

Sphaerophoria taeniata (Meigen, 1822) A new species of hoverfly for Wyre Forest

GARY FARMER



Sphaerophoria taeniata

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On 27th July 2019 members of the Wyre Forest Study Group met at Hawkbatch to look for and record wildlife along the pipeline. This sheltered grassland area should have been buzzing with insects at this time of year but the weather was not feeling at all summery; it was cold, dark and very wet! Despite this, the brave (or foolhardy) Study Group members continued with the planned walk. It would be fair to say, that there was unsurprisingly "not a lot about", even the bryologists amongst us who normally curse the hot summer sun (preferring a little dampness to bring the mosses to life) were struggling to stay enthusiastic in the torrential drizzle of this dullest of July days.

There was life however; a few bumblebees were battling through the soaked vegetation, searching for flowers and a couple of grasshoppers were easily caught, unable to jump far in such cold temperatures. I even found a few butterflies sheltering amongst the vegetation, somehow surviving the downpour by hiding under leaves and grass stems. A Purple Hairstreak was a nice surprise sheltering low down under leaves of an oak, knocked from its usual high perch in the canopy by the falling raindrops. I then noticed a bright yellow hoverfly, its elongate body made it immediately

identifiable as a *Sphaerophoria* species, but this was shorter bodied than the common *S. scripta* and its yellow bands were very broad. I decided to take this to identify later. After keying it through and referring to Steven Falk's Flickr site I found it to be *Sphaerophoria taeniata*, and it appears to be a new species for Wyre Forest. I had seen and identified specimens of this species from the Avon valley near Evesham, collected by Terry Knight in 2018. It had only been recorded from near the Severn at Worcester in the county before that. According to Steven Falk's Flickr site this is a widespread but localised southern species that is currently expanding its range into the Midlands.

This just goes to show, even on the dampest of days there are always things to find in the forest.

References

Steven Falk's Flickr site available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/albums/72157631661413177/>

Stubbs, A. & Falk, S. 2002. British Hoverflies: An Illustrated Identification Guide (2nd edition). British Entomological and Natural History Society