castle, near Leominster (24 May), then an abundance of the species, flying with *R. campestris* at Frith Wood, near Ledbury on 26 May.

In my own experience, *R. rostrata* favours damp woodland edge situations, feeding at Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and Red Campion *Silene dioica*, flying in early spring. However the Worcestershire records are predominately for the later part of the summer and into the autumn. With the latest record for 11 October 2003. Many of the Worcestershire records are of the species feeding at Devils Bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

Most of the encounters with *R. rostrata* are with singletons or up to six individuals. However on odd occasions there may be good numbers present, as at Frith Wood on 26 May 2006; Joan's Hole, near Heightington, Worcestershire on 24 April 2003 and at Tiddesley Wood, Worcestershire on 15 September 2002.

It certainly appears that *Rhingia rostrata* is enjoying a surge in numbers in what can loosely be termed as the Welsh Marches area. In addition the latest map on the Recording Scheme's web-site shows a cluster of records in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, so there appears to be a great concentration of records in the middle-west of England. David Iliff wrote in **Hoverfly Newsletter No. 38** (August 2004) of a dramatic increase in the species in Gloucestershire since 2000. It will

be interesting to see if similar numbers are present across the border in Wales and indeed if the species continues to turn up with such frequency.

My thanks to Harry Green and Kevin Mcgee for providing their Worcestershire records of *R rostrata* and commenting on this report.

CHEILOSIA SEMIFASCIATA DISCOVERED IN SHREWSBURY

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I have long regarded the possibility of *Cheilosia semifasciata* occurring in Shropshire as quite a strong one. The county contains a good number of locations where Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* thrives, and there is a cluster of records for the species in nearby north Wales. In April 2006 I noted a particularly promising stand of Navelwort in woodland close to Shrewsbury. I returned on 3 June and initially I could not find the stand of Navelwort. After a good deal of searching I realised that the stand had been devastated, with all the leaves reduced to shrivelled remains. Eventually, I found a few leaves that had not withered away and to my delight I found that each leaf contained larvae of *C. semifasciata*. Evidently, the larvae had completely laid waste a substantial stand of its food-plant.

Later that day I e-mailed the Shropshire Botanical Society to ask their members to inspect any stands of Navelwort they came across. The next morning the SBS secretary contacted me to say that he had been out that morning to a streamside location near Pontesbury, where he had found *C. semifasciata* infested Navelwort. A few days later, on 6 June I found more larvae in Navelwort, under trees, at Lee Brockhurst, about ten miles north of Shrewsbury.

It seems very likely that *C. semifasciata* could be present in most over-shaded stands of Navelwort in Shropshire and I anticipate that there could be numerous colonies in nearby Mid Wales remaining to be discovered.

**ANNOUNCEMENT: FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
SYRPHIDAE, 29 JUNE-3 JULY 2007**

The following message has been received from Gunilla Ståhls:

First Announcement. The IV International Symposium on Syrphidae will be held in Siikaranta, Espoo, Finland, June 29 - July 3, 2007. A one-day excursion trip in southern part of Finland is planned for July 4. A second announcement including registration and planned program will follow in January 2007. The organizing committee is open for suggestions about thematic sessions, etc. (gunilla.stahls@helsinki.fi). Siikaranta Congress Hotel (www.siikaranta.fi; pages in English will be posted soon) can be reached from the city centre of Helsinki by commuter train to Leppävaara rail station, and then local bus 28T to Siikaranta (total duration of trip 45-60 mins). The venue is situated close to the Nuuksio National Park (>3800 hectares), a rocky upland boreal forest area with many lakes and hiking trails. We hope to meet many syrphidologists in Finland in 2007! The Organizing Committee: Gunilla Ståhls, Antti Haarto, Sakari Kerppola.

INTERESTING RECENT RECORDS

Melangyna cincta: many males resting on laurel foliage, Batsford Arboretum, Gloucestershire, SP1833, 29 April 2006 (David Iliff)

Neoascia meticulousa: 1 female, Oxenhall Canal, Gloucestershire, SO7127, 13 May 2006 (Martin Matthews); fifth record for Gloucestershire VCs (33/34), but only second outside Bristol area.

Sphaerophoria philanthus: 2 males, The Park, Tidenham, Gloucestershire, ST556993, on recently restored heathland, 15 July 2006 (John Harper).

Myolepta dubia: several, Ebernoe Common, West Sussex, SU977273, mid-June 2006 (Alan Stubbs).

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Compiled by Roger Morris

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