

NOTES OF SUFFOLK RECORDS OF THE GENUS *VOLUCELLA* (DIPTERA, SYRPHIDAE)

ALAN HUBBARD

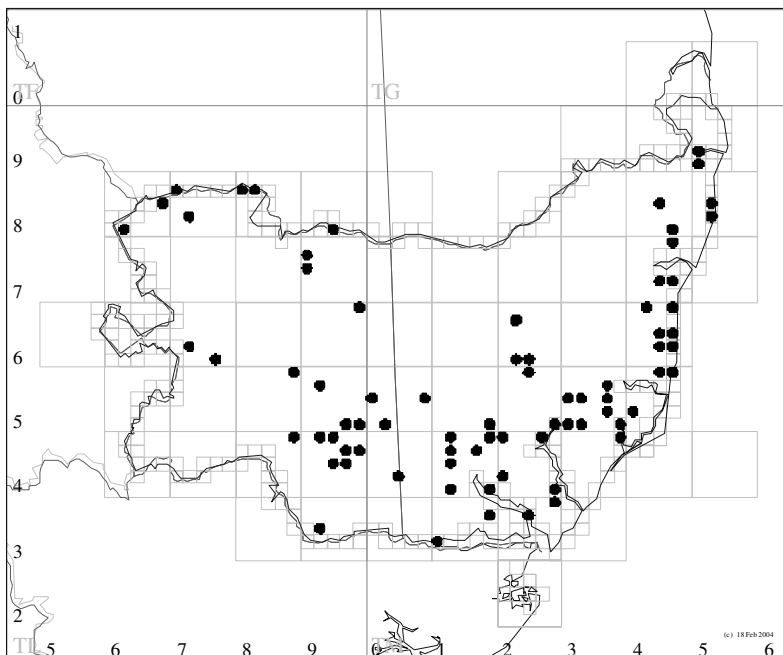
There are five species in the genus *Volucella* and they all occur in Suffolk. Four are scavengers/predators in the nests of social wasps and bumblebees and one is associated with sap runs. They are amongst our largest hoverflies and mimic bumblebees and wasps; three are considered nationally scarce.

Volucella bombylans (Linnaeus)

129 records

This is a bumblebee mimic and occurs in two forms; red-tailed (f. *bombylans*) and white-tailed (f. *plumata* see Plate 10) which mimic bumblebees such as *Bombus lapidarius* and *B. hortorum* respectively. The larvae are scavengers in the nests of bees and social wasps. It has been recorded between May 18th and August 21st with the majority of records occurring mid June to early July. It is most commonly seen in areas of scrub where bramble is dominant and along sunny woodland rides. Apart from bramble blossom, other flowers visited include marsh thistle, wild angelica, red campion, dog-rose and valerian. There are a few records from gardens.

Volucella bombylans

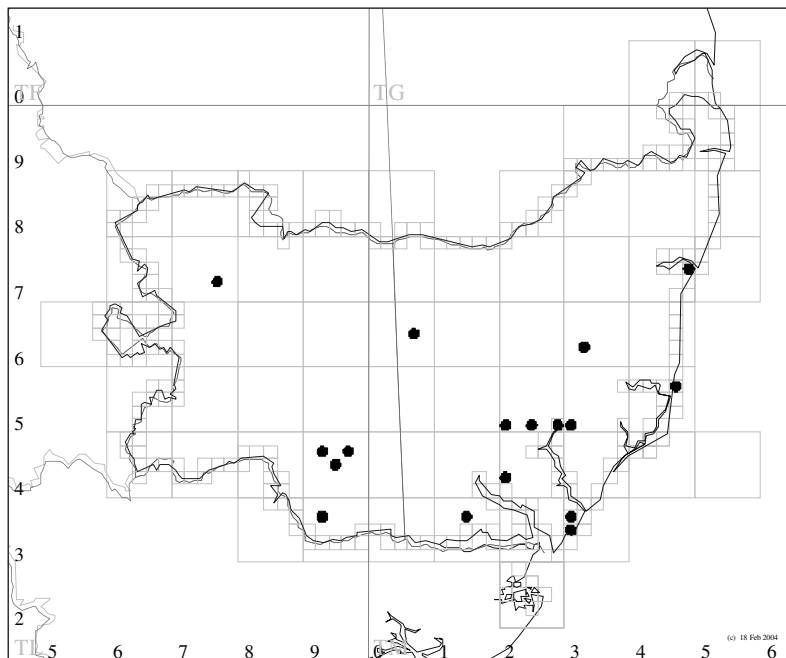


Volucella inanis (Linnaeus)

Nationally scarce – 35 records

This species is a wasp mimic with yellow bands on the abdomen (see Plate 11). Records occur from July 10th to September 7th with a peak in late July and early August. There are one or two records prior to 1980 for the county but since 1998 records have been more frequent with 16 sightings in 2001 and ten in 2003. In 1998 it was seen in Felixstowe with further records in 1999 at the same location and additional sightings at Tattingstone and Monks Eleigh. Since 2000 it has expanded its range northwards as far as Icklingham in the west of the county and Walberswick in the east. It has been recorded in woodland and scrub with additional observations in gardens. Flowers visited include bramble, ivy, hemp agrimony and water mint. In gardens adults have been noted at *Lysimachia* sp., marjoram and *Hebe* sp. The record at Walberswick was of an adult at a moth trap.

