
Approximately 250 species of hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae) have been found for Slovenia. However, the estimates for this group range between 400 and 500 species. So, still many species have to be discovered in Slovenia. When you start to deal with such a fascinating group, you soon face the problem of which identification literature should be taken into account.

Till recently, this problem could partially be solved only by making a reference collection, use the hoverfly guides of van der Goot (1981) or Bradescu, (1991) or compile your own key with the keys published in various articles. Especially the facts that guides were either in Dutch (van der Goot 1981) or French (Bradescu 1991), which makes it difficult to use these guides for non-native speakers, and that they were not up-to-date (recently there were many changes in taxonomy and new species for science were discovered), make them more or less problematic for use in the field. In 2004, M. van Veen published a possible answer to cope with this problem: A hoverfly key for Northwestern Europe.

The book starts with the preface where van Veen describes for which areas within Europe the key is useful: North-western Europe, which ranges from Scandinavia, Germany, North France and Ireland. The preface also provides the information that the females for some genera are not included as good identification criteria do not yet exist.

In the introductory part, he explains every basic detail about the family of hoverflies. He starts how this group can be distinguished from other relative similar insects like wasps, bees and bumblebees. This book also explains the habitats of different species. Actually you can find hoverflies everywhere where flowers are flowering. But most of the species are attracted to the fringes of forests, meadows and marshes. You will find especially the species with limited ability to disperse in the vicinity of the larval micro habitat, whereas good dispersers can be found everywhere. A flower-rich garden can already be a good place to start with hoverflies.
The largest part of the book covers the determination keys. In general, the keys bring you directly to the correct species, especially with beautiful illustrations, most of which are borrowed from Verlinden (1990). Before publishing, the keys were used by experts; however, in every publication one can find some mistakes. The corrections can be found on the internet site: http://home.hccnet.nl/mp.van.veen/boekhoverflies.html

When reading the title, bells should ring: how many of the Slovenian hoverflies can be actually identified by this book? The answer is that more than 80% of the species are included in the book. This is because the majority of the species occurring in Slovenia are Central European species that also occur in Northwestern Europe.

From all known genera in the region, three are not included: *Rohdendorfia*, *Spazigaster* and *Syrphocheliosia*. Although 80% of the species are included in the book, it can still be hard to determine them, as the missing species are scattered among the genera. The genera, which are mostly southern orientated (*Merodon, Eumerus*) or are very specialized and space limited (*Cheilosia*), or even whose status is more or less unknown (*Pipiza, Pipizella, Paragus*), are problematic. However, the book is very useful for the central and eastern parts of Slovenia. When you visit the Alps or the Mediterranean area, however, it is advisable to find additional keys.

In conclusion, although the keys are in general very useful for the territory of Slovenia, one should use it very carefully, and when there are anomalies it can happen that a species is not in the key at all. Therefore it should only be used as a basic key; together with additional keys and photo books, such as those by Reemer (2000).

Maarten de Groot

**Literature**

