

Linnaemya picta (Meigen, 1824) (Diptera, Tachinidae) new to Britain.

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Summary

Linnaemya picta (Meigen, 1824) is newly recorded from Britain on the basis of specimens taken in Kent. Previous misidentifications of *L. picta* as *L. rossica* (Zimin, 1954) are corrected.

Introduction

On the 19th August 2009 HB visited Denge Wood in Kent to collect flies. The day was sunny and warm, and in a large woodland clearing an area of wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) fringed with bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) (TR106522) was busy with hoverflies and large numbers of the common Tachinid *Tachina fera*. At rest on a bracken frond was a fly which was clearly a Tachinid but which HB did not recognize. Using the keys in Belshaw (1993) he identified it as a male *Linnaemya rossica* (Zimin, 1954). Belshaw notes that this species is “usually found in cool montane areas with pine forests” – a description which is very far from fitting Denge Wood – and gives its British distribution as Northern England, Northern Scotland and Woolwich Wood in Kent. The four records from this last location all date from the 1950s and were taken by d’Assis Fonseca.

HB sent the specimen to CR for confirmation of its identity. CR agreed that Belshaw led unambiguously to *L. rossica*, but because it was taken in a place so different from its usual habitat he decided to investigate further. After talking to Theo Zeegers he worked through the keys in Tschorsnig & Herting (1994), and this indicated that the fly was actually *L. picta*, a much more likely candidate for the Denge Wood habitat, though previously unrecorded from Britain. The next step was to look again at the previous Kent records of *L. rossica*, and CR asked Nigel Wyatt at the Natural History Museum, which holds Fonseca’s specimens, to check their identity. He confirmed that they are indeed *L. picta*, so it seems that this species was taken in Kent in the 1950s, but misidentified at the time. Tschorsnig notes that *L. picta* is often very frequent in the warmer parts of Central Europe, but rare further north, though it does occur as far north as St. Petersburg. In the light of this it is perhaps surprising that no British records exist between 1956 and 2009.

Subsequently another specimen of *L. picta* (a female) was taken by Matt Smith on Hogweed flowers growing next to the River Stour near Hothfield in Kent (TQ959459) on 23rd September 2009.

The hosts of *Linnaemya picta* are listed as *Agrotis* sp., *Amathes c-nigrum* L., *Eurois prasina* F & *Mamestra brassicae* L. (Noctuidae) in Tschorsnig & Herting (1994).

Identification

The following modifications to the keys in Belshaw (1993) accommodate the new species. On page 49 replace the *Linnaemya* couplet 3 with:

3. Gena with only fine hairs (at least some of the lower ones also fair) - distinct from the single line of bristles extending down from the vibrissa (fig.223). [Costal cell of the wing (fig.225) with only approximately half its area covered in the microscopic hairs found over most of the wing; sternite 1 with pale hairs].....*tessellans* (R-D.)
- Gena with larger black hairs/small bristles - some of which are at least half the thickness of the bristles below the vibrissa (fig.224). [Costal cell with a uniform covering of microscopic hairs; sternite 1 with black hairs].....4
- Posterodorsal part of the head, behind the post-ocular row, with a single row of 2-8 long, stout bristles extending across most of the width of the head, in addition to small black hairs mixed with the white hairs [head rather dull silvery-grey pollinose with parafrontalia appearing blackish if viewed from side, palps almost as long as the length of the mentum].....*rossica* (Zimin)
- Posterodorsal part of the head, behind the post-ocular row, with just a scattering of fine black hairs restricted to the middle third of the head when viewed from above, mixed with the white hairs, [head more densely yellowish-grey pollinose, not appearing blackish on parafrontalia, palps less than half of the length of the mentum].....*picta* (Meigen)

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References

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- Tschorsnig, H. P. and Herting, B. 1994. *Die Raubenfliegen (Diptera: Tachinidae) Mitteleuropas*: Bestimmungstabellen und Angaben zur Verbreitung und Ökologie der einzelnen Arten. *Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Naturkunde* (A) 506, pp.1-170