

Identifying soldierflies and allies: snipeflies in genus *Chrysopilus*

Compiled by Martin C. Harvey for the Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme

Version 1 at 8 March 2020

These guides are only possible thanks to the generosity of the brilliant photographers who have allowed their images to be used. Special mention must be given to Malcolm Storey and Steven Falk, whose photo collections form the backbone for most of the species guides:

Malcolm Storey's [BioImages website](#) – Steven Falk's [photo collections on Flickr](#)

Other photographers included in this guide are Chris Sellen, Ian Andrews, Jeremy Richardson, Martin Cooper, Martin Harvey, Neil Marks, Rob Wolton, and Teresa Frost.

Males are shown first, one page for each species, then females. The pages for males include distribution maps taken from the recording scheme's [provisional atlas](#) (Harvey 2017).

As far as possible, these guides show features that can be seen on live insects in the field, or are likely to be visible in photographs. For comprehensive identification keys and species accounts see [British soldierflies and their allies](#), by Alan Stubbs and Martin Drake. See also the recording scheme's [additional notes](#) to accompany the Stubbs and Drake keys.

For lots more information on soldierflies and allies go to the recording scheme [website](#), [Twitter](#) page or [Facebook](#) group.

For lots more information and events, and to support the study and conservation of flies, please consider joining [Dipterists Forum](#).

Records wanted!

Once you have identified your fly, please let the recording scheme have the details! Add to [iRecord](#) or send to the [recording scheme](#) so that we can share the records for conservation and research.

The Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme is part of Dipterists Forum



The Soldierflies and Allies Recording Scheme is supported by the UKCEH Biological Records Centre



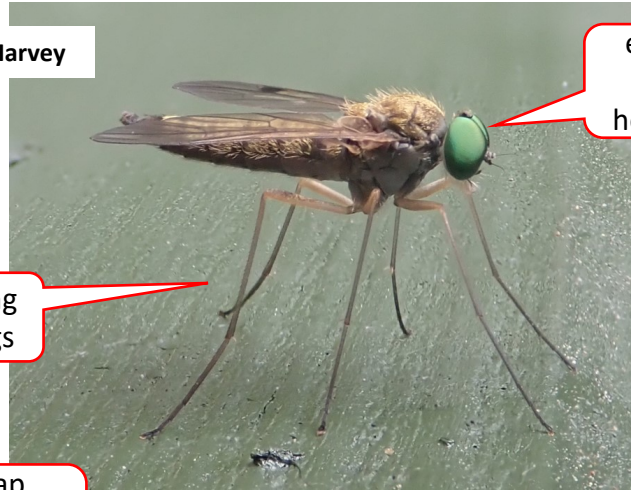
Recognising the genus: *Chrysopilus*

Genus *Chrysopilus* contains four small to medium species (4.5–9mm long). They have the typical long legs and broad wings of the snipefly family. Wing venation helps to separate *Chrysopilus* species from snipeflies in genus *Rhagio*.

There are differences in colours and markings between males (eyes meet at top of head) and females (eyes with a wide gap at top of head).

Two of the species (*C. asiliformis* and *C. cristatus*) are common and widespread, the latter most numerous in damp meadows and wetlands. *C. laetus* was considered a great rarity of ancient woodland, and has larvae developing in decaying wood, but in recent years has spread more widely. *C. erythrophthalmus* is an enigmatic species that has mostly been recorded from upland stony streams and valleys.

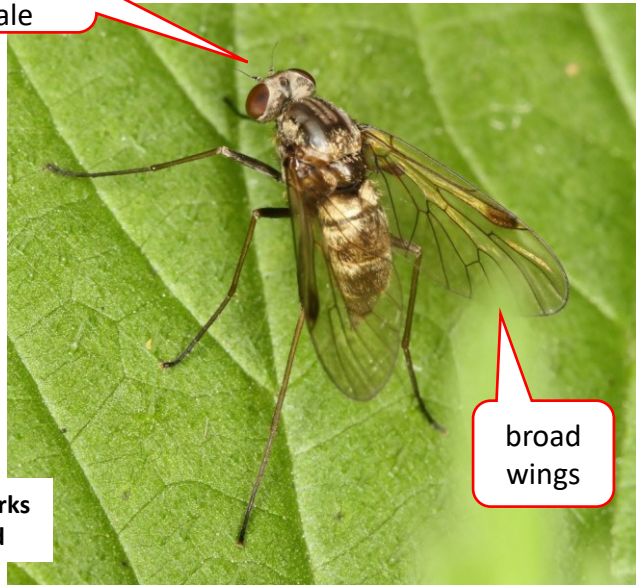
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eyes meet on top of head = male

