

# Identifying soldierflies and allies: snipeflies in genus *Rhagio*

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

Version 1 at 29 February 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 Geir79, George Tordoff, Ian Andrews, Martin Harvey and Simon Knott.

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

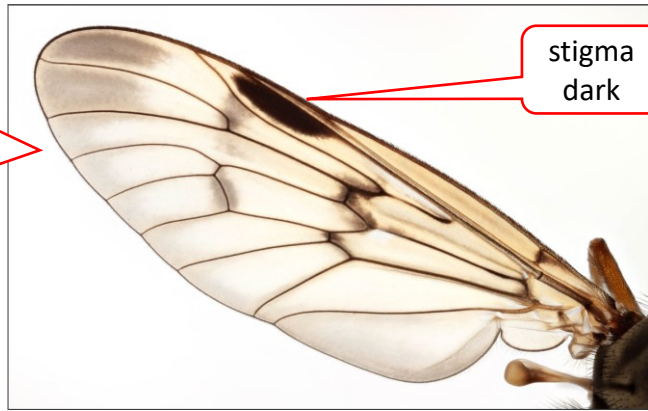


# Recognising the genus: *Rhagio*

Genus *Rhagio* contains six medium to large species (5.5–14mm long). They have the typical long legs and broad wings of the snipefly family, and all are a combination of yellow and black. Wing venation helps to separate *Rhagio* species from snipeflies in genus *Chrysopilus*, and wing markings help to separate the species of *Rhagio*.

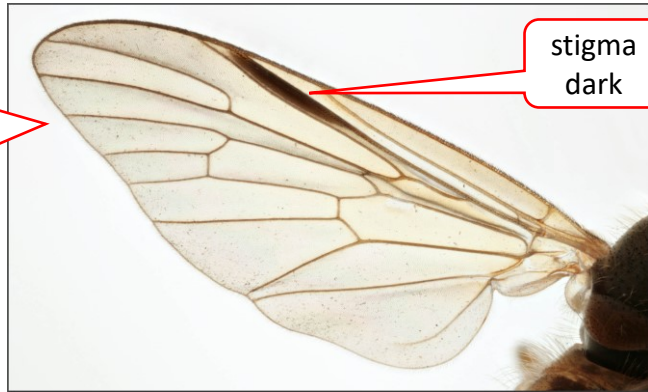
wings with dark stigma **and** grey clouding =

- *R. scolopaceus* (common) **or**
- *R. strigosus* (rare)



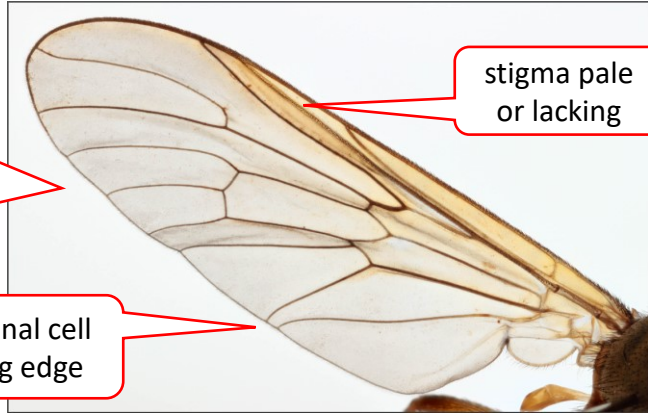
wings with dark stigma **only** =

- *R. lineola* (common) **or**
- *R. notatus* (rare)



wings with stigma pale or lacking =

- *R. tringarius* (common) **or**
- *R. annulatus* (rare)



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

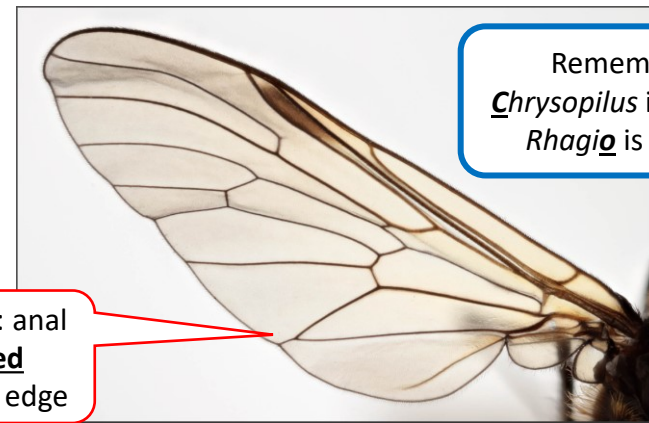
Males and females are fairly similar in appearance but can be distinguished by their eyes (male eyes meet at top of head, female eyes have a narrow gap at top of head).

Three of the species (*R. lineola*, *R. scolopaceus* and *R. tringarius*) are common and widespread, the latter most numerous in damp meadows and wetlands. The other three (*R. annulatus*, *R. notatus* and *R. strigosus*) are all rare. The reasons for this are poorly understood, and in fact the ecology of snipeflies in general is not well-known.



wing photos © Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

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



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





[Diptera.info link](https://www.diptera.info)

- ID difficulty: 4
- Flight period: May to mid Jun
- GB threat: Near Threatened • GB rarity: Nationally Rare
- southern England, Scotland (including Orkney)
- woodland edge but on a variety of soils (and in open habitat on Orkney)
- No. of records: 20 • % since 2000: 15%

***Rhagio annulatus* (Wood Snipefly) – MALE**



compare with the much more widespread [\*R. tringarius\*](#)





© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages



dark stigma mark on wing

[Ian Andrews link](#)



© Ian Andrews

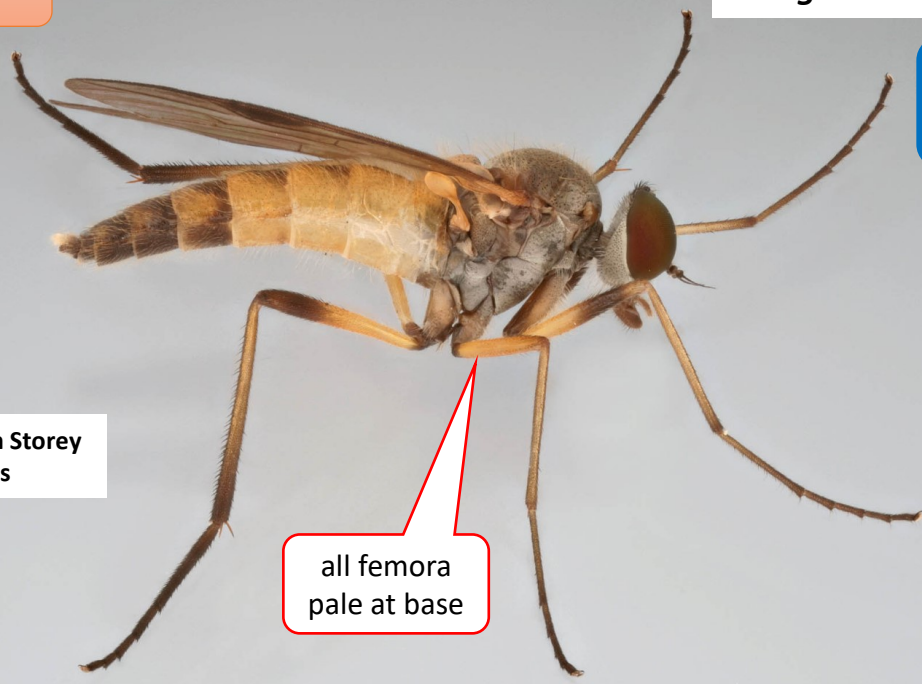
the smallest *Rhagio* species, 5.5–8mm long

