

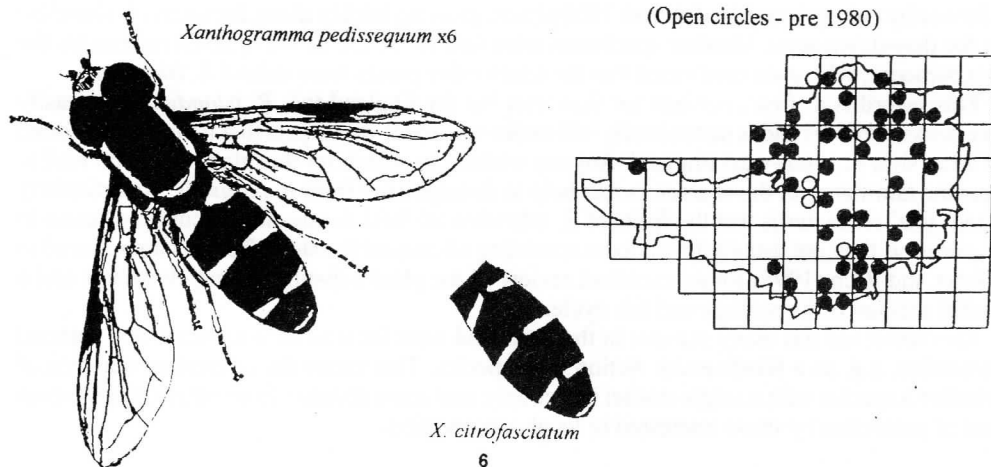
THE ORNATE HOVERFLY

Prior to the early 1900s, this hoverfly was known as *Syrphus omatum*, as named by Dr. J W Meigen in 1822. It seems to us a very appropriate name for this striking, very immaculate wasp-mimic, which is a great favourite of ours.

Xanthogramma pedissequum, its proper scientific name, is slightly larger than a Common House Fly, a sleeker, more streamlined insect of shining black, with brilliant yellow bands along the sides of the glossy thorax and stripes and triangles on the abdomen. The wings are often held at a full 45° angle, so these markings are easy to see, especially when it rests so openly – on a sun-lit leaf low down on a bank or hedgerow. This is a species of wooded clearings and common-land scrub, but it also can be seen in suburban gardens, as here in Yeovil.

Usually it occurs singly and most often is found resting on leaves less than 1m above the ground, hovering about a foot above the ground or flying erratically amongst low vegetation, when it is thought to be looking for ant nests. Its larvae are said to develop amid ant communities like several other hoverflies. Rarely we have seen it feeding at Wild Carrot and other umbelliferae.

The adult fly first appears in April and can be seen well into September. We have records from 64 localities in Somerset, since it was first listed for the county at Minehead in 1906.



Left: *Xanthogramma pedissequum*; Centre: *X. citrofasciatum*; Right: Somerset distribution of *X. pedissequum* (open circles = pre 1980)

There are two *Xanthogramma* species on the UK list, though the second species is decidedly scarcer and has a much more limited flight period.

Xanthogramma citrofasciatum flies from late April till mid-June, but mainly in May and some years individuals are seen in their habitats for less than a fortnight. This is an insect of open grassy places, commons, verges, and drier marshland and is invariably seen at rest on a grass blade or amid short turf on the ground. We have found it at rest on sedge flowers and feeding on umbelliferae. It is perhaps not quite as striking as its commoner cousin and can be identified by the narrower linear stripes on the abdominal segments. We have 28 site records mainly from North Somerset (VC6).