

SOMERSET HOVERFLY REPORT 1999–2001

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Despite the foot-and-mouth restrictions and also time lost through illness, records for 2001 seem quite good and progress was made with Hoverfly lists for Bickham Wood (SWT) and Marston Wood, just south of Frome. It was noticed that aphid-dependant species like *Dasysyrphus*, *Epistrophe* and *Syrphus* were rather scarce in the first half of the year, perhaps due to the very wet winter period.

Three new species were added to the County List as follows,

Platycheirus splendidus

A species recently split from the common *Platycheirus scutatus*, which was found when we re-examined our specimens. The new species was taken at Lord's Wood on 5.6.1997.

The two *Platycheirus* are doubtfully separable in the field, so microscope study is necessary. Males are easier to distinguish than females.

Platycheirus occultus

Also new to Somerset was found at Dolebury Warren on 3.5.1999, Weston Moor 8.6.1999 and Max Bog 27.7.1999 by David Gibbs.

Cheilosia ranunculi

Is another newly split species and needs to be separated from the very common *Cheilosia albitarsis*. David Gibbs has found the new species at three sites in May 2001. It may well be just as common as the latter species, but needs to be captured to ascertain its identity.

Several new sites for *Pandasyopthalmus haemorrhous*, *Xanthogramma festiva* and *Volucella inflata* were found. Coverage of Syrphidae in Somerset has now reached 780 sites and the County List stands at 206 species.

We are most grateful to Janet Boyd, David Gibbs, Roger Sutton and H.G. Ward for their record contributions.

The most interesting species found during the three years are as follows:

Anasimyia transfugus

Pawlett Levels 15.5.2000 (David Gibbs) (10th Locality Record), Shapwick Heath 19.5.2000.

Arctophila superbiens

Folly Farm 25.7.2001 (David Gibbs); Bickham Wood 10.8.2000; Chewton Wood 15.8.2000; Otterhead Lakes 2.9.2000; Emborough 9.10.2001 (all ET/DA Levy).

Brachypalpoidea lenta

Marston Wood 12.6.2001; Bickham Wood 21.5.2001 (both ET/DA Levy).

Brachypalpus laphriformis

Goblin Combe 16.5.1999; Cheddar Gorge 31.5.2000; Radstock Sidings 16.6.1999 (David Gibbs) (6th, 7th and 8th County Records).

Chalcosyrphus nemorum

Weston Moor 12.5.1999/ 8.6.1999 (David Gibbs); Bickham Wood 4.5.2001 (ET/DA Levy).

Cheilosia albipila

Priddy Mines 21.3.2000; Cheddar Gorge 10.4.2000; Monks Wood 27.3.1999 (all David Gibbs).

Cheilosia antiqua

Bickham Wood 29.4.2000 (ET/DA Levy).

Cheilosia grossa

Monks Wood 27.3.1999 (David Gibbs) (8th County Record).

Cheilosia lasiopa (previously *honestia*)

Dolebury Warren 3 & 19.5.1999; Weston Moor 12.5.1999 (both David Gibbs) (9th, 10th and 11th County Records).

Cheilosia soror

Westem Big Wood 12.7.2001; Sladers Leigh 1.1.7.2001 (both David Gibbs).

Cheilosia urbana (previously *praecox*)

Bleadon Quarry 4.5.1999; Goblin Combe 16.5.1999 (both David Gibbs) (4th and 5th County Records).

Chrysogaster coemiteriorum

Sladers Leigh 11.7.2001 (David Gibbs).

Chrysotoxum elegans

Dolebury Warren 4.7.1999; Sladers Leigh 11.7.2001; Cheddar Gorge 22.7.2000 and 19.7.2001 (all David Gibbs) (5th and 6th Locality Records).

Criorhina asilica

Marston Wood 28.5.1999, 9.6.2001 (ET/DA Levy); Goblin Combe 16.5.1999 (David Gibbs).

Criorhina floccosa

Monks Wood 15.5.1999; Goblin Combe 16.5.1999 (David Gibbs).

Criorhina ranunculi

Priors Wood 2.4.1999; Bourton Combe 9.4.1999; Folly Farm 10.4.1999 (all David Gibbs).

Didea fasciata

Otterhead Lakes 27.8.1999 (ET/DA Levy).

Eoseristalis abusivus

Blakes Pools, Kingston Seymour 2.6.1999 (David Gibbs).

Eristalinus aeneus

Brean Down 30.4.2000 (David Gibbs) (6th County Record).