This species would appear to be expanding its range northwards from its stronghold around the suburbs of London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. In 1999 it was reported as new to Norfolk and Cambridgeshire (McLean, 1999; Paston, 1999).

Volucella inanis

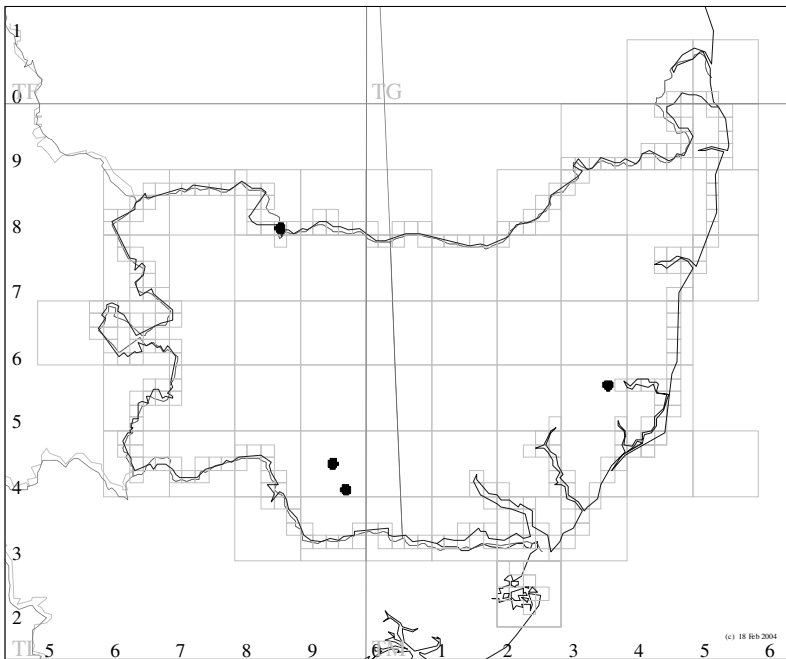
Volucella inflata (Fabricius)

Nationally scarce – 4 records

This species is similar in appearance to *Volucella pellucens* but the panels at the base of the abdomen are orange instead of white and the thorax has some orange colouration. In contrast to the other four species of the genus, *inflata* is associated with sap runs, possibly those created by the larva of the Goat moth (*Cossus cossus*). There is an old Suffolk record mentioned in Verrall (1901) of an adult being caught at Bentley Woods near Ipswich about a *Cossus* burrow (July 1895, C. Morley).

More recently it was recorded purely by chance during a farmland bird survey in June 2002 at Blaxhall when a male was seen on the flowers of elder, and later in the year a female was seen on privet flowers south of Thetford in July.

Further records in 2003 were of a male on bramble flowers in a glade in Long Wood, Little Waldingfield on the 7th June during a SNS field meeting, and a single at Boxford on the 21st June.

Volucella inflata

Volucella pellucens (Linnaeus)

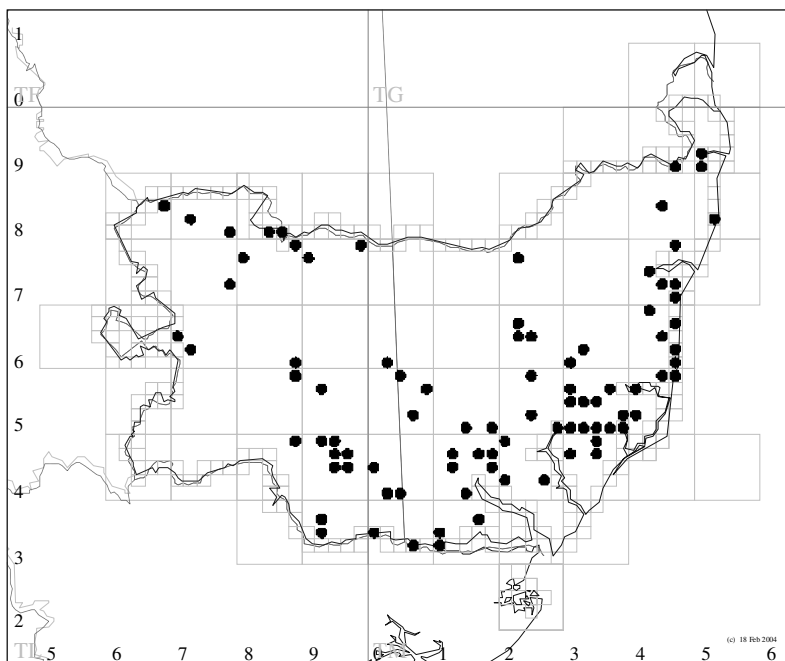
165 records

This is a large fly with a conspicuous white band at the base of the abdomen (see Plate 12). The larvae are scavengers in the nests of social wasps. It can often be seen along sunny woodland rides hovering about 2 m above the ground when its abdomen can appear to be transparent about the base when viewed from below.

