



Hoverflies of Tentsmuir

S.T. Buckland



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This is not a comprehensive account of the hoverflies of Tentsmuir. It covers just the species that I have been able to identify and photograph. I would like to thank the remarkable support given by Roger Morris and colleagues through the UK Hoverflies Facebook page. Any remaining errors of identification are mine alone!

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Hoverflies of Tentsmuir

Given its northerly location, there is a surprisingly wide variety of hoverfly species at Tentsmuir. The species are not at all evenly distributed. Hotspots for hoverflies include where the trees meet the dunes at Kinshaldy, the dunes near the ice house at Tentsmuir Point (especially in May, when the catkins of creeping willow attract a remarkably wide variety of species), the track that runs from Leuchars to the beach along the edge of the army base, and in particular, Morton Lochs. At Morton Lochs, the most productive place to look for hoverflies is the railway path, which runs north and south from the car park. The stretch of path south of the car park from the bridge to the southern end is always worth checking on sunny days from April to September.



Waisted swamp fly *Anasimyia contracta*

A scarce species in Fife, associated with bulrushes. This one put in a very brief appearance at Morton Lochs in early July 2020.



Common dainty *Baccha elongata*

Occurs along the more shaded paths at Morton Lochs.





Lesser spring blacklet *Cheilosia albipila*

The above female was on creeping willow near the ice house at Tentsmuir Point in May 2018. The female below was at Morton Lochs in late April 2019. These are the first and second records for Fife.





Buttercup blacklet *Cheilosia albitarsis* /

bulbous buttercup blacklet *Cheilosia ranunculi*

These individuals are probably *Cheilosia albitarsis*, which is far more widespread than *C. ranunculi*.





Primrose blacklet *Cheilosia antiqua* /
lady's mantle blacklet *Cheilosia vicina*

This female is one of these two similar species, and was at Morton Lochs on 18 June 2020.





Ragwort blacklet *Cheilosia bergenstammi*

Common at Tentsmuir wherever there is plenty of its food plant. A carder bee is about to knock the above individual off its perch.





Foxy blacklet *Cheilosia chrysocoma*

The female above was at a patch of creeping willow on the dunes near the ice house in May 2018. The male below was at a patch of dandelions where the road to Kinshaldy meets the west edge of the forest in April 2020. The only previous records for Fife were for a single site in 2008.





Orange-shinned blacklet *Cheilosia fraterna*

Occurs at Morton Lochs and at Tentsmuir Point. Has previously been recorded from Morton Lochs, but from nowhere else in Fife.





Greater spring blacklet *Cheilosia grossa*

Occurs at Morton Lochs and at Tentsmuir Point.





Bumblebee blacklet *Cheilosia illustrata*

A relatively large hoverfly and bee mimic, common in mid-summer, mainly on common hogweed, its food plant. Distinctively 'scruffy' in appearance.





Parsley blacklet *Cheilosia pagana*

Widespread. Occurs along the railway path at Morton Lochs and near the forest edge at Tentsmuir Point.





Dull-bellied blacklet *Cheilosia proxima*

Not a species that can be identified conclusively from photos, but hairy eyes, black colour, leg markings and yellow hair on the abdomen of the male (below) together suggest this species.





Bolete blacklet *Cheilosia scutellata*

The yellow tip to the scutellum on these females (top and bottom) makes identification easier. The above individual was on the railway path south of the car park at Morton Lochs, while the one below was next to the track between the lochs, both in late July 2017. The male (middle) was on the railway path in early August 2017. Prior to these records, the species had only been recorded twice in Fife (1982 and 1984), from the same 10km square.





Figwort blacklet *Cheilosia variabilis*

Fairly large, all-black hoverfly. The male below had a territory towards the northern end of the railway path at Morton Lochs in late May 2017. The above male was towards the southern end of the railway path in early May 2020.





Dark-winged wrinklehead *Chrysogaster solstitialis*

Occurs along the railway path and along the track between the lochs at Morton Lochs.





