

aphids were seen close to the oviposition site. Aphids from both species of plant at this site were retained for future identification, although no direct association can be inferred. Observations of *S. rueppellii* females hovering up and down the stems of *E. hirsutum* "searching for oviposition sites" were confounded when males were seen exhibiting apparently identical behaviour.

### **VOLUCELLA ZONARIA MOVES WEST**

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On 28 August 1991 I found a fine specimen of *Volucella zonaria* on *Sedum* in my front garden in Plymouth. I had seen it (whether the same or a different individual) on several occasions during previous days on a variety of plants well known to be attractive to Syrphids. This dramatic creature was reported from Torquay by David Iliff (Hoverfly Newsletter No. 9, May 1989), and is clearly maintaining its inexorable drift westwards. The River Tamar is unlikely to be a permanent barrier to further progress; Cornwall, here it comes .....

### **HOVERFLY HUNTING IN ALGERIA**

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I was invited to go for a week to Algeria in July of this year, courtesy of the Dr Boudjema Samraoui of the Department of Biology, University of Annaba. The trip started and ended with unforeseen problems, but the in-between part was excellent! The evening before I was to fly, I heard on the news that the President, Mohammed Boudjiaf, had been shot in, of all places, Annaba. After an anxious few days of delay waiting for the 'trouble' predicted by commentators, I eventually overcame caution and flew out to Annaba via Algiers.

I gave six lectures in all, to 3rd, 4th and MSc students of ecology. Dr Samraoui is by training a high-powered molecular biologist, used to working out the molecular structure of proteins. However, there are no facilities for this work in Algeria, and he has returned to his favourite subject of behaviour and ecology. His main interest is in dragonflies; last year Professor Philip Corbet was invited to Annaba in the same way. But, naturally enough, Dr Samraoui has become more and more interested in hoverflies, and has a very competent and enthusiastic MSc student, Sihem Djellab. She has collected by net and by systematic trapping using a large number of Malaise traps throughout the local area, and together she and Dr Samraoui are now starting the rather difficult task of identifying them all.

I was surprised to realise that the local habitats are overwhelmingly those of wetlands. The El-Kala National Park near Annaba is a large and diverse area that is designed to protect these habitats, unique in North Africa, that include large and almost impenetrable areas of alder carr! The entire area was malarial until the 1970s, and this has largely protected the area from exploitation until now. Dragonflies are extraordinarily abundant,

and include a number of relict species that occur nowhere else. While hoverfly diversity was relatively low in July, earlier in the season they were just as abundant as the dragonflies, they informed me.

The hoverflies of North Africa in general are almost unknown, and thus there could be some spectacular surprises in store, especially in view of the known dragonfly diversity. One small fresh-water lake just behind the dunes of the seashore is now the only site for a relict dragonfly species. There are no trees for some distance, and yet *Ceriana* is almost common there: quite what the larvae are feeding on is a mystery, since they are supposed to be in sap-flows.

The commonest species are undoubtedly various species of *Sphaerophoria*, *Paragus*, *Eumerus* and particularly the helophilines. Dr Samraoui and Ms Djellab will be writing about the species in Hoverfly Newsletter before long, and so I will leave the goodies to them! I must write a little about one, though, which I found especially attractive. This was a species of *Volucella*, the males of which spend all their time hovering or perching while waiting for females, just as our own *V. pellucens* does. We found it in the cork-oak forests in the mountains above Annaba, at 600 m at a place called Seraidi. It is a most beautiful fly, with a black abdomen tipped with gorgeous golden orange hairs. I cannot identify it from the literature I have, but it may well be *V. liquida* (= *analis*), originally described from Algeria, and known only from there and neighbouring Morocco.

Dr Samraoui and his students have made an excellent start on a modern and reliable faunistic study of the syrphids of Algeria. They clearly have benefited enormously from having Stubbs & Falk, whose illustrations allow them to name at least to genus and often to get close to the species for most of the individuals they have collected. Now comes the specific identifications, which will not be easy in view of the large number of *Sphaerophoria*, *Paragus* and *Eumerus*. If anyone can help, I can certainly recommend the superb hospitality of Dr Samraoui and his Head of Department, Dr Borhane Djebbar!