

Megasyrphus annulipes

A largish hoverfly, with a wingspan of about 25mm. Abdomen black with yellow stripes, like many similar species, but this one is larger and rather hairier than comparable species. The thorax is blackish-brown and shiny.

Habitat Found in woodland margins and rides.

Status and distribution Widespread but local in the UK, rather more frequent in Europe.

Season 5–10.

Similar species

No close relatives, but see *Syrphus ribesii* (see p.224)

Meliscaeva cinctella

A smallish hoverfly, wingspan about 20mm. Abdomen pattern rather resembles *Episyrphus balteatus* without the double black mark, though overall it is a slightly smaller and more slender species.

Habitat In scrub and rough flowery habitats; very mobile.

Status and distribution Widespread and frequent, probably migratory.

Season 5–10.

Similar species

Melangyna cincta is similar in size and general markings, but has more black, with the uppermost yellow markings reduced to 2 lateral triangles. Widespread, more frequent in the south.

Meliscaeva auricollis has the dark abdominal bands prolonged forwards into a pointed triangle. It is widespread in wooded places, common in the south, rarer further north.

Metasyrphus corollae

Wingspan about 16–18mm. Wings clear, thorax unmarked, abdomen black with 1 interrupted and 2 notched or interrupted stripes of yellow.

Habitat Almost any flowery habitat, including gardens.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout, with numbers probably boosted by migration in some years.

Season 5–10.

Similar species

M. latifasciatus has a rather broader abdomen, and areas of yellow more rounded. Widespread and moderately frequent in open flowery habitats, especially in damp places.

Metasyrphus luniger

Similar in size and general shape to the above 2 species but generally blacker in appearance, with 3 pairs of comma-shaped lunules of creamy yellow on the abdomen.

Habitat A wide variety of flowery habitats such as pastures, woodland rides, gardens.

Status and distribution Widespread and common, probably boosted by immigrants in some years.

Season 4–10.

Similar species

M. nielsenii is very similar, but the lunules have blunter outer ends. Very local, mainly in Scotland in the UK, but occasional elsewhere; widespread but local in Europe. *M. nitens* often has the yellow bands joined, except the uppermost. Local, in old woodlands.

See also *Scaeva* species (p.222).



Megasyrphus annulipes



Meliscaeva cinctella



Metasyrphus corollae



Metasyrphus latifasciatus



Metasyrphus nitens

Epistrophe nitidicollis

A typical hoverfly, with yellow and black abdomen. Wingspan 22–24mm. The legs are entirely orange, and the thoracic pattern should be checked carefully against the photograph.

Habitat Woodland rides and glades.

Status and distribution Local in southern part of UK, more widespread on the Continent.

Season 5–8.

Similar species

E. diaphana has broader yellow bands on the thorax; local.

E. grossulariae has even broader bands, with the top one consisting of 2 almost square blocks. Widespread but local.

Episyrphus balteatus

Probably the most frequently noticed hoverfly. The orange body, with double black stripes across it (the lower one very narrow in each case) is distinctive.

Habitat May occur in almost any habitat where there are flowers; highly mobile, migrating widely.

Status and distribution Widespread and abundant throughout, though varying in numbers according to the number of immigrants.

Season Mainly 3–11, but could be seen in any month.

Leucozona lucorum

A distinctive medium-large hoverfly, with a wingspan of about 25mm and a broad body. Abdomen creamy-white above, black towards the tip; thorax black with brown hairs. The wings have a dark patch near the centre of the front margin.

Habitat Damp open woodland with rides and clearings.

Status and distribution Widespread, frequent in the south though rarer further

north in the UK. Widespread on the Continent.

Season 5–8, most frequent 5–6.

Similar species

L. glauca has less white on the abdomen, and a more slender body. Similar habitats, but more local.

Scaeva pyrastris

A largish conspicuous hoverfly, with a wingspan of about 25mm. The black abdomen, with 3 creamy-white pairs of lunules, is a distinctive combination (except for species below).