[Biolimages link](#)

***Rhagio lineola* (Small Fleck-winged Snipefly) – MALE**

- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: late May to Sep, peak mid Jun to mid Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- woodland edge, scrub, hedgerows with trees
- No. of records: 2633 • % since 2000: 43%

© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages



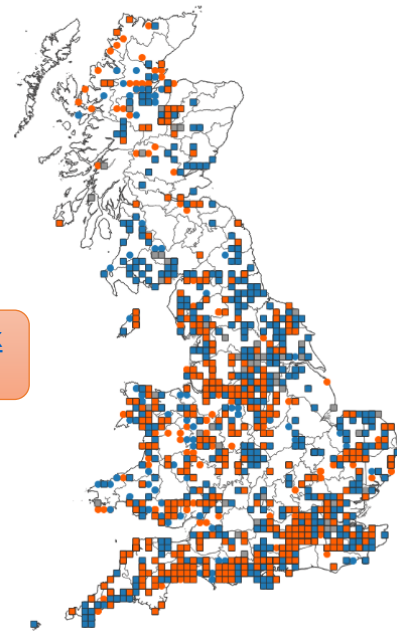
all femora pale at base

compare with the rarer *R. notatus*



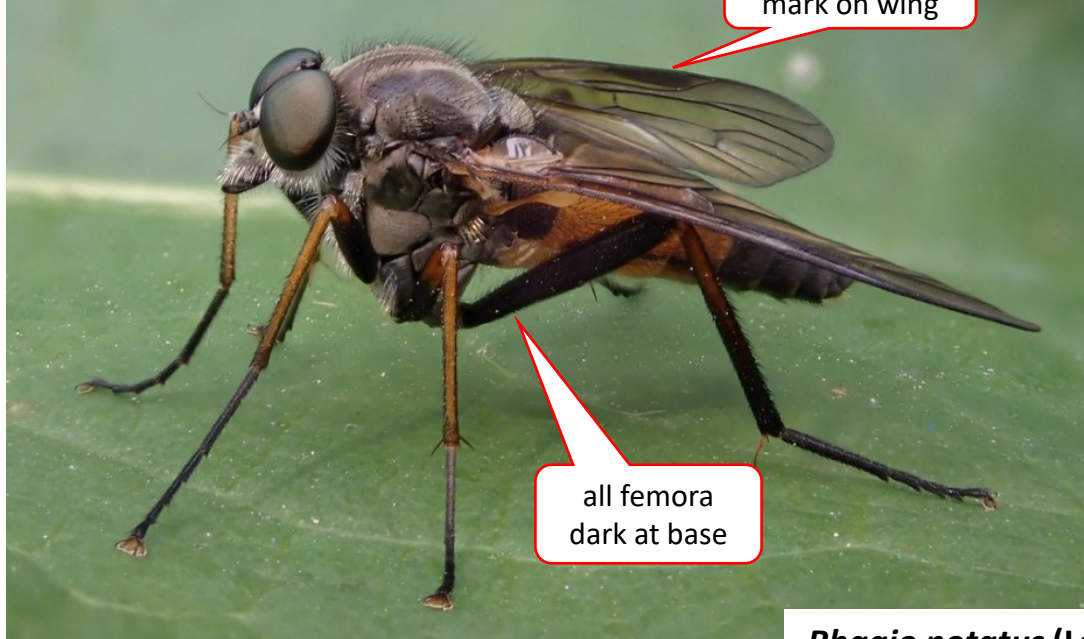
© Steven Falk

[Steven Falk link](#)





© Ian Andrews



dark stigma mark on wing

all femora dark at base

[Ian Andrews link](#)

larger than *R. lineola*, 8.5–13mm long

© Ian Andrews



- ID difficulty: 3
- Flight period: May to Jul
- GB threat: Least Concern
- mostly northern, but scattered in the south
- often at river margins, but also found on dry hills
- No. of records: 140 • % since 2000: 19%

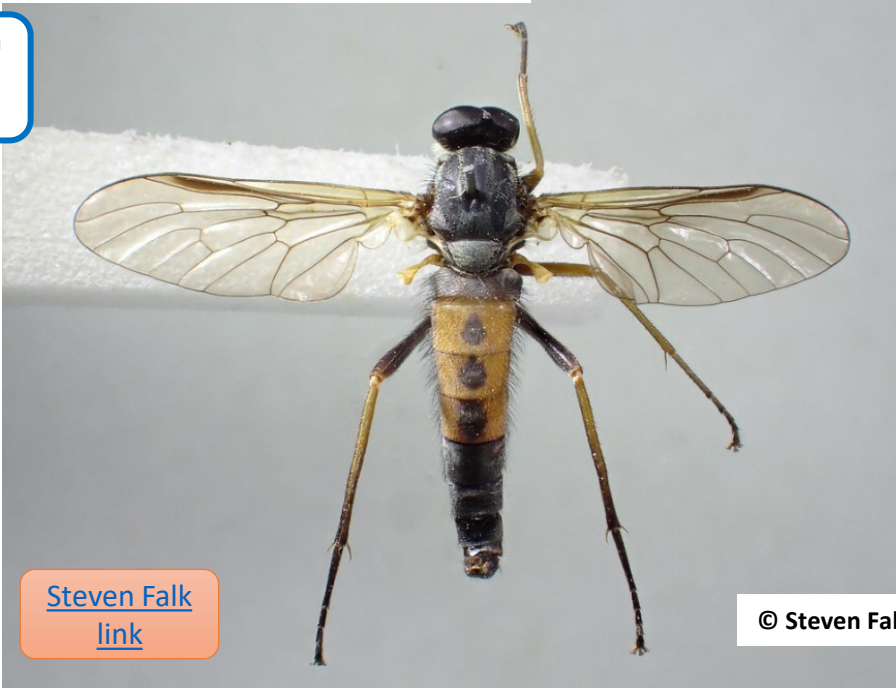
### *Rhagio notatus* (Large Fleck-winged Snipefly) – MALE

compare with the much more widespread [R. lineola](#)

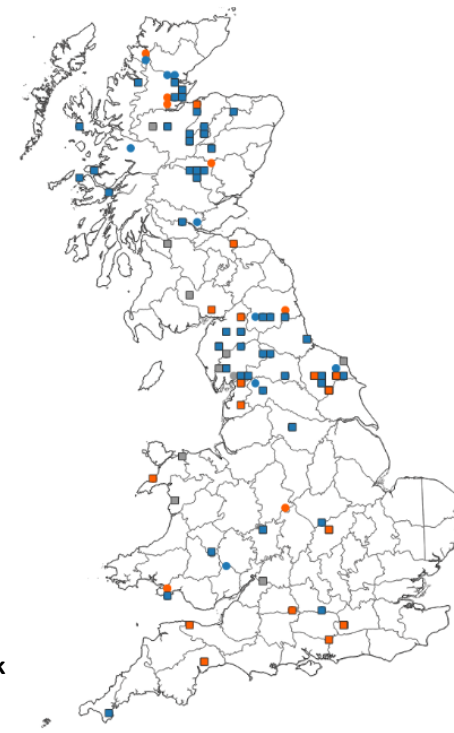
© Ian Andrews



[Steven Falk link](#)