Eumerus ornatus

Bickham Wood 19.6.2001 (ET/DA Levy).

Heringia heringi

Bath Western 14.8.2001 (David Gibbs) (8th County Record).

Mallota cimbiciformis

Ashton Court 20.6.1999 (David Gibbs).

Megasyrphus erraticus

Hedgecock Hill 26.6.2000 (ET/DA Levy) (4th County Record).

Orthonevra brevicornis

Folly Farm 22.5.1999 (David Gibbs) (7th County Record); Marston Wood 28.5.1999 (ET/DA Levy).

Pipizella virens

Max Bog 25.6.1999 (David Gibbs).

Platycheirus tarsalis

Radstock Sidings 25.5.1999 (David Gibbs).

Scaeva selenitica

Chewton Wood 15.8.2000 (ET/DA Levy) (10th County Record).

Sericomyia lappona

Marston Wood 28.5.1999; Bickham Wood 29.4.2001 (both ET/DA Levy).

Sphegina verecunda

Otterhead Lakes 6.9.2000 (ET/DA Levy).

Trichopsomyia flavitarsis

Pawlett Levels 4.6.1999; Sladers Leigh 11.7.2001 (David Gibbs).

Volucella inanis

Tickenham Hill 27.8.2001 (David Gibbs) (4th County Record).

Volucella zonaria

Bath 29.7.1999 (H. G. Ward); Bath Western 23.7.2001 (David Gibbs) (4th and 5th County Records).

Xanthandrus comtus

Marston Wood 28.5.1999; Priddy 28.9.2001 (both ET/DA Levy); Sand Point 24.6.2001 (David Gibbs).

THE STRIKING *SERICOMYIAS*

The two species of *Sericomyia* are easy to recognise in the field and are large enough to attract some attention.

Sericomyia silentis (Fig.1) is the largest, commonest and with bright yellow abdominal markings, the most likely to be seen. *S. silentis* is often larger than a honey bee, the largest hoverfly of damp, marshy places, too robust in build to be a realistic ‘wasp mimic’ and, despite the buzz, quite harmless (like all our hoverflies). This species occurs all over the Somerset Levels, in open habitats of heathland and in damp woodland rides or clearings. We have seen it in the suburbs of Yeovil, along lanes with ditches, where Water Dropwort umbels abound. The larval stages are aquatic, found amongst the roots of water plants and the adults begin to appear in late May with late examples seen on Ivy blossom in October. It is widely distributed over both vice-counties of Somerset and we have 69 locality records.

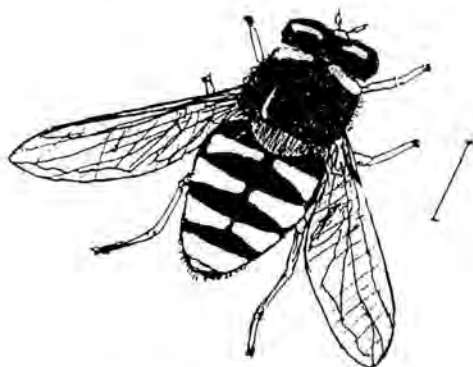


Fig. 1 *Sericomyia silentis*, slightly triangular yellow markings



Fig. 2 *Sericomyia lappona*, narrow white abdominal markings

Sericomyia lappona (Fig. 2) is decidedly scarcer and a little smaller than *S. silentis*. Its flight period is earlier and it can easily be distinguished by its pure white markings. It seems to be much more sensitive about its habitats, occurring in boggy moorland, so the Somerset Levels

and Exmoor are its main bases in the county. As if to contradict this, we were very surprised to find it at Bickham Wood last year, feeding on a variety of plants including Lesser Celandine and Wild Garlic, close to laneside ditches. *S. lappona* first appears in late April, peaks in May/June and individuals are occasionally seen in August. We have just 21 locality records.

Both species like to sit and enjoy the sun and, as they tend to spread their wings at 45 degrees, the bold yellow or white abdominal markings are easily observed. *S. lappona* is invariably seen at low level amongst ground flora, but the commoner *S. silentis* is also often seen on shrub and tree blossom. More records of these two hoverflies would be most welcome. People living near the Somerset Levels could possibly see both species in their gardens. For those who prefer not to collect specimens but photograph wildlife instead, we will be happy to identify hoverflies from good prints or slides. Although many species cannot be determined this way and require microscopic study, others, like the *Sericomyias*, are easily recognisable.