Little meadow fly *Chrysotoxum arcuatum*

Small numbers occur at Tentsmuir Point NNR, on the dunes at Kinshaldy, at Morton Lochs, and north of the Leuchars army base. This is one of five very similar species, but the only one that occurs in Scotland.





Two-banded meadow fly *Chrysotoxum bicinctum*

An attractive species. This female was at the southern end of the dunes at Tentsmuir.





Stripe-backed brusheye

Dasysyrphus albostriatus

Note the distinctive parallel stripes on the thorax. Sometimes occurs just south of the car park on the railway path at Morton Lochs.





Black-spotted brusheye *Dasysyrphus pinastri*

Occurs along the paths at Morton Lochs and along the coast path from Tayport to Tentsmuir Point. There have been a few previous records for Fife, all from the Morton Lochs area.





Yellow-gridled brusheye *Dasysyrphus tricinctus*

Distinctive, relatively large hoverfly. The males above and below right were photographed on ragwort at Kinshaldy and the male below was at Tentsmuir Point.





Broad-barred brusheye

Dasysyrphus venustus

Similar to *D. pinastri*, and it occurs in the same locations at Morton Lochs. It also occurs where the dunes meet the trees around Kinshaldy. Females are shown above and on the right, and a male bottom right.





Pale-knobbed lucent *Didea fasciata*

A scarce species that occurs occasionally in August and September along the railway path at Morton Lochs and where the trees meet the dunes at Kinshaldy.





Spring smoothtail *Epistrophe eligans*

This early-season and distinctive species is relatively scarce in Scotland. The above female was near Earlshall in May 2018, and the one below on the Newport and Wormit nature trail in May 2024.





Black-horned smoothtail *Epistrophe grossulariae*

Fairly large hoverfly with parallel bands. Quite common at Tentsmuir.





Marmalade hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus*

Extremely common, variable in size, shape and brightness, but consistent in its distinctive markings. Numbers often enhanced by migrants.





Bear fly

Eriozona syrphoides

An uncommon coniferous woodland specialist. The individual at the bottom right was on ragwort on the dunes around a mile north of the car park at Kinshaldy in early August 2016. Several were present along the railway path at Morton Lochs in late August 2016, two of which are shown here. These were the first records for Fife.





Eurasian drone fly *Eristalis arbustorum*

This drone fly occurs along the edge of the dunes and at Morton Lochs.





Stripe-winged drone fly *Eristalis horticola*

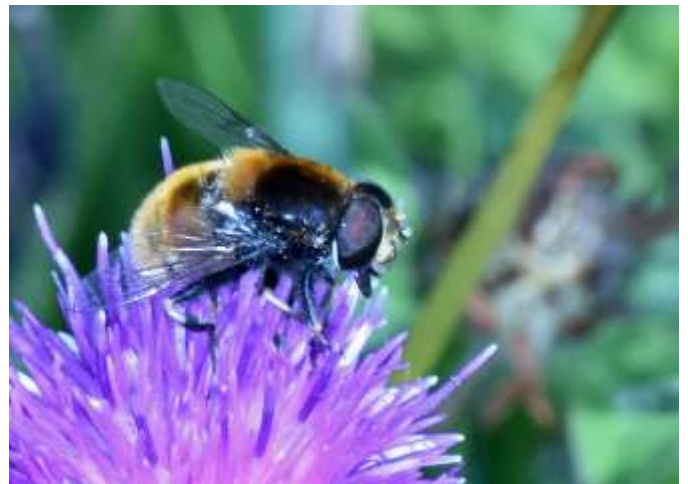
A strongly-marked drone fly that is common along the dunes and at Morton Lochs.





Furry drone fly *Eristalis intricaria*

Not numerous at Tentsmuir, but occurs widely.





Stripe-faced drone fly *Eristalis nemorum*

Occurs along the dunes and at Morton Lochs.
Males sometimes hover above a female, as
on the right.





Tapered drone fly *Eristalis pertinax*

A large hoverfly, common in Tentsmuir.





Common drone fly *Eristalis tenax*

A common large hoverfly with variable markings.





Eumerus sp

Several small species that are difficult to identify from photos. This female was at Morton Lochs in early August 2018.



