

Beneficial Species Profile



Photo credit: Edward L. Manigault, Clemson University Donated Collection, Bugwood.org; Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

Common Name: Rat-Tailed Maggot (larvae); Drone Fly (adult)

Scientific Name: *Eristalis tenax*

Order and Family: Diptera: Syrphidae

Size and Appearance: Larvae are aquatic maggots and breathe via a long tube protruding from their abdomen that acts as a snorkel. Adults resemble honeybees, except that they only have one pair of wings and no true “waist” between their abdomen and thorax. They have short brownish-yellow hair and even mimic the exact movements of a honeybee.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	<1mm	Long and oval, typically sticky and laid in masses of 20+ near stagnant or polluted water
Larva/Nymph	Up to 20mm, with the tube they can be 30-40mm	A white maggot with a long breathing tube that can be as long as the body itself
Adult	16mm	Larvae are aquatic and breathe via a long tube that acts as a snorkel; adults resemble honeybees with one set of wings and no “waist”; short brownish-yellowish hairs often with yellow and black stripes on the back
Pupa (if applicable)		Hardened last larval instar with skin glued to body; darker in

	Same size as the last instar larvae <20mm	color and slightly chubbier than larva
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Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Larvae have chewing mouthparts and scavenges. The adult has sponging/siphoning mouthparts.

Host/s: Maggots are reared in polluted or stagnant water or on carrion and adults are typically found near flowers unless they are laying their eggs.

Description of Benefits (predator, parasitoid, pollinator, etc.): Larvae scavenges and feeds on organic matter, adult is a pollinator and feeds on nectar and pollen.

References:

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