long legs

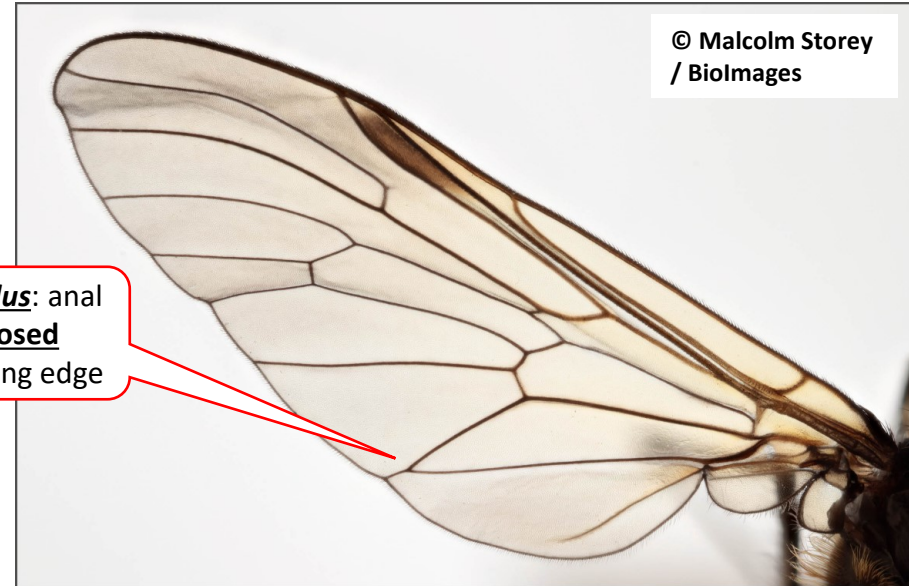
wide gap between eyes = female



broad wings

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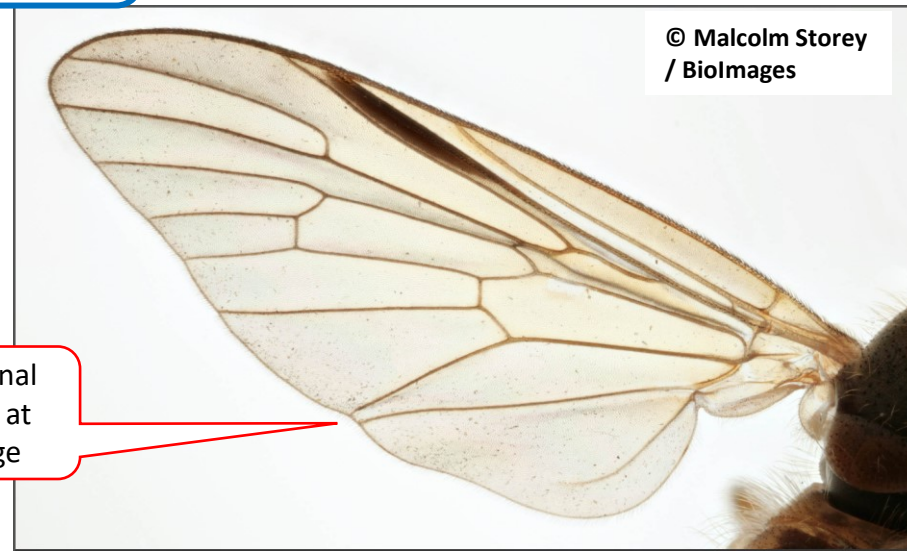
Chrysopilus: anal cell **closed** before wing edge

Remember: ***Chrysopilus*** is **closed**, ***Rhagio*** is **open**!