Habitat Most open sunny flowery habitats, including gardens; a very mobile species.

Status and distribution Widespread and generally common, with numbers boosted in some years by immigration.

Season 5–10.

Similar species

S. selenitica is superficially similar, but the white commas extend equally far up the abdomen at either end. Local but widespread.

Sphaerophoria scripta

One of a group of similar small species, with a wingspan of 12–15mm, and a yellow edge to the black thorax. Abdomen black and yellow; in this species, the long abdomen projects noticeably beyond the wings. Markings variable.

Habitat In most flowery habitats including gardens and waste ground.

Season 5–10.

Similar species

S. mentastri is slightly smaller, and has each yellow bar interrupted. Widespread and common throughout.

S. philanthus is smaller and darker, with 4 pairs of yellow dots. Mainly western in UK on heaths, moors, acid uplands.



Epistrophe nitidicollis



Episyrphus balteatus



Episyrphus balteatus, pupa



Leucozona lucorum

Scaeva pyrastris

Sphaerophoria scripta



Syrphus ribesii

A common and familiar 'typical' hoverfly. Wingspan 20–24mm. Thorax dark, unmarked. Abdomen broad, roughly oval, with 1 interrupted and 3 uninterrupted yellow bands; females have entirely yellow hind femora.

Habitat Most flowery habitats, such as rough grassland, hedgerows, gardens.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season 5–11.

Similar species

See *Megasyrphus annulipes* (p.220).

Syrphus vitripennis

This species resembles *S. ribesii* in general form and colouring. It is usually slightly smaller and more slender, and part of the hind femora of the females is always black (all yellow in the above species). Males are much more difficult to separate with certainty in the field.

Habitat Occurs in a wide variety of flowery habitats. They migrate widely and can appear almost anywhere.

Status and distribution Common and widespread throughout, varying in abundance according to immigrant numbers.

Season 3–11.

Xanthogramma pedisequum

An attractive medium-sized species, with a wingspan of about 22mm. Generally black, but with a yellow stripe on each side of the thorax, yellow triangles on each side of the abdomen, then 2 interrupted yellow stripes below that. Wings have dark patches towards the front margins.

Habitat Grassland, woodland rides and other flowery places, usually where there is some bare ground.

Status and distribution Widespread but local in UK; widespread on the Continent.

Season 5–9.

Similar species

X. citrofasciatum. Similar in size, shape and general appearance, but wings barely marked, and the first yellow markings on the abdomen are stripes rather than triangles. Widespread on the Continent, but local and southern in the UK.

Rhingia campestris

One of the most distinctive of hoverflies, once learnt. Wingspan 22–25mm. Abdomen brownish-orange, usually with a dark stripe down the centre (occasionally much reduced). The most distinctive feature is the extended snout, clearly visible from most angles.

Habitat Most closely associated with damp cattle pastures, but they are mobile and can turn up almost anywhere.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season 5–10, most frequent in early summer.

Similar species

R. rostrata is generally more orange, with virtually no dark stripe, and the snout is slightly smaller and paler – not always easy to separate from *R. campestris*. Local or rare, mainly in woodland.



Syrphus vitripennis



Syrphus ribesii



Rhingia campestris



Xanthogramma pedisequum

Drone-fly

Eristalis tenax

A common and familiar species, noted for its mimicry of male Honey Bee. Wingspan 24–28mm. Highly variable, basically deep brown with 2 narrow whitish rings, and greater or lesser amounts of orange on the edges of the abdomen. Rather hairy.

Habitat A very wide range of habitats, occurring almost anywhere that there are flowers.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season Can be seen in any month, and adults hibernate.

Similar species

E. horticola has a shorter, broader abdomen, a darkened area in the centre of the wing, and broad curved yellow marks on the abdomen. Widespread but local throughout.

Eristalis pertinax

Rather similar to Drone Fly, though slightly more slender with a strongly tapering abdomen, and with 1 pair of broad yellow markings on the abdomen; front legs wholly orange.

