

A tussle with Tachinidae and other parasitic flies

Franz-Rudolf (Rudi) Schnitzler *¹

¹ Landcare Research, Private Bag 92170, Auckland Mail Centre, Auckland 1142, SchnitzlerR@landcareresearch.co.nz & Ministry for Primary Industries, P.O. Box 2095, Auckland 1140, Rudi.Schnitzler@mpi.govt.nz

Tachinidae are considered to be the most speciose family of the order Diptera in the world. There are currently about 140 described species in about 58 genera in New Zealand. Many more undescribed species are known and more remain to be discovered. All species with known life histories are internal parasitoids of other insects and arthropods. Therefore they are ecologically important in regulating herbivore populations and in structuring both natural and managed ecological communities. Yet they are very much understudied as they are considered to be one of the most difficult families of Diptera in which to make practical identifications. I will report on the making of the DoC funded TFBIS project a *Virtual guide to the tachinid flies (Tachinidae) of NZ*, which will be but one stepping stone towards a better understanding of New Zealand Tachinidae and hopefully will encourage future research and funding. I present examples of an interactive key to New Zealand genera of Tachinidae, relevant character and imago images, as well as fact sheets. These will be made available on the Landcare Research website upon completion. I will discuss observations and perils faced during the development of the key. Furthermore I will comment on a record of another parasitic New Zealand fly family.