The small water-snipefly *Atrichops crassipes* (family Athericidae) also has a closed anal cell and looks rather like a true snipefly, but has the third antennal segment enlarged, and a long proboscis

© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages



Rhagio: anal cell **open** at wing edge

© Malcolm Storey / Biolmages

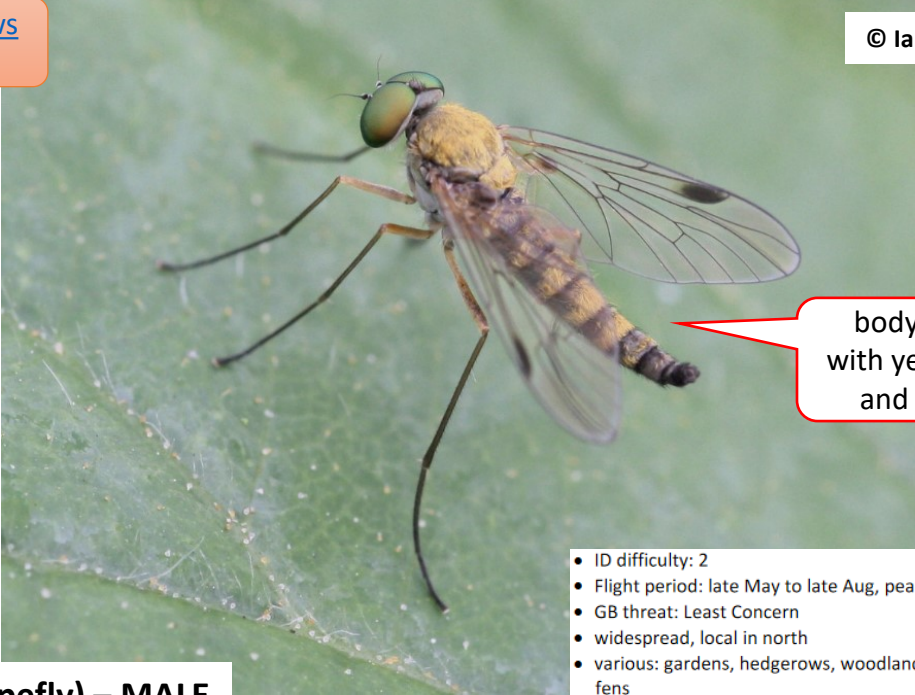


[Biolmages link](#)

[Ian Andrews link](#)