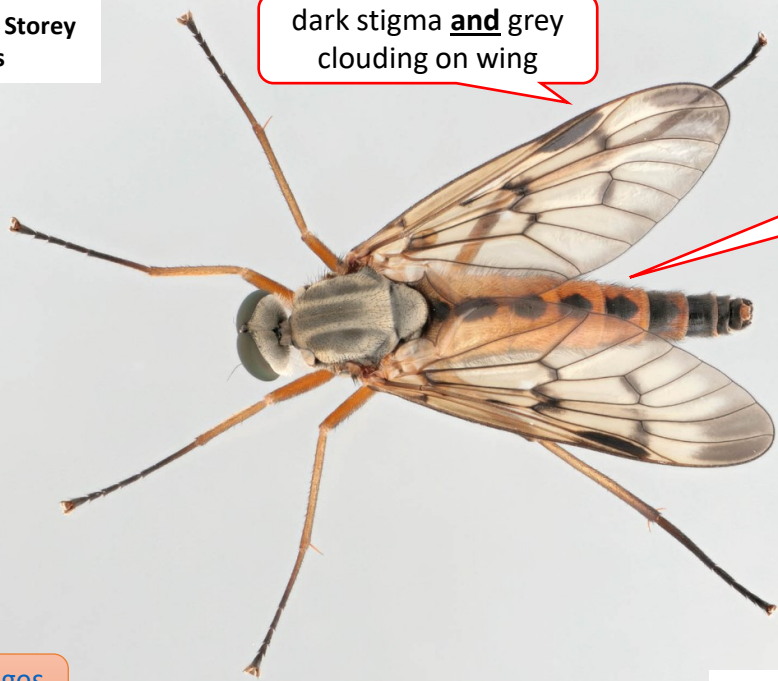


© Steven Falk





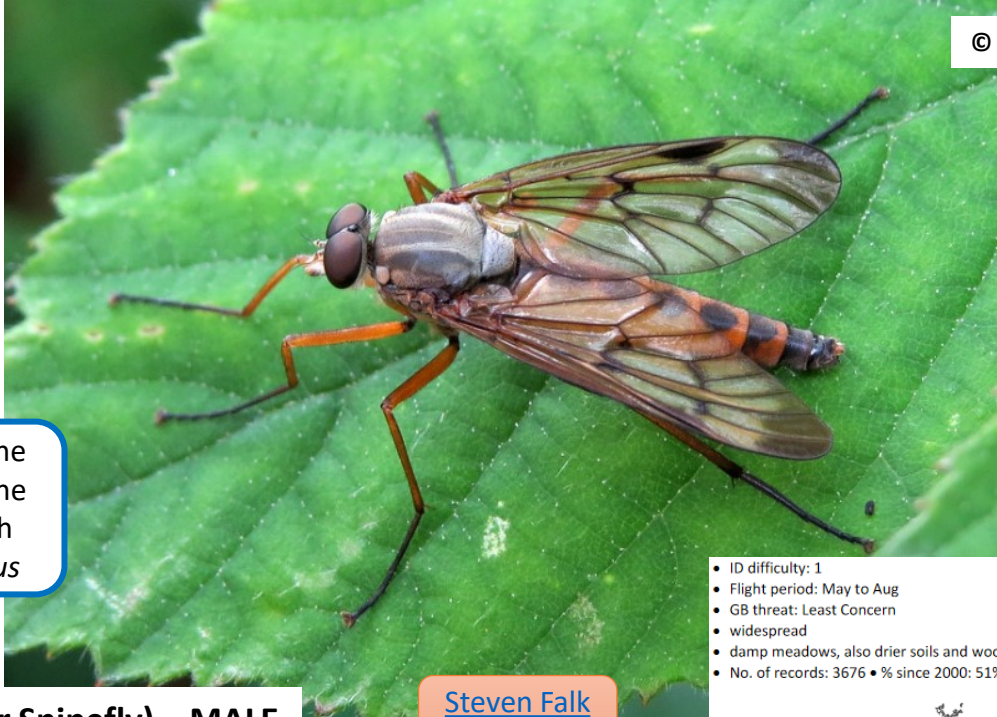
dark stigma **and** grey clouding on wing



long hairs at sides of abdomen

the third antennal segment is the most reliable ID feature – see the [comparison page](#) to distinguish from the much rarer *R. strigosus*

[Biolimages link](#)



- ID difficulty: 1
- Flight period: May to Aug
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread
- damp meadows, also drier soils and woodland
- No. of records: 3676 • % since 2000: 51%

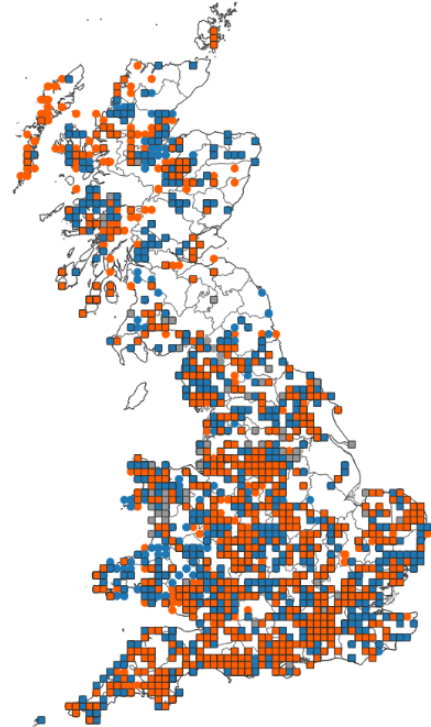
[Steven Falk link](#)

### *Rhagio scolopaceus* (Downlooker Snipefly) – MALE



third antennal segment **pointed**

this photo shows the typical 'downlooker' pose when perched on a tree-trunk





***R. scolopaceus*** is widespread throughout Britain in many habitats

***R. scolopaceus***: third antennal segment **pointed**

***R. strigosus***: third antennal segment **rounded**

***R. strigosus*** is only known from chalk areas of Surrey, Berkshire and Oxfordshire

1 mm

500 µm

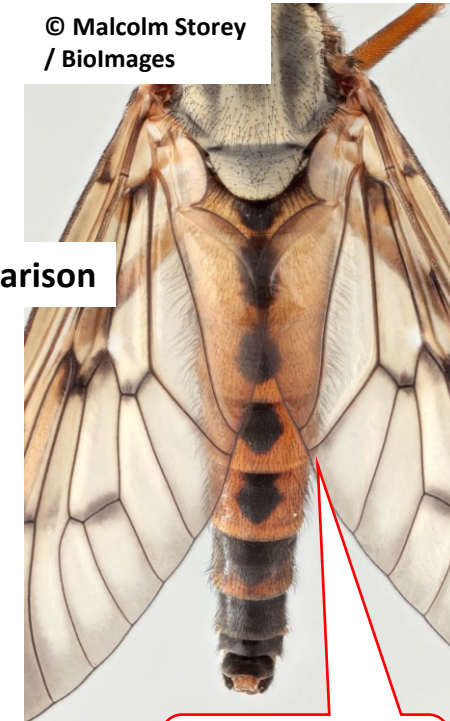
***Rhagio scolopaceus* and *Rhagio strigosus* comparison**

There are some other differences that can give clues as to which species you have, but these are not as reliable as the antennae:

	<i>R. scolopaceus</i>	<i>R. strigosus</i>
Sides of thorax	grey	grey or yellowish in strigosus (females are usually yellower than males)
Abdomen segment 4 (tergite 4)	long hairs on sides	short hairs on sides
Main flight period	early May to early August, peak in early June	early June to early September, peaking in early July

© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

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***R. scolopaceus***: **long** hairs on sides of abdomen

***R. strigosus***: **short** hairs on sides of abdomen



third antennal segment **rounded**

dark stigma **and** grey clouding on wing

***Rhagio strigosus* (Yellow Downlooker Snipefly) – MALE**

- ID difficulty: 4
- Flight period: Jun to mid Sep, peak Jul
- GB threat: Vulnerable • GB rarity: Nationally Rare
- southern England (Chilterns, North Downs)
- woodland edge, also isolated trees and telegraph poles, in calcareous areas
- No. of records: 153 • % since 2000: 29%
- **Caveats:** the three westernmost records are thought erroneous

the third antennal segment is the most reliable ID feature – see the [comparison page](#) to distinguish from the much more widespread *R. scolopaceus*

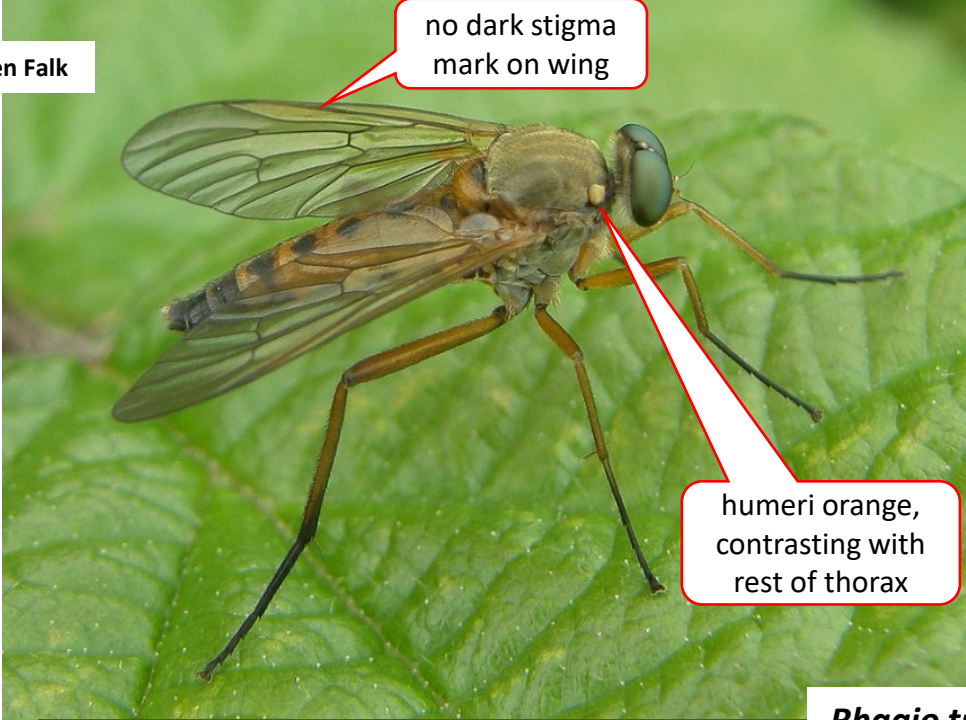


short hairs at sides of abdomen





© Steven Falk



[Steven Falk link](#)

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- ID difficulty: 2
- Flight period: May to Sep
- GB threat: Least Concern
- widespread, scarcer in Scotland
- marshes and wet meadows, pond edges, woodland
- No. of records: 2139 • % since 2000: 47%

***Rhagio tringarius* (Marsh Snipefly) – MALE**



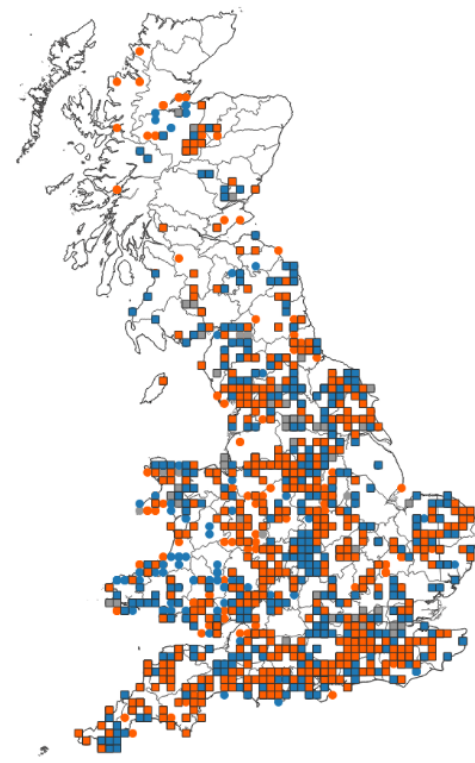
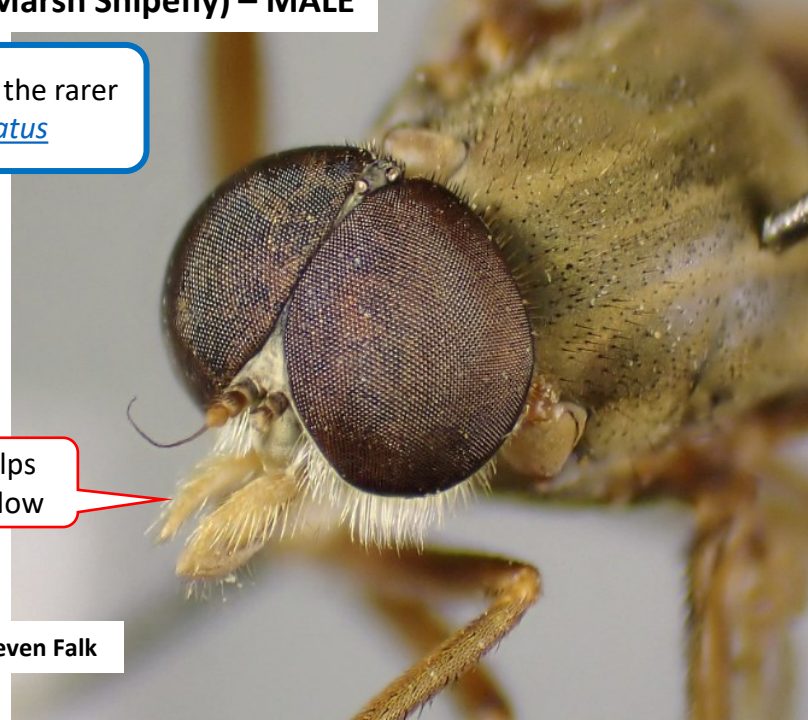
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[Biolimages link](#)

compare with the rarer [R. annulatus](#)

