

The Humble Bee Fly (Family Bombyliidae –Order Diptera) ... John Lenagan

There is a buzzing in the air. It is of a higher and more consistent frequency similar to that of a blue banded bee. The buzzing lingers and then stops, You might have just had a close encounter with a Bee Fly.

Bee Flies range in size from 5–15mm. They are usually stout and hairy. They have long proboscises used to feed on nectar and pollen and they do not bite, unlike the March Flies. On a sunny day they can often be seen hovering over flowers and vegetation or resting on the bare ground where they lay their eggs. They are important pollinators of many of the coastal plant species.

The Bee Fly is the hairiest of flies and does not have the narrowed waist of a typical fly. Its wings are easily recognised with distinct vein patterns, usually dark in colour, some with patterns or spots. When at rest, its wings are flat in an outspread position. Its head is occupied by large eyes, more or less in a hemispherical shape. Its legs are slender and without bristles. The Bee Fly female typically lays its eggs in sandy soils. Most of the larvae are parasitic on other insects' eggs or larva, its own subsoil larvae are hard to find.

Bee Flies are known to mimic bees and wasps. There are various forms of Bee Flies to be found in the coastal areas around Anglesea. The photos indicate a few of the subfamilies and tribes to be found in the summer months.

Subfamily Toxophorinae - Slender Bee Flies (the smallest 5–8 mm)



Various Slender Bee Flies. Note the long horizontal proboscis—for feeding in flight

Subfamily Bombyliinae - True Bee Flies (15 mm)



Golden-brown Bee Fly *Staurostichus* sp



White-striped Golden True Bee Fly, *Staurostichus* sp., showing flying hovering skills



Subfamily Lomatiinae - Brown Bee Flies (12-15mm)



Grey-wing Brown Bee Fly —
Comptosia praeargentata

Subfamily Anthracinae - Black Bee Flies, Stout Bee Flies and Banded Bee Flies

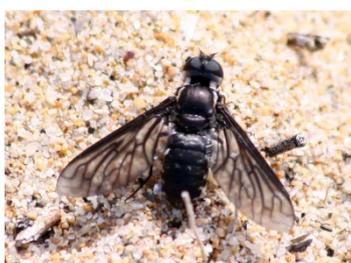


Coastal Long-wings Bee Fly—
Aleucosia costalis



Anthrax Bee Fly—*Anthrax proconisus*
Long black winged

Tribe Exoprosopini Stout Bee Flies 10-15 mm



Short-winged Bee Fly—*Pseudopenthes fenestrata*



Banded Villa Bee Fly 1—*Villa* sp.



Banded Villa Bee Fly —*Villa* sp.