small species, 4.5–6mm long

© Ian Andrews

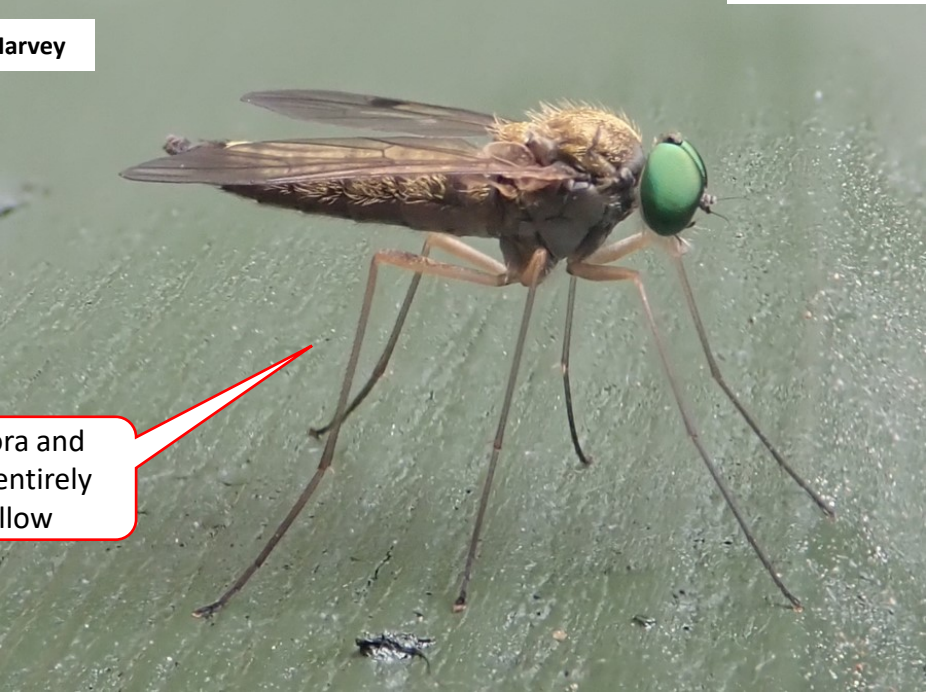


body greyish with yellow hairs and dusting

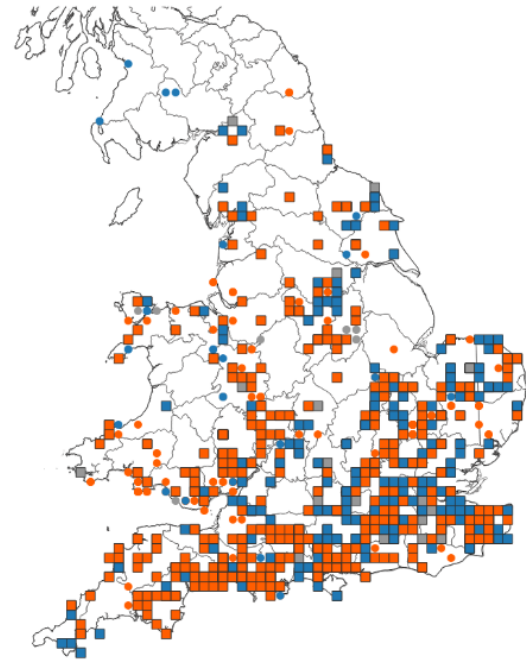
- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: late May to late Aug, peak mid Jun to mid Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread, local in north
- various: gardens, hedgerows, woodland margins, marshes and fens
- No. of records: 1653 • % since 2000: 63%

Chrysopilus asiliformis (Little Snipefly) – MALE

© Martin Harvey

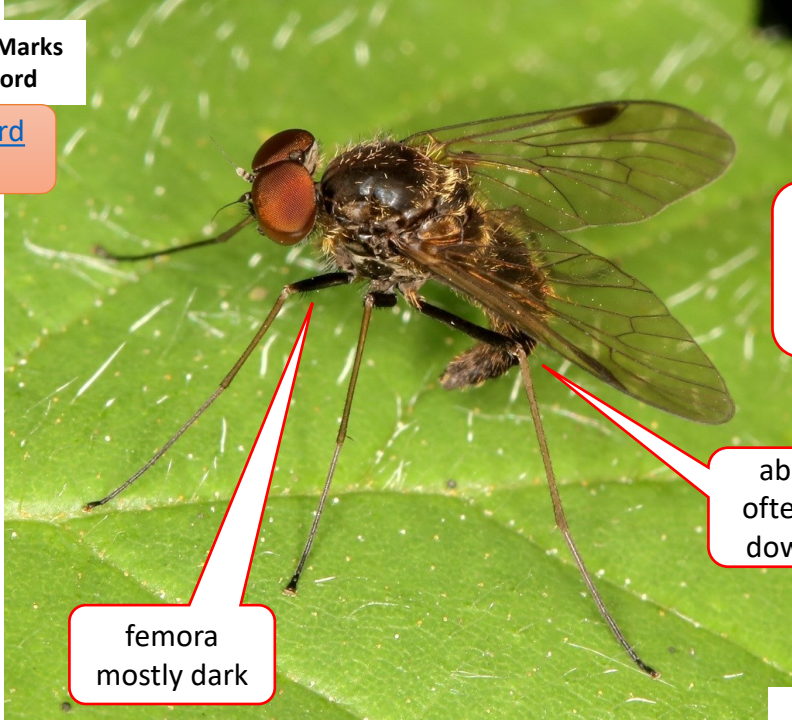


femora and tibia entirely yellow



© Neil Marks
via iRecord

[iRecord link](#)



smaller than *C. erythrophthalmus*:
body length: 6.5–9mm
wing length: 6–8mm

abdomen
often curled
downwards

femora
mostly dark

Chrysopilus cristatus (Black Snipefly) – MALE

© Malcolm Storey
/ Biolimages



body black
with sparse
hairs

[Biolimages link](#)

- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: mid May to Aug
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- damp soils in meadows, marshes, fens, ditches
- No. of records: 5256 • % since 2000: 53%

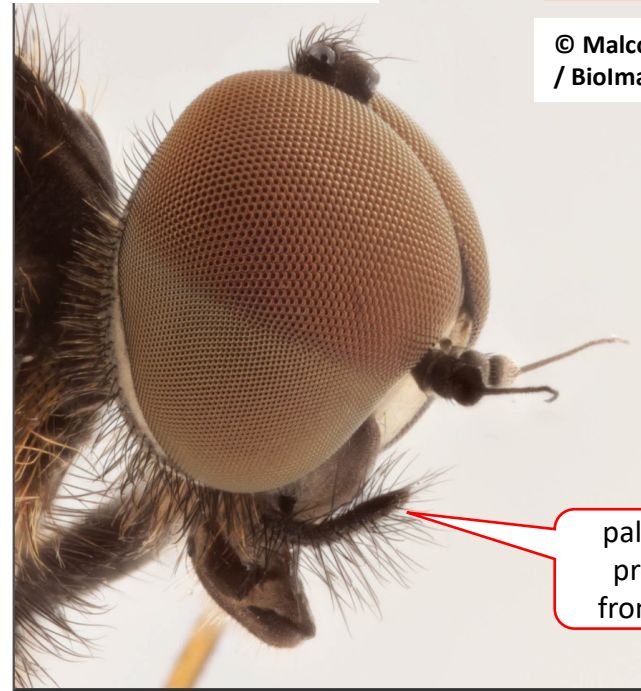
© Steven Falk

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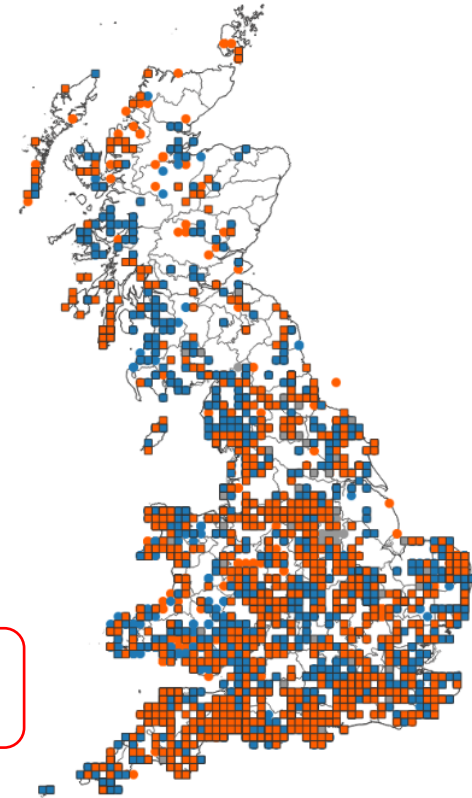


widespread in damp
and wetland habitats

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palpi long and
projecting in
front of mouth