Migrant aphideater *Eupeodes corollae*

A fairly small hoverfly. Male (middle right) and females (top and bottom right). Male markings are quite variable. A common migrant.





Broad-banded aphideater *Eupeodes latifasciatus*

This species is not common at Tentsmuir. These two (female above, male below) were amongst very large numbers of *Eupeodes corollae* at Morton Lochs in early August 2018.





Lunuled aphideater *Eupeodes luniger*

Medium-sized hoverfly, very similar in appearance to *Eupeodes corollae*, but with yellow not extending to the very edges of the abdomen. Occurs at Morton Lochs.





Snouted duck fly *Eurimyia lineata*

This individual was next to the drainage ditch in the grazed field to the north of Morton Lochs in late May 2017. It is the second record for Fife, the first being in 2008.



Woolly-tailed marsh fly *Helophilus hybridus*

Very similar to *Helophilus pendulus* but less common. These individuals (male above, female below) were just north of the Leuchars army base in mid-August 2016.





Tiger marsh fly *Helophilus pendulus*

Common, distinctively-marked hoverfly. Gains its common names from its striped thorax.





Lemon marsh fly *Helophilus trivittatus*

Much less common than the other two *Helophilus* species. This female was on creeping willow at Tentsmuir Point on 20 May 2020.





Bow-veined aphideater *Lapposyrphus lapponicus*

This female (above) and male were at Tentsmuir Point on 29 June 2019. These are the first records for Scotland since the 1930s.





Green shimmer *Lejogaster metallina*

Seldom recorded in Fife, this pretty hoverfly is small and easily overlooked. This female was at Morton Lochs in late May 2022.





Pale-saddled hoary

Leucozona glauca

A pretty, medium-sized hoverfly that is widespread at Tentsmuir and can be quite numerous along the old railway line at Morton Lochs.





Dark-saddled hoary
Leucozona laternaria

Similar to the previous species, but much less common. This male (bottom) and female were alongside the track that runs between the lochs at Morton Lochs in July 2017. These were the first records for Fife.





Blotch-winged whitebelt *Leucozona lucorum*

Another pretty hoverfly. These individuals were near the Leuchars army base in May 2017. Also occurs at Morton Lochs and Kinshaldy.





Great banded gossammer *Megasyrphus erraticus*

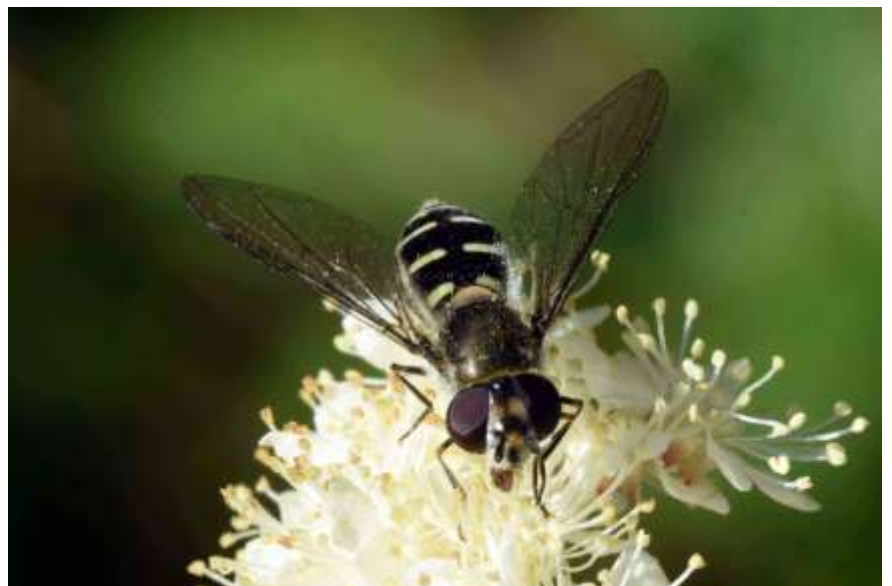
This uncommon coniferous woodland specialist looks like a large, rather black *Syrphus*. A few individuals were alongside the railway path just south of the car park at Morton Lochs in August 2016. These were the first records for Fife.





