

***ERISTALIS PRATORUM* (MEIGEN, 1822): A NEW BRITISH HOVERFLY**

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On 27.iii.1990 an afternoon visit was made to Ryton Wood, Warwickshire (SP3872) with some colleagues from the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry to record various groups of insects. Eight species of hoverfly were seen, including the scarce *Criorhina ranunculi* (Panz.) in respectable numbers at willow and sloe blossom. Males of *Eristalis pertinax* (Scop.) were plentiful in a woodland ride, but my attention was eventually drawn to a large female *Eristalis* basking on bare earth in an extensively disturbed, open area nearby. I captured it, being uncertain whether it might be *E. pertinax* or *E. tenax* (L.), the latter having not been seen that day.

Closer examination immediately revealed that it was not *E. tenax*, the eyes lacking the distinct hair bands, the hind legs without the entirely black, swollen tibiae, and the face without the broad central black stripe characteristic of that species. However, despite a close resemblance to *E. pertinax*, there were a number of features that were not typical of that species. The abdomen had the orange markings on the second tergite too bright and well defined for spring examples of *E. pertinax* (which are usually darker and furrier than summer examples) and most significantly, the mid- and fore-tarsi were blackish, not orange as in *E. pertinax*.

The last character is diagnostic in the separation of *E. pertinax* from the very similar non-British *E. pratorum*, a species that I had encountered in Israel and Crete during recent years. There was little doubt that this was the species just captured. Further confirmation of its identity was obtained through comparison with my foreign examples of *E. pratorum*, and reference to Van der Groot (1981).

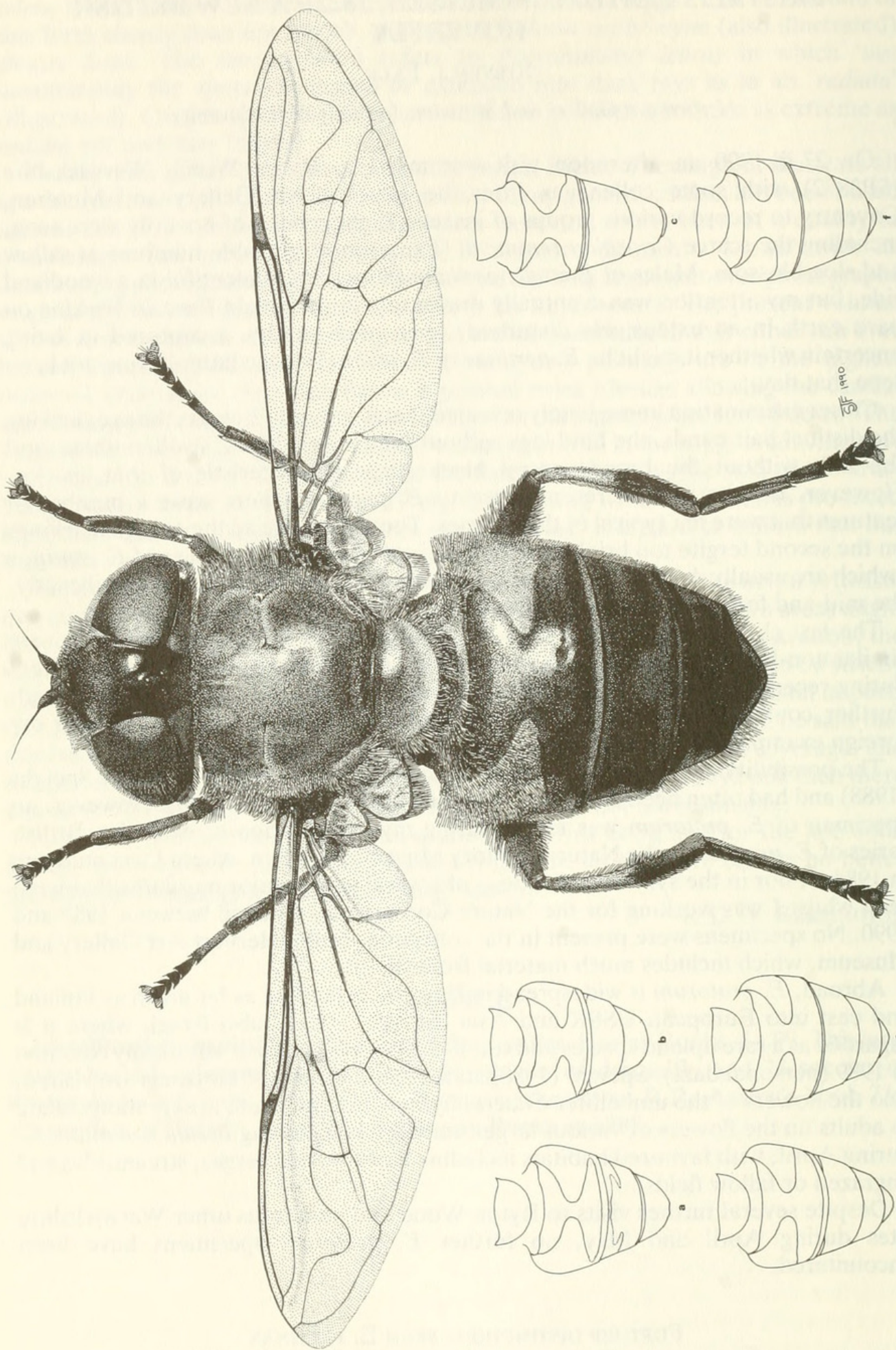
The possibility of this species turning up in Britain was recently noted by Speight (1988) and had often been discussed between myself and Alan Stubbs. However, no specimen of *E. pratorum* was found during my examination of extensive British series of *E. pertinax* in the Natural History Museum, London, where I was studying in 1984–5, nor in the syrphid collections of several other major museums that were seen whilst I was working for the Nature Conservancy Council between 1985 and 1990. No specimens were present in the collections of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, which includes much material from the site.

Abroad, *E. pratorum* is widespread in Europe, extending as far north as Finland and east into European USSR and Asia (Speight, 1988); also Israel, where it is regarded as a rare upland species and south-west Crete, where it was locally common in 1989 (personal data). Speight (1988) states that a variety of blossoms are visited, also the flowers of the umbellifer *Chaerophyllum*. All my Crete observations relate to adults on the flowers of various larger umbellifers including *Ferula communis* L. during April, with favoured habitats including flowery road verges, streamsides and ungrazed or fallow fields.

Despite several further visits to Ryton Wood and numerous other Warwickshire sites during April and May, no further *E. pratorum* specimens have been encountered.

FURTHER DISTINCTIONS FROM *E. PERTINAX*

The large size (average body length 15 mm) and broadly pale bases to the hind





Falk, Steven J. 1990. "Eristalis pratorum (Meigen, 1822): a new British hoverfly." *British journal of entomology and natural history* 3, 139–140.

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