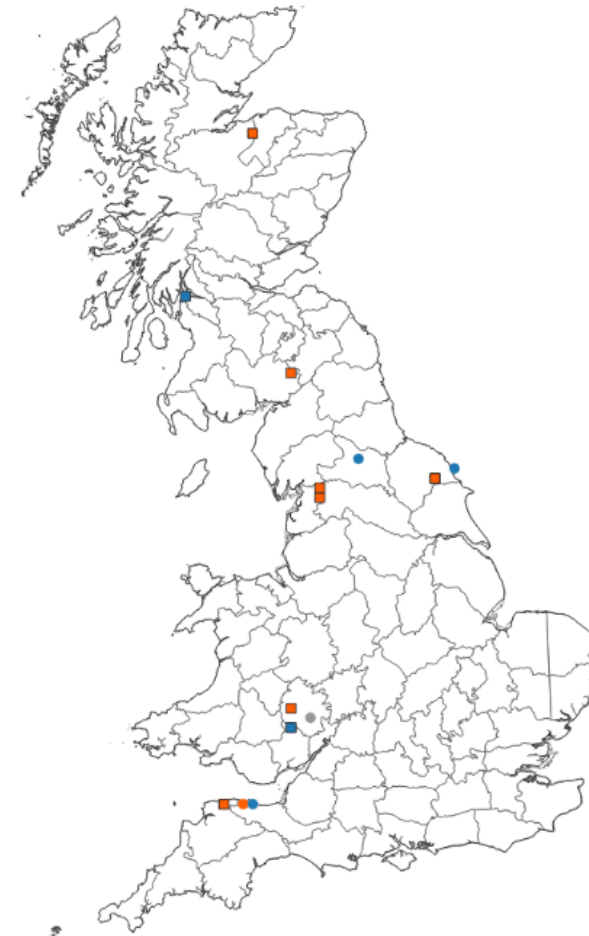




palpi shorter, and **not** projecting in front of mouth

larger than *C. cristatus*:
body length: 10–12mm
wing length: 8–9mm

- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: mid Jun to early Aug
- GB threat: Least Concern • GB rarity: Nationally Scarce
- northern and western uplands
- stony streams in upland areas, perhaps needing calcareous conditions
- No. of records: 15 • % since 2000: 73%

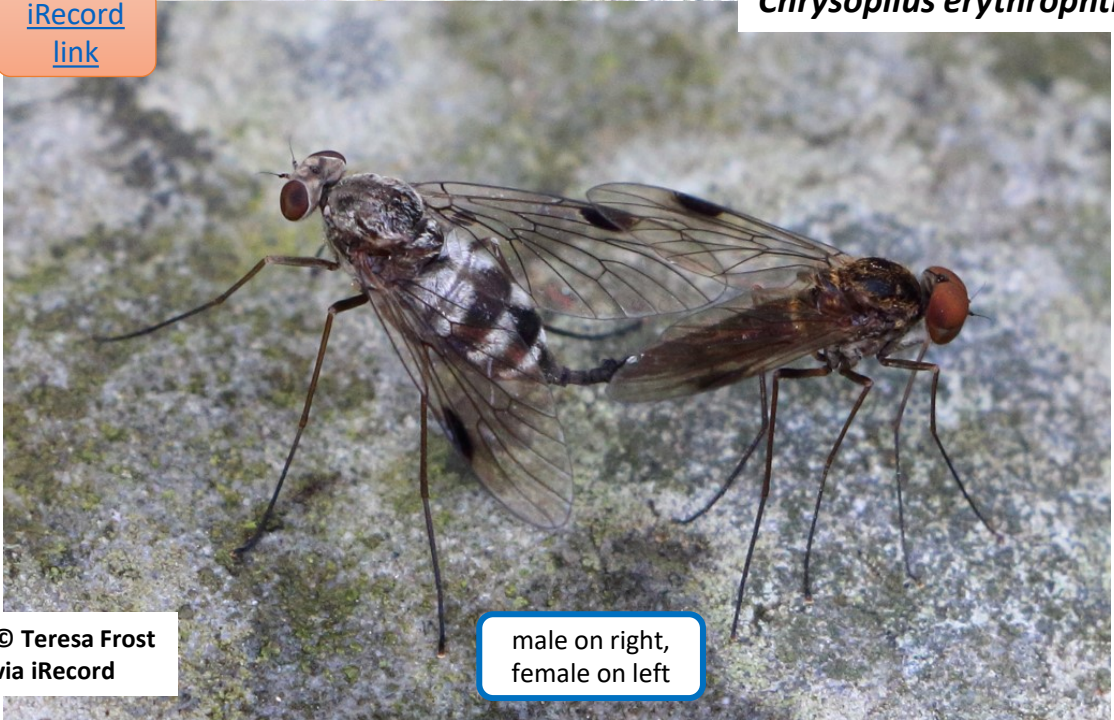


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Chrysopilus erythrophthalmus (Silver-banded Snipefly) – MALE

associated with upland stony streams



male on right,
female on left

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dark shading
across centre
of wing