Matt-backed halfband *Melangyna compositarum*

Occurs along the railway path and along the track between the lochs at Morton lochs.





Spring halfband *Melangyna lasiophthalma*

An early season species that can be numerous when almost no other hoverflies are flying. The dark female below right is probably of this species; the above female is the more usual form, and more like the male below.





Black halfband *Melangyna quadrimaculata*

A rarely-recorded species in Scotland. It is an early season species, but the female above and below left was near the car park at Morton Lochs on 21 May 2019, a remarkably late date for this species. It is the second record for Fife. The female below right was also at Morton Lochs, on 19 March 2020.





Shiny-backed halfband *Melangyna umbellatarum*

This species is not often recorded in Scotland. There were two previous records for Fife. This female was alongside the track where it enters the reserve at Morton lochs on 30 July 2017.



Common wrinklehead *Melanogaster hirtella*

The female above was north of the car park at Kinshaldy, in the dunes. The male below was by the railway path at Morton lochs.





Variable duskyface *Melanostoma mellinum*

Much less common at Tentsmuir than *Melanostoma scalare*. The female below left and male above were at Morton Lochs, while the male below right was at Tentsmuir Point.





Long-winged duskyface *Melanostoma scalare*

Very common small hoverfly that can be difficult to identify in the field because at rest, it covers its abdomen with its folded wings. In good light, the female's distinctive markings are visible through its wings (right).





Spotted thintail *Meliscaeva auricollis*

Occurs along the paths at Morton Lochs, at Kinshaldy, and north of Leuchars army base.





Banded thintail *Meliscaeva cinctella*

Distinctive narrow, banded abdomen. Common along the railway path at Morton Lochs and along the dunes at Kinshaldy.





Narcissus bulb fly *Merodon equestris*

A very variable species, with different colour forms mimicking different species of bumblebees. The male above and females below were all near the railway path at Morton Lochs on the same day, 25 May 2020. Its larvae usually feed on daffodil bulbs.





Common batman fly *Myathropa florea*

Present in small numbers at Tentsmuir. Its common name arises from the distinctive marks on its thorax. The three shown were near Tayport, on the dunes north of Kinshaldy, and at Morton Lochs respectively.





Yellow-kneed fen fly *Neoascia meticulosa*

A tiny, rarely-recorded hoverfly associated with reed beds. This female was at Morton Lochs in late April 2019.





Paragus sp

A tiny hoverfly of grassland. This female was at Tentsmuir Point NNR in July 2018, and is probably a common grass skimmer, *Paragus haemorrhous*.





Dark-legged bristleside *Parasyrphus lineola*

This rarely-recorded species is associated with spruce. This female was on hawthorn blossom at the edge of the forest north of the ice house at Tentsmuir Point on 1st June 2019.





Smudge-faced bristleside *Parasyrphus malinellus*

A rarely-recorded species, this female (above and below left) was on creeping willow near the ice house at Tentsmuir Point on 10th May 2018. It is the second record for Fife, the first being in 1980. The male was on hawthorn blossom in the line of trees east of the forest at Tentsmuir Point on 1st June 2019.





Common spotted bristleside *Parasyrphus punctulatus*

An early-season species that occurs at Morton Lochs and Tentsmuir Point. Prior to 2018, it had only been recorded in Fife once, in 1980. Male above and below left, female below right.





Pine bristleside *Parasyrphus relictus*

Similar to *Parasyrphus malinellus*, this female was on creeping willow near the ice house at Tentsmuir Point on 16th May 2018. It is the fifth record for Fife, and the first since 1984. All but one record were from Tentsmuir.





Marsh stripeback *Parhelophilus versicolor* /
 tuberculate stripeback *Parhelophilus frutetorum*

The females above and below left were by the railway path south of the car park at Morton Lochs, while the male below right was just north-west of the north loch.





