

Hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae) from Vumba, Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, with the description of a new species of *Paragus*

by

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ABSTRACT

The Natal Museum Diptera collection contains the D. Cookson collection from Vumba in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, in which there are 440 specimens of hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae). This is one of the few large collections of hoverflies assembled by an individual collector from a single locality in Africa, and the only extensive collection from this particular locality. Not only is it thus significant as a collection, but it is also valuable as a conservation tool, providing a basic list of species from Vumba. In relation to this collection, the importance of the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe as a conservation area, is discussed. A new species of *Paragus* (*Pandasyophthalmus*) Stuckenberg, 1954, is described from the collection. Thirty five species and eight genera previously unrecorded from Zimbabwe, are listed.

INTRODUCTION

Hoverflies (Syrphidae) are distinctive and often colourful Diptera, generally popular among professional and amateur entomologists. In Africa, however, they remain understudied, with few works on ecology, periodicity, conservation and general biology (see e.g. De Meyer & Maragia 1993; Schmutterer 1972*a,b* 1974). Apart from the fact that available researchers are thinly spread in Africa, the scarcity of biological work may be a result of inadequate identification keys, often causing difficulties in identification of Syrphidae, where there is no access to an extensive reference collection. Thus, Syrphidae tend to be ignored (along with many other groups of insects) in faunal surveys. The keys that do exist are, nevertheless, an asset to identification. The most important of these are: Bezzi 1915; Curran 1927 1938*a,b* 1939*a,b*; Stuckenberg 1954*a,b*; Hull 1964; Vockeroth 1973; Hippa 1985 1990. Some of these keys are now out-dated and do not cover all species from the region.

Although conservation studies including hoverflies in Africa are limited, a few recent publications do exist, enabling further comparative studies on distribution and biodiversity to be carried out. At present these generally centre on East Africa, including: De Meyer *et al.* 1990 (Comoros), De Meyer & Whittington 1993 (East Africa), Whittington 1994 (Afrotropics), De Meyer *et al.* 1995 (East Africa), De Meyer *et al.* 1996 (East Africa). Hopefully, similar studies will be undertaken elsewhere, to provide a better understanding of the distribution of Syrphidae in Africa.

There are also relatively few good collections of hoverflies from single localities, or from individual countries, that are sufficiently comprehensive to be used for