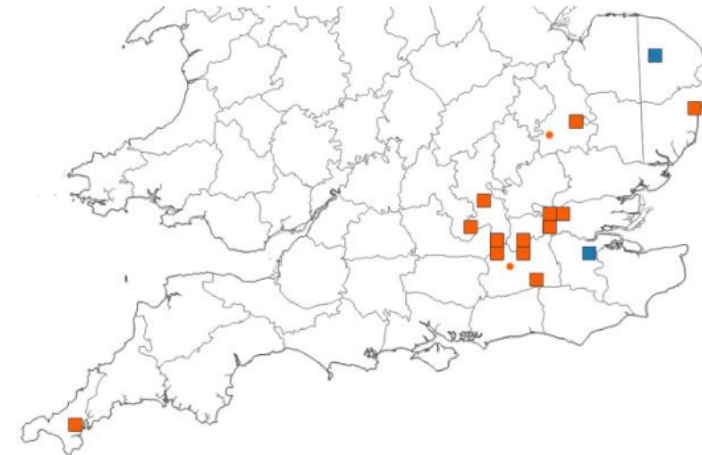
tip of antennae
(3rd segment)
black

orange body
with black bands
and patches

Chrysopilus laetus (Tree Snipefly) – MALE

- ID difficulty: 4
- Flight period: Jun? to Jul
- GB threat: Near Threatened • GB rarity: Nationally Scarce
- southern England
- wood mould in old trees, often but not always in ancient woodland
- No. of records: 27 • % since 2000: 81%
- **Caveats:** a 2009 record for Gloucestershire is not yet mapped

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via iRecord



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body greyish with yellow hairs and dusting

small species, 4.5–6mm long

[Martin Cooper link](#)

© Martin Cooper



Chrysopilus asiliformis (Little Snipefly) – FEMALE



[iRecord link](#)

© Neil Marks via iRecord

femora and tibia entirely yellow

[Martin Cooper link](#)

© Martin Cooper



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link](#)



femora
mostly dark

smaller than *C. erythrophthalmus*:
body length: 6.5–9mm
wing length: 6–8mm

© Steven Falk



body black with
yellowish-grey
dusting

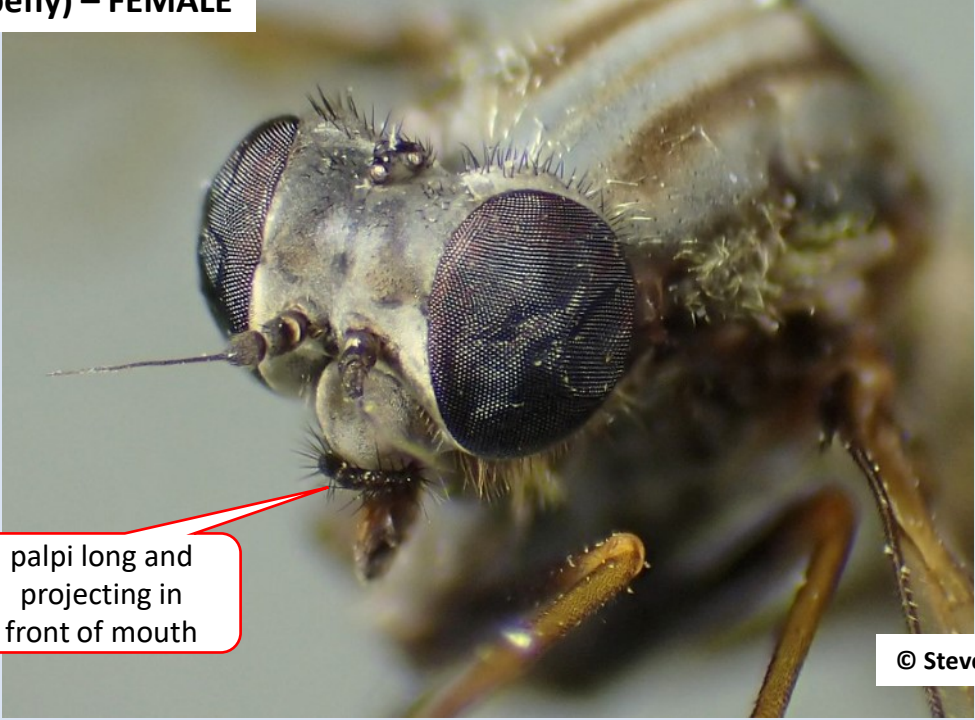
***Chrysopilus cristatus* (Black Snipefly) – FEMALE**