palps yellow

© Steven Falk





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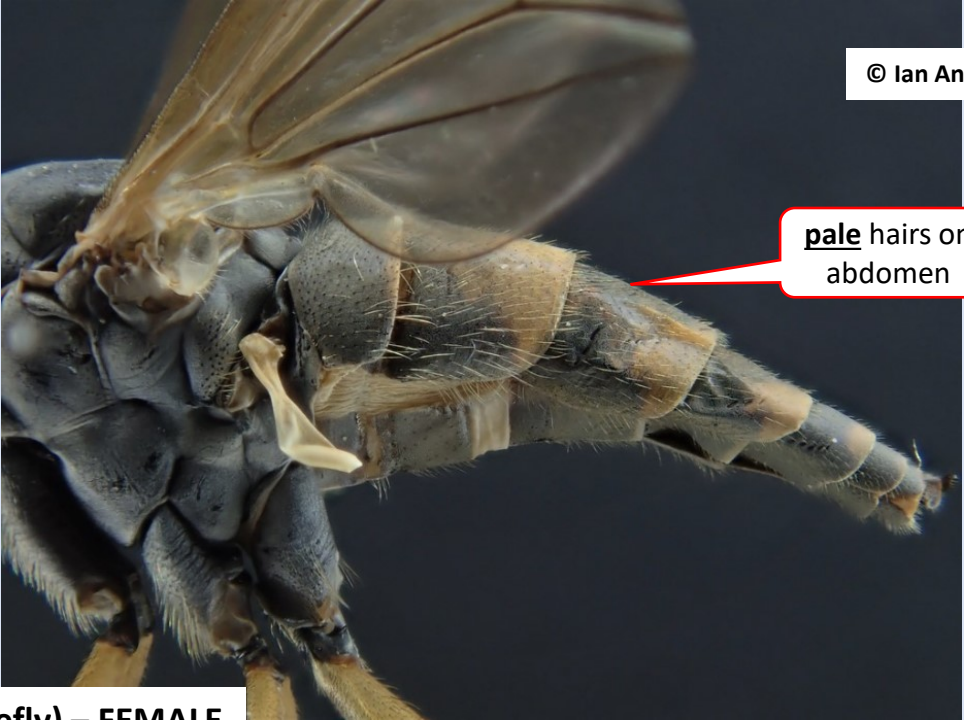
no dark stigma mark on wing



[Ian Andrews link](#)

© Ian Andrews

pale hairs on abdomen

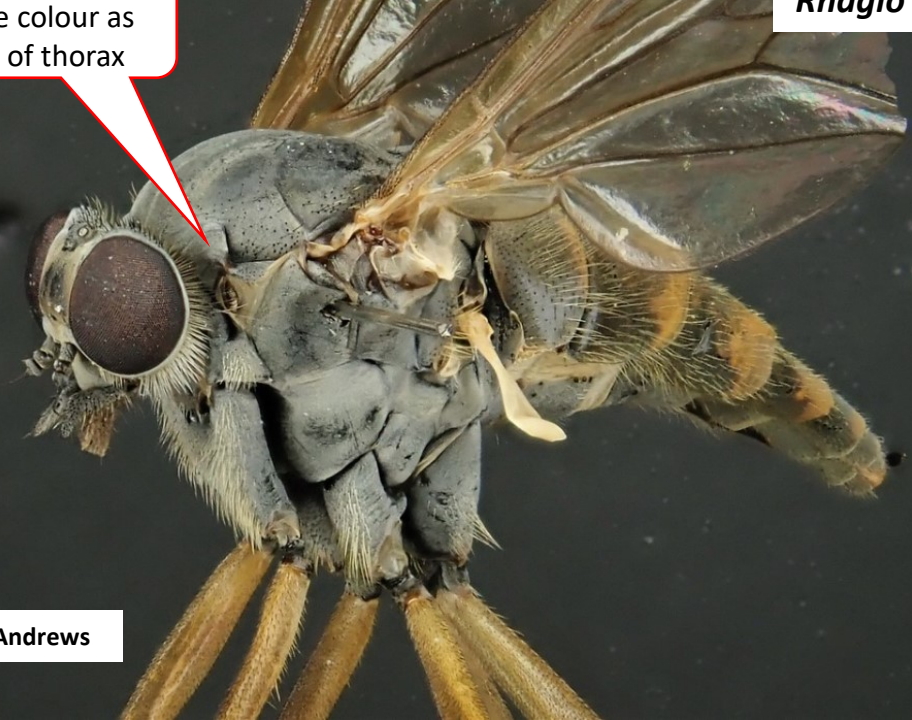


humeri grey, same colour as rest of thorax

***Rhagio annulatus* (Wood Snipefly) – FEMALE**

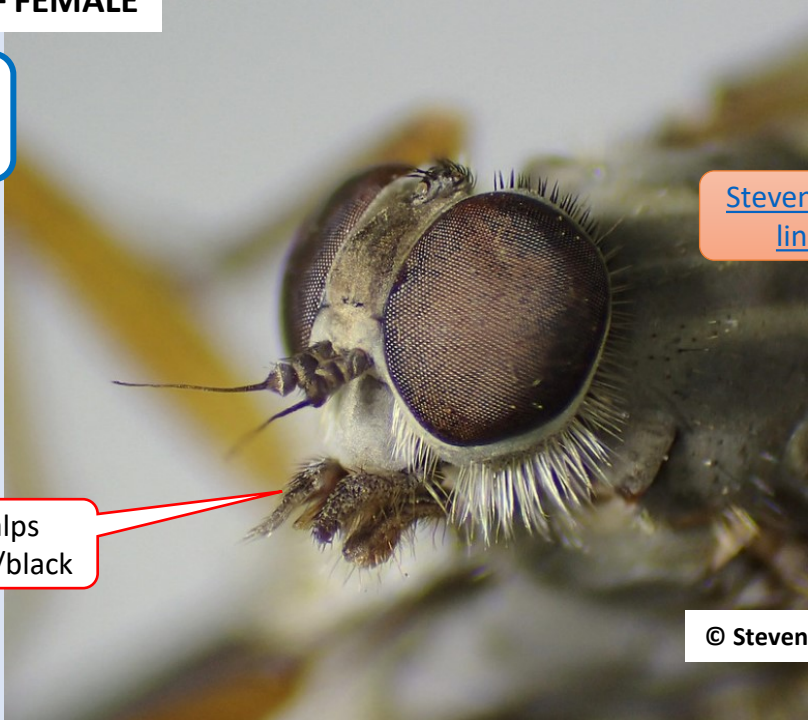
compare with the much more widespread [R. tringarius](#)

© Ian Andrews



palps grey/black

[Steven Falk link](#)



© Steven Falk



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[Steven Falk link](#)

