

Hoverfly Course Report, Treborth Botanic Garden, 31st March – 1st April 2012

Attendees arriving on the Saturday morning were confronted by several entomological trays, bristling with a bewildering array of pinned hoverflies of various shapes, sizes and colours. Under normal circumstances this display would have sapped the confidence of a budding fly enthusiast, however the display was accompanied by Stuart Ball and Roger Morris, two highly knowledgeable, enthusiastic course leaders.

On the Saturday morning we were given an introductory talk explaining what a hoverfly was and how to recognise one from the various other insects they often impersonate. It was fascinating to hear how, as larvae, they defecate only once – just before pupation! It was a real eye-opener to learn just how varied the larval ecology of this group of flies is.

We were then guided through the keys to hoverfly tribes, gaining confidence in how to recognise and interpret important structural features used in the keys. Baffling terms such as “hairy humeri” soon became common knowledge amongst the group, enabling us to work successfully through the keys. The use of a projector-enabled microscope allowed Roger and Stuart to highlight important features and characteristics which were not always obvious to the beginner – an invaluable teaching aid.



Attendees went on to work through various specimens, at their own pace, calling on the expertise of Roger and Stuart, where necessary, to confirm their tribal identifications. This session rounded off an enjoyable day.

We reconvened on the Sunday morning to build on knowledge gained the previous day. The focus of the day was species identification. In a similar vein to Saturday we each worked through several specimens, carefully chosen to give us the experience of identifying species from different tribes.



Microscope work was interspersed with talks detailing collecting methods and techniques, specimen preparation and the importance of submitting your records to the National Hoverfly Recording Scheme.

The course concluded on Sunday afternoon, with all attendees leaving with a much greater understanding of hoverflies and their identification. It is hoped that the enthusiasm generated by this course will stimulate more recording of these flies in North Wales.



Unsolicited course feedback:

“...I learned an awful lot about the hoverflies. Definitely the best course I’ve been on.”

“The workshop was excellent and reflected both your enthusiasm for hoverflies and a well honed and well practised programme for the 2 days.”