Pale-footed pithead *Pipiza luteitarsis*

A species seldom recorded in eastern Scotland. The individual above was enjoying the sun just south of the car park by the railway path at Morton Lochs, while the other was just north of the car park, both on 26 May 2017.





Pipiza sp

The strong 'wing clouds' on this female suggest *P lugubris*, *P austriaca* or *P noctiluca*, but reliable identification from a photo is unlikely for these species.



Common flatface *Pipizella viduata* /

Hairy-legged flatface *Pipizella virens* /

Smudge-winged flatface *Pipizella maculipennis*

This individual was just north of Leuchars army base in June 2017.





Greay-spotted sedge-sitter *Platycheirus albimanus*

Quite a small species that typically hides its distinctive markings under folded wings when at rest. Note the enlarged, whitish front feet of the male (above) that give it the scientific name '*albimanus*'. Common.





Slender sedgesitter *Platycheirus angustatus*

A difficult species to identify from photos, so this female's identity is tentative. It was at Morton Lochs in mid-July 2018.





Common sedge-sitter *Platycheirus clypeatus*

Or at least one of the *P. clypeatus* group of very similar species. These males were at Morton Lochs, where it is common.





Orange-legged sedge-sitter *Platycheirus fulviventris*

A wetland species not often recorded in Fife. This male was towards the southern end of the railway path at Morton Lochs on 12 June 2020.





Dull-backed sedge-sitter

Platycheirus manicatus

Another species that typically hides its markings under folded wings when at rest. The face profile is distinctive. Quite common.





White-spotted sedge-sitter

Platycheirus peltatus

Another species for which it can be difficult to identify live individuals. The male below was at Morton Lochs, while the female above and right was by Leuchars army base.





Many-tufted sedge-sitter *Platycheirus scutatus*

Now considered a group of species. It occurs along the woodland rides at Morton Lochs.





Hornhand sedgesitter

Pyrophaena granditarsa

A species of wetlands, damp meadows and damp woodland rides. This male was in the grazed area to the west of the main loch at Morton Lochs, in late July 2017.





Fourspot sedge-sitter *Pyrophaena rosarum*

A scarce species in Fife. This male was on the railway path at Morton Lochs in mid-July 2020.



Common snout fly *Rhingia campestris*

A stubby hoverfly with a distinct snout. The individual above was close to Leuchars army base in mid-May 2017, while the one below was out early, on 1st May 2017, alongside the railroad path north of the car park at Morton Lochs.





White-bowed smoothwing *Scaeva pyrastris*

Quite a large hoverfly which is sometimes very common, especially when local numbers are boosted by migrants. The female below right is very unusual as it is missing the white markings.





Yellow-bowed smoothwing *Scaeva selenitica*

Similar to the previous species, but markings more yellow than white, and extending further forwards at the outer margin of the abdomen. The male above and bottom right was on the railway path at Morton Lochs in mid-August 2016, and the one below at the same place in late July 2017. An uncommon species; the only earlier record for Fife was in early August 2016, in the far west of the county.





White-barred pond fly *Sericomyia lappona*

Generally occurs in bogs, but the above male was by the path from Tayport to Tentsmuir Point on 1 June 2018, the third record for Fife. The male below was at the forest edge at Tentsmuir Point on 25 April 2019, the fifth record for Fife.





Yellow-barred pond fly *Sericomyia silentis*

A large hoverfly, although its size is quite variable. Small numbers can be seen for example at Morton Lochs and north of Leuchars army base.





Interrupted globetail *Sphaerophoria interrupta*

These two males were at Morton Lochs, one on 25 May 2018, and the other on 11 August 2018. They cannot be definitely identified from photos, but are likely to be of this species.





Common globetail *Sphaerophoria scripta*

This hoverfly has a long abdomen. As can be seen when the wings are folded as below, the abdomen is appreciably longer than the wings in the male. This species is quite common at Morton Lochs and Kinshaldy.





Sphaerophoria sp

These *Sphaerophoria* appear delicate compared with the previous species. Males (above) can be identified when dissected under the microscope, while females (right) cannot be reliably identified. Whichever species these are, they appear common on dry grassland along the dunes, north of Leuchars army base, and at Morton Lochs.