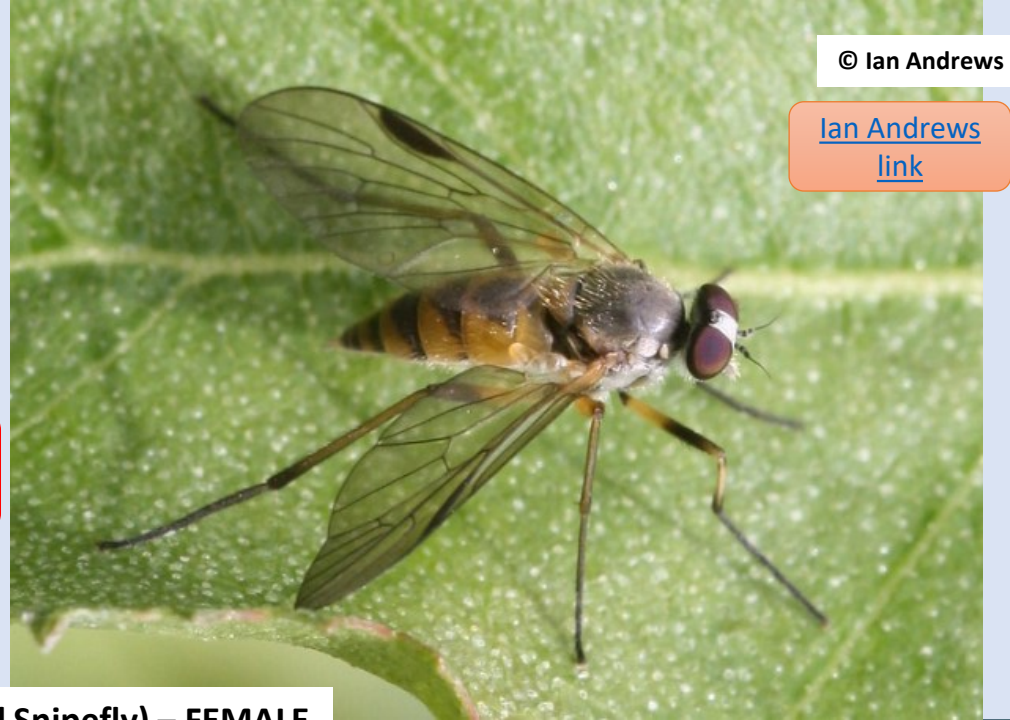


dark stigma mark on wing

the smallest *Rhagio* species, 5.5–8mm long

© Ian Andrews

[Ian Andrews link](#)

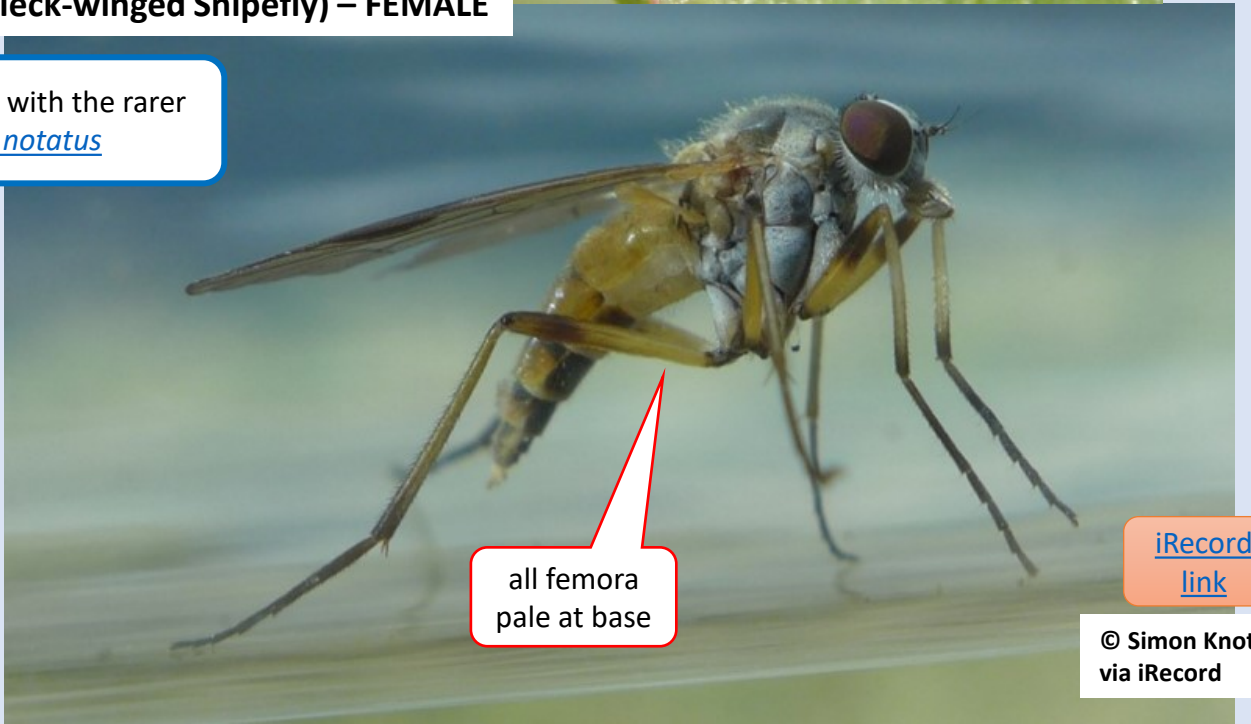


***Rhagio lineola* (Small Fleck-winged Snipefly) – FEMALE**

compare with the rarer [R. notatus](#)



© Martin Harvey



all femora pale at base

[iRecord link](#)

© Simon Knott via iRecord

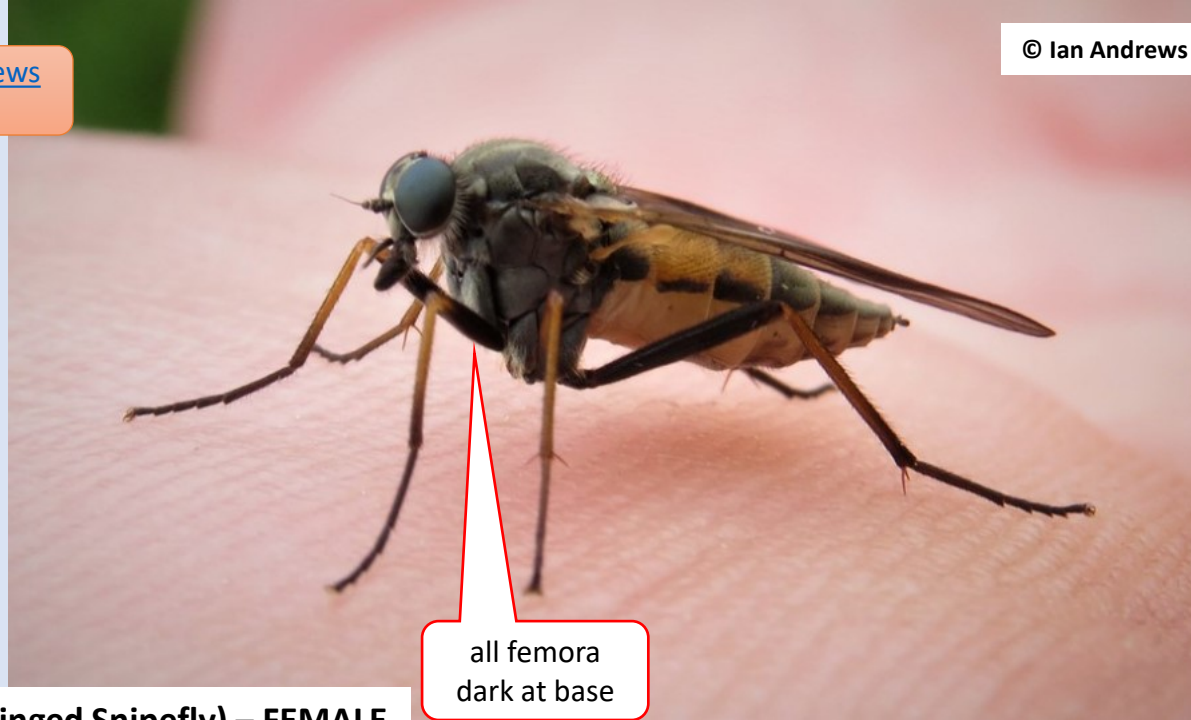




dark stigma  
mark on wing

[Ian Andrews  
link](#)