It has been recorded between May 26th and October 23rd with a peak mid June to July and would appear to have the longest flight period of the five species.

Apart from woodland it is frequent in areas of scrub and there are several records from gardens. There are one or two records of it being found indoors and a single record of one found in a moth trap.

Several observations are of adults visiting bramble flowers; additional flower visits include water mint, creeping thistle, hemp agrimony, heather, red campion and marjoram (garden).

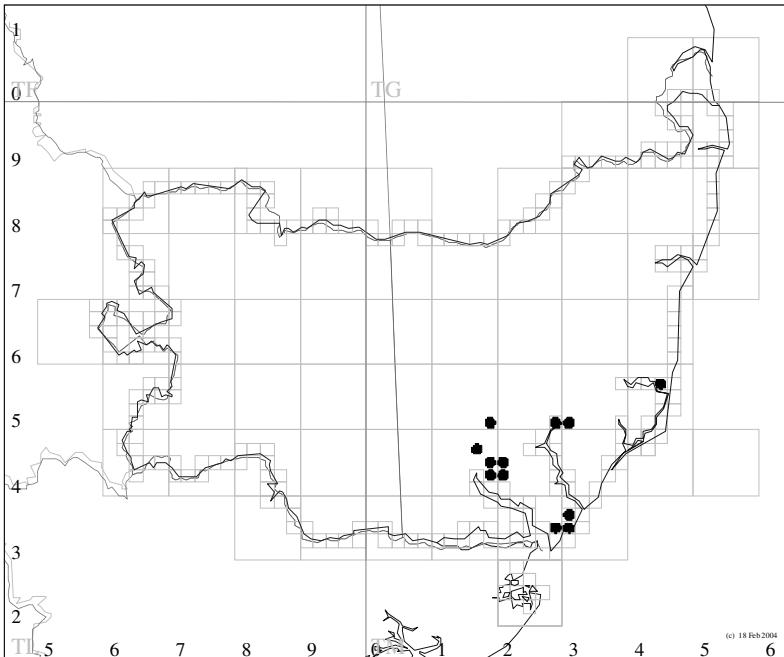
Volucella pellucens

Volucella zonaria (Poda)

Nationally scarce – 22 records

This is the largest British hoverfly and is hornet like in appearance (see Plate 13); the larvae are scavengers in the nests of social wasps. Up until 1940 it was a rarity in this country appearing only on the south coast as a migrant. During the 1940s it became established as a breeding species in the outer suburbs of London and until recent years most records have occurred in this area with scattered records along the south coast and the Bristol area.

In 1998 it was reported from Felixstowe with an additional two records in 1999 from the same area. In 2000 there were two more records, again from Felixstowe and one from Bromeswell. 2001 saw an increase to nine records with five observations coming from gardens, two in Ipswich, one in Witnesham and two in Eyke. One record was of five on bramble flowers at Bixley Heath, Ipswich. There was only one reported record in 2002 and that was from Rushmere Road, Ipswich. Reports increased to seven observations in 2003 and included five individuals on the flowers of hemp agrimony at Purdis Heath, Ipswich, singles in two gardens in Bromeswell and a single in a garden at Aldeburgh – this being the most northerly record for the county to date.

Volucella zonaria

It has been recorded from June 12th to October 23rd peaking with nine records in late July and six in August. Flower visits, in addition to those already mentioned, have included umbellifer sp., honeysuckle, cotoneaster sp., buddleja and ivy. There is one record of an adult flying around in a kitchen and another being found dead in a greenhouse.

It would seem that *zonaria* is also expanding its range northwards mirroring *inanis*, but with records concentrated in the Felixstowe-Ipswich area.

The maps cover both East Suffolk (25) and West Suffolk (26) and include the areas to the north of Fritton Decoy in the north-east and west of the Little Ouse and Thetford in the North West. Both are now in the administrative county of Norfolk.

The records are plotted by tetrads (4 × 1km squares) but are retained as 1 km square records. The maps were produced using the programme MAPMATE.

Acknowledgements

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Plate 10: Hoverfly, *Volucella bombylans* (L.) f. *plumata*, a mimic of white-tailed bumblebees such as *Bombus hortorum* (p. 113).



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Plate 11: Hoverfly, *Volucella inanis* (L.), a wasp mimic with yellow bands on the abdomen. This Nationally Scarce species has expanded its range northwards in recent years (p. 114).



A. C. Hubbard

Plate 12: Hoverfly, *Volucella pellucens* (L.), a large fly with a conspicuous white band at the base of the abdomen. It can often be seen along sunny woodland rides hovering about 2m above the ground (p. 116).



L. Jackson

Plate 13: Hoverfly, *Volucella zonaria* (Poda.), the largest British hoverfly is hornet like in appearance; the larvae are scavengers in the nests of social wasps. This Nationally Scarce species has also expanded its range northwards in recent years (p. 117).