Common pufftail *Sphegina clunipes*

Numerous along the shadier paths at Morton Lochs.





Variable pufftail *Sphagina sibirica*

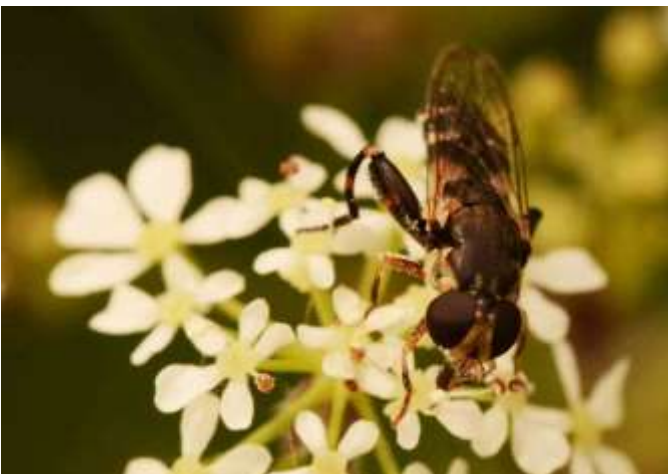
A species that is expanding its range, and which now appears to be widespread at Tentsmuir. The species had not been recorded in Fife before the first Tentsmuir record in 2017.





Common compost fly *Syrirta pipiens*

A common species at Tentsmuir, with migrants often arriving off the North Sea. It is small and easily overlooked.





Common flower fly *Syrphus ribesii*

Very common, but difficult to distinguish from similar species. The all-yellow hind femur distinguishes females from females of *S. torvus* and *S. vitripennis*.





Hairy-eyed flower fly *Syrphus torvus*

These females were along the railway path at Morton Lochs. The species is difficult to distinguish from *S. vitripennis*; hair on the eyes can be difficult to see, especially in females, but is visible in these shots if you zoom in on the images. In the above individual, pollen can be seen clinging to the minute hairs in the eye. Note that the 'thighs' (femora) of the back pair of legs are mostly black, whereas for female *S. ribesii*, these are yellow.





Black-thighed flower fly *Syrphus vitripennis*

The absence of hairs on the eye of these females together with the mostly-black hind femur suggest *S. vitripennis*, although this is not conclusive. The above female was at Kinshaldy, and the one below was by the railway path near the car park at Morton Lochs.





Swamp thickleg *Tropidia scita*

The male below left was one of two individuals by the railway path just south of the car park at Morton Lochs in May 2017. The female below right was at the same site in May 2019, and the above male was one of three there in May 2020. There had only been two previous records for Fife. Note the distinctive 'tooth' on the femur of the hind legs.





Bumblebee plumehorn *Volucella bombylans*

A large, very visible and variable species. The above male was towards the southern end of the railway path at Morton Lochs, the male below left was between the car park and the squirrel hide at Morton Lochs, and the female below right was north of Leuchars army base.





Pied plumehorn *Volucella pellucens*

A large, very visible species. Its larvae live in wasp or bee nests. Occurs along the railway path at Morton Lochs, along the woodland edge at Kinshaldy, and north of Leuchars army base.





Migrant flatbelly *Xanthandrus comtus*

The female above and below left was near the ice house at Tentsmuir Point on 30 July 2019. The female below right was at Morton Lochs on 9 July 2020. This is a rare species, with very few Scottish records.





Spruce-stump leafwalker *Xylota jakutorum*

An uncommon species of pinewoods and conifer plantations. The female above was near the Education Pavilion at Tentsmuir Point, while the male was at Morton Lochs.





Orange-belted leafwalker *Xylota segnis*

Occurs along the railway path at Morton Lochs and north of Leuchars army base. Male above and female below.





Golden-tailed leafwalker *Xylota sylvarum*

A woodland species, larger and much less common than *X segnis*. This female was at Morton Lochs by the car park in early August 2018. It is the fourth location in Fife where the species has been recorded.