© Steven Falk

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widespread in damp
and wetland habitats



palpi long and
projecting in
front of mouth

© Steven Falk

© Rob Wolton



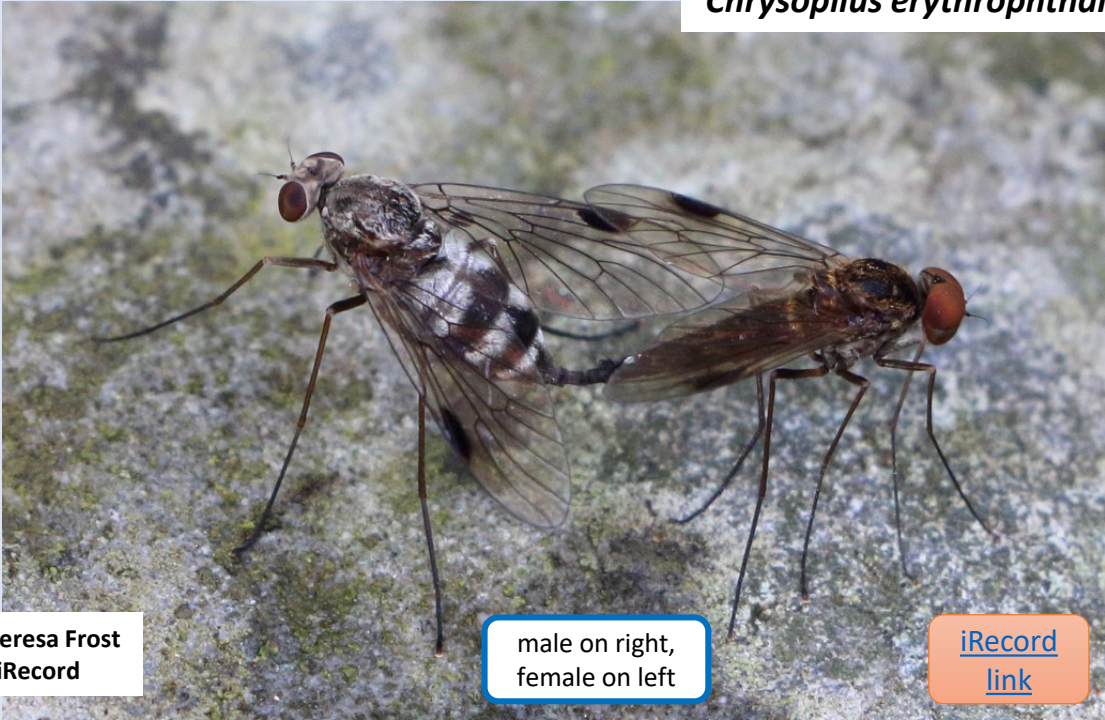
body black with silvery bands on abdomen

palps less prominent than in *C. cristatus*

© Rob Wolton



***Chrysopilus erythrophthalmus* (Silver-banded Snipefly) – FEMALE**



male on right, female on left

[iRecord link](#)

larger than *C. cristatus*:
body length: 10–12mm
wing length: 8–9mm

associated with upland stony streams

[Steven Falk link](#)



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© Jeremy Richardson



body mostly orange, with small black bands and patches

***Chrysopilus laetus* (Tree Snipefly) – FEMALE**

dark shading across centre of wing (can be faint)



© Martin Harvey

© Jeremy Richardson



tip of antennae (3rd segment) black

© Jeremy Richardson

