

Stratiomys longicornis and *Stratiomys singularior* at Mill Bank Meadows pond, Fladbury, Worcestershire

Gary Farmer



01. (Left) *Stratiomys longicornis* and (Right) *Stratiomys singularior* at Mill Bank Meadows pond 08.06.23. Gary Farmer

I have reported in a previous edition of Worcestershire Record on the success of the resurrected 'ghost pond' at Mill Bank Meadows (Farmer 2022). The area continues to develop and during a visit on 8th June 2023 I noticed two large soldierflies Stratiomyidae which I photographed (01). Considering them to be the same species, *Stratiomys singularior* one of the 'big five' soldierflies (Steven Falk Flickr site) and a scarce species in the county, I emailed my photos round to a few local Recorders. Mike Averill directed me to an online identification guide (Harvey 2020). After consulting the guide, I concluded that I had actually photographed *S. longicornis* which would be a first record for Worcestershire so I submitted the record along with images to iRecord. On closer inspection I realised I had photographed two separate species and had submitted images of both species as one record to iRecord. I removed the record and sent the images to Steven Falk who confirmed that I had indeed found both species at one site on the same day. I resubmitted two records to iRecord and Martin Harvey confirmed these.

The larvae of these two species are aquatic and able to survive in wet mud if ponds dry up. They have also been seen crawling on filamentous algae (blanket weed) or even crossing terrestrial habitats, possibly in search of other waterbodies (Stubbs and Drake 2001). Both species are traditionally associated with coastal grazing marshes and saltmarsh; *S. singularior* in mildly brackish waters and *S. longicornis* in very brackish waters (Stubbs & Drake 2001). But they are both also known to occur inland at brick pits, quarries and brownfield sites (Steven Falk Flickr site).

These two species can be separated by the following features (02): *S. singularior* has long antennae, a pale tip to its scutellum, pale stripes at the side of the abdomen, white spots behind the head which continue up and over to the top of the head.

S. longicornis has very long antennae, a dark tip to the scutellum (beware of long white hairs), only very rarely has pale stripes on the abdomen (white hairs may well be present), the white spots behind the head do not reach over on to the top of the head, thorax covered in red/brown hair in fresh specimens.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Mike Averill for directing me to the identification guide, and to Steven Falk and Martin Harvey for confirming my identifications.

References

- Farmer, G. 2022. Resurrecting a ghost pond at Mill Bank Meadows. *Worcestershire Record* 50:53-56.
- Harvey, M. 2020. Identification guide to soldierflies in genus *Stratiomys* plus *Odontomyia ornata* (version 2). Available at: https://soldierflies.brc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Stratiomys%20ID%20guide_0.pdf [Accessed 22.12.23]
- Steven Falk Flickr site. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@N07/collections/72157632885395920/> [Accessed 22.12.23]
- Stubbs, A. & Drake, M. 2001. *British soldierflies & their allies*. British Entomological & Natural History Society.

Images

01. (Left) *Stratiomys longicornis* and (Right) *Stratiomys singularior* at Mill Bank Meadows pond 08.06.23. Gary Farmer.

02. Comparison between *S. singularior* and *S. longicornis*. Mill Bank Meadows pond 08.06.23. Gary Farmer.



02. Comparison between *S. singularior* (bottom) and *S. longicornis* (top). Mill Bank Meadows pond 08.06.23. Gary Farmer.