Habitat Found in a wide variety of habitats, wherever there are flowers. Larvae breed in wet, organically enriched situations.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season 3–10.

Eristalis intricarius

A furry bee mimic, similar in size to Drone-fly, though seeming more robust as it is much hairier. Body dark and light brown, legs black and yellow.

Habitat Various flowery places, especially if damp or semi-shaded.

Status and distribution Widespread throughout, but local.

Season 3–9.

Similar species

See Narcissus Fly (p.228), which is usually darker, and has all-black legs.

Eristalis nemorum

A smaller species than the above, with a wingspan of about 22mm, and a shorter body. Abdominal markings similar to *E. pertinax*, legs black and yellow, wing with just a small squarish dark mark.

Habitat A wide range of flowery habitats.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season 4–9.

Similar species

E. arbustorum can be almost identical in size and markings, though the face is usually pale without a dark stripe, and there is usually more yellow on the abdomen. Similar habitats and distribution.

Eristalinus sepulchralis

A small blackish fly, with a wingspan of less than 20mm. Thorax and abdomen black, with obscure greyish stripes on the abdomen. An active little fly, less approachable than many hoverflies.

Habitat Lowland marshes, damp grazing and similar damp flowery habitats.

Status and distribution Widespread but local throughout.

Season 4–9.

Similar species

E. aeneus is rather larger and longer-bodied, blacker in colour overall. A local species, occurring mainly in coastal habitats.



Drone-fly



Eristalis horticola



Eristalis pertinax



Eristalis intricarius



Eristalis nemorum



Eristalinus sepulchralis

Helophilus pendulus

A very attractive and distinctive hoverfly. Wingspan about 25mm. Thorax boldly striped with 3 black stripes on yellow; abdomen yellow and black; legs predominantly pale yellowish, with small patches of black.

Habitat Almost any rough flowery habitats, though especially common near water, where the larvae usually live.

Status and distribution Widespread and common throughout.

Season 4-10.

Similar species

H. hybridus is very like *H. pendulus*; males tend to have more continuous yellow markings down each side of the abdomen, and there is more black on the hind legs of both sexes. Local around well-vegetated ponds. Widespread.

Myathropa florea

Resembles the larger *Eristalis* species in size and markings, but is brighter in colour and more boldly marked, and the pattern is reasonably distinctive on close examination. Wings virtually clear.

Habitat Flowery rides and clearings in woodland, or on wooded commons.

Status and distribution Widespread but only locally common.

Season 5-10.

Narcissus-fly

Merodon equestris

A dark, hairy bumble bee mimic, with a wingspan of 22-24mm. Head and thorax basically all black, but widely variable in the colour of the hairs, mimicking various species of bumble bee, including the red-tailed ones; legs all black.

Habitat Woods and other sheltered flowery places. Unusually for hoverflies, the larvae live in monocotyledonous bulbs, mainly Wild Daffodils and Bluebells, but they can also be a horticultural pest on cultivated bulbs.

Status and distribution Widespread, though only rarely abundant.

Season 5-8; most frequently seen in May.

Sericomyia silentis

A most attractive largish hoverfly, with a wingspan of about 30mm. When seen in the field, the golden fringe of hairs is very noticeable. Legs yellow, wings clear except for a brownish main vein.

Habitat Damp well-vegetated acid areas, around peat-cuttings or bog pools. Frequently visits flowers of Devil's Bit Scabious in late summer.

Status and distribution A widespread species throughout and locally common in suitable habitats.

Season 5-10.

Similar species

See *Megasyrphus annulipes* (p. 220).

Sericomyia lappona

An attractive and distinctive species, resembling the above in general form, but smaller. The abdominal stripes are thinner and paler, more or less parallel-sided, and just meeting along the midline.

Habitat In damp places, especially associated with bogs or other peaty habitats.

Status and distribution A local species, though widespread both in Britain and on the Continent. Generally commoner northwards, where there is more suitable habitat.

Season 4-8.



Helophilus pendulus



Myathropa florea



Narcissus-fly



Sericomyia silentis



Sericomyia lappona