**larger** than *R.  
lineola*, 8.5–  
13mm long



all femora  
dark at base

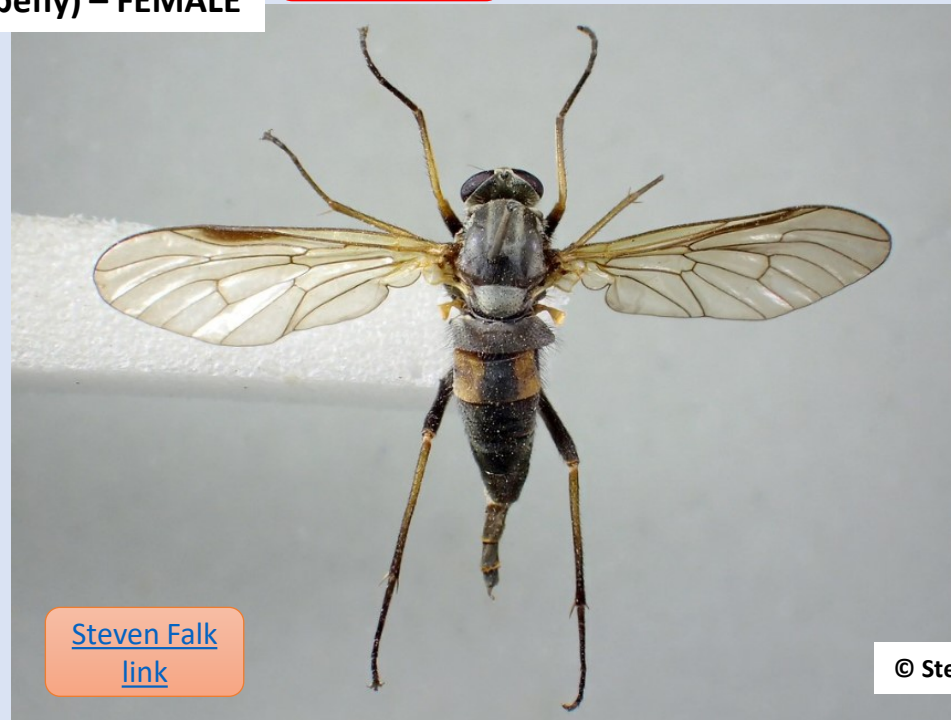
***Rhagio notatus* (Large Fleck-winged Snipefly) – FEMALE**

compare with the much  
more widespread  
[R. lineola](#)



the orange 'bump'  
on the underside in this  
photo is a mite, not an  
identification feature!

[Steven Falk  
link](#)





© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages



dark stigma and grey clouding on wing

long hairs at sides of abdomen

[Biolimages link](#)

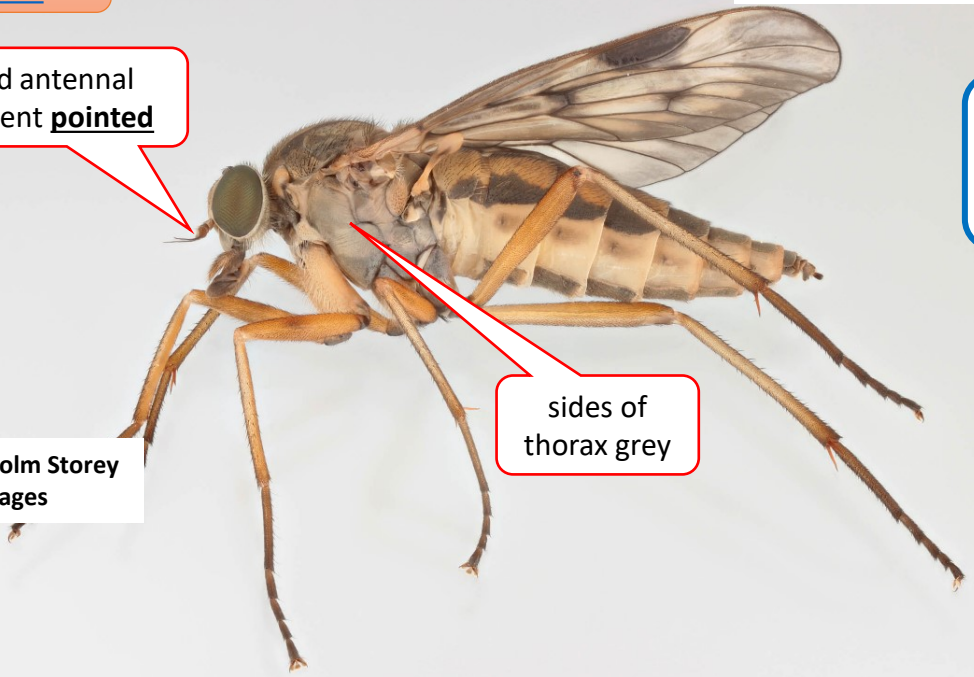
***Rhagio scolopaceus* (Downlooker Snipefly) – FEMALE**

© Steven Falk



[Steven Falk link](#)

third antennal segment **pointed**



sides of thorax grey

© Malcolm Storey / Biolimages

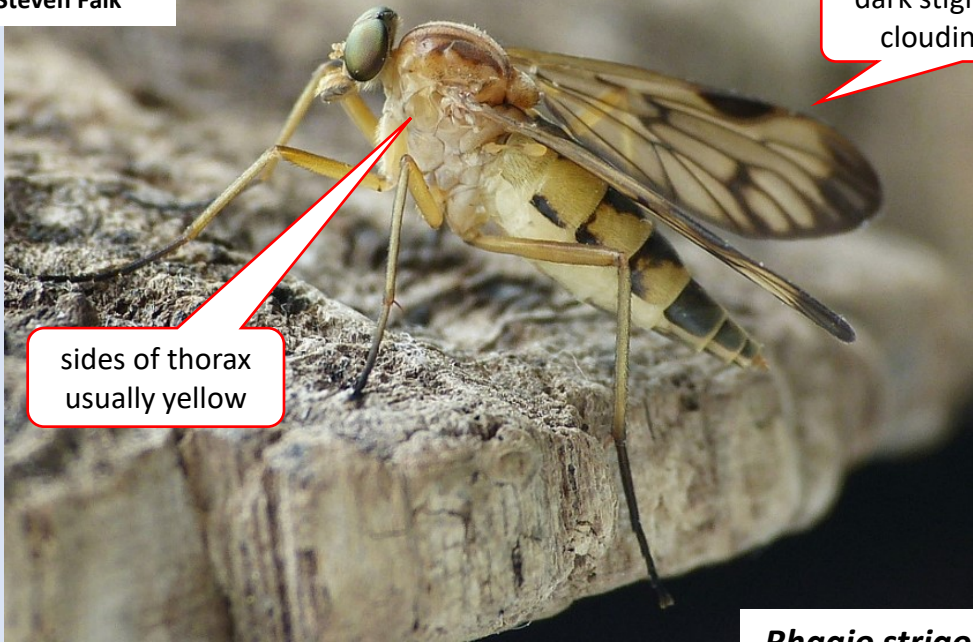
the third antennal segment is the most reliable ID feature – see the [comparison page](#) to distinguish from the much rarer *R. strigosus*



© Steven Falk



© George Tordoff  
via Steven Falk



sides of thorax  
usually yellow

dark stigma and grey  
clouding on wing

[Steven Falk  
link](#)

© George Tordoff  
via Steven Falk



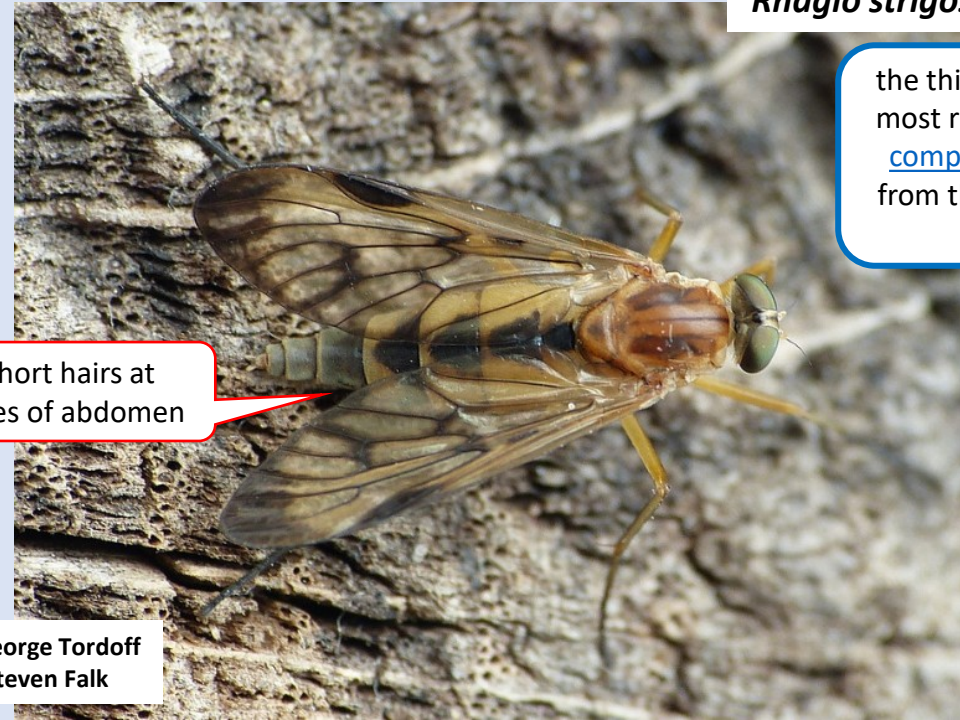
third antennal  
segment rounded

***Rhagio strigosus* (Yellow Downlooker Snipefly) – FEMALE**

the third antennal segment is the  
most reliable ID feature – see the  
[comparison page](#) to distinguish  
from the much more widespread  
*R. scolopaceus*

short hairs at  
sides of abdomen

© George Tordoff  
via Steven Falk



© George Tordoff  
via Steven Falk

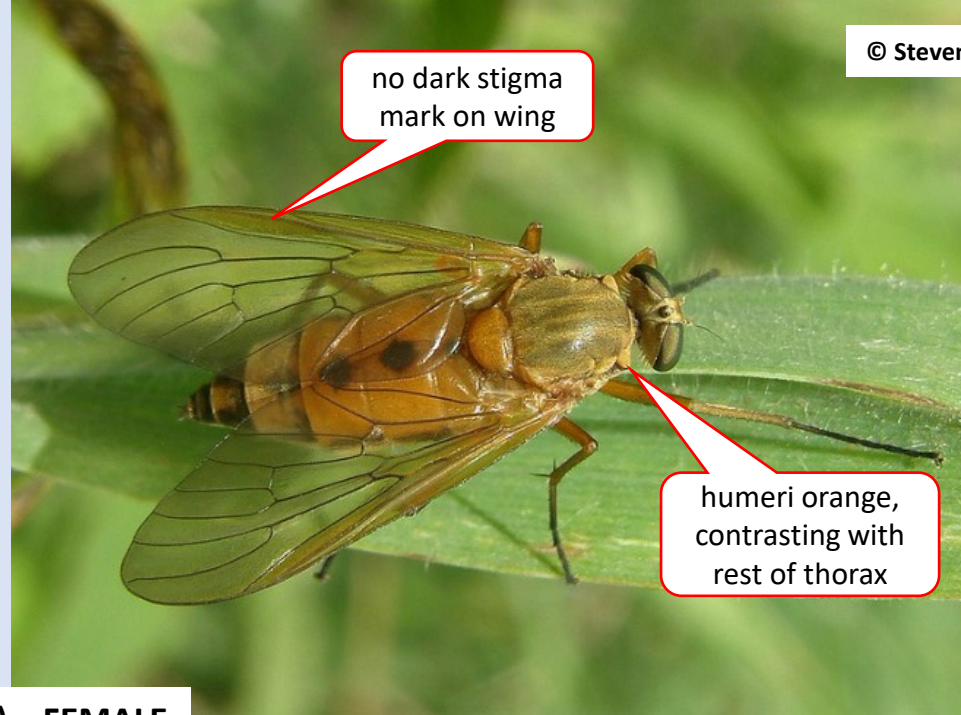






[BioImages link](#)

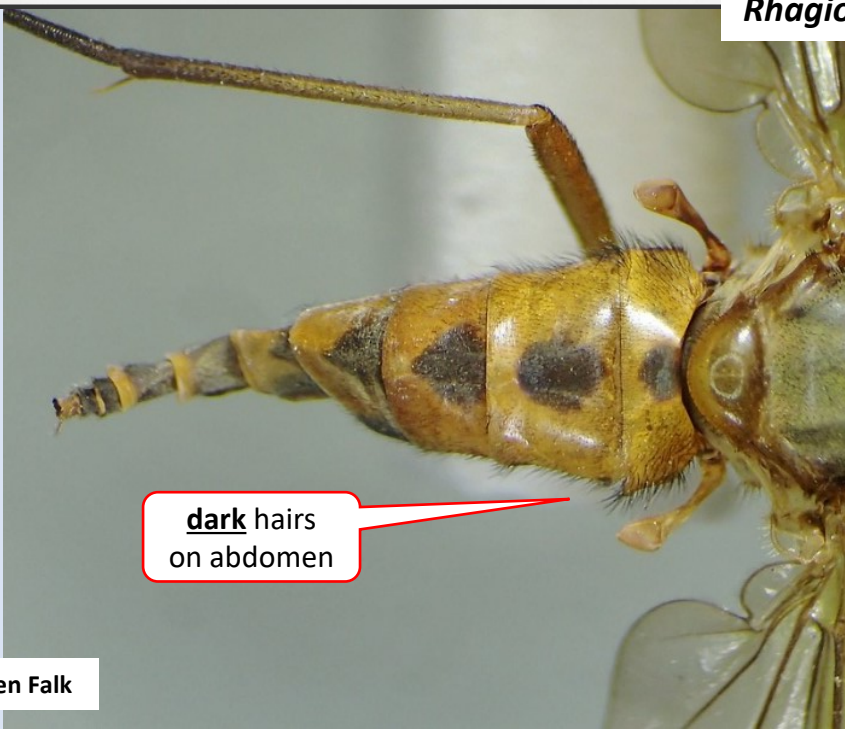
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*Rhagio tringarius* (Marsh Snipefly) – FEMALE

no dark stigma mark on wing

humeri orange, contrasting with rest of thorax



dark hairs on abdomen

compare with the rarer [R. annulatus](#)

[Steven Falk link](#)



palps yellow