



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

September, 2023

The arrival of the Asian Hornet in UK has prompted a scramble to lessen the impact by raising awareness, asking beekeepers to help monitor its spread and 'track and trace' training. LBKA have financially contributed to Sharon, Luke, Rebecca and a group of seven other beekeepers to go to Jersey to learn how they are tracking down nests. There will be a unique opportunity to learn from them at the Monthly Meeting on Sunday. Please make every attempt to be there. We will be giving out traps. In addition, please read our guidance on page 3, the identification guide on page 4 (that has been in every issue for the past few years) and Mark's plea to spare other insects on page 12.

In addition, David has written up our Spectacular Summer Social accompanied with photos taken by George on from page 5. Howard has written a summary of LBKA's educational offerings over the past year (p6). And Richard, Howard and Mark have their regular contributions on pages 1, 9 and 10.

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Thank you to this month's contributors: Richard Glassborow, David Hankins, George Kozobolis, Howard Nichols and Mark Patterson. Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, reflections, advice, recipes...

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From our Chair

Richard Glassborow
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What a month August 2023 has turned out to be for LBKA!

On the 13th August we held our summer social at Bell House in Dulwich. It is getting increasingly difficult to find venues that are easily accessible for all our members, spread out as we are, across most of London. Coupled with the fact that Covid seems to have robbed us of the habit (and benefits) of going to person-to-person



Bee on a "bug hotel" containing plenty of evidence of use by solitary insects. Photo taken in the grounds of Bell House during our Spectacular Summer Social. Photo: George Kozobolis.

meetings, the committee had been somewhat anxious about holding this event in a place that is not exactly easy to reach whichever side of London you live. In the event, members bucked recent trends and turnout was good. If the journey had been arduous, Bell House rewarded our efforts with an easy and relaxed atmosphere with plenty of space to circulate and renew old acquaintances and make new ones.

As well as being anxious over whether members were going to turn up for the social, I was also anxious about delivering the update on the London Bee situation with its implications for more sustainable beekeeping in London. It is a very sensitive subject and I am well aware some members think we are going too slowly and others too fast. So I was relieved and delighted to find the talk stimulated a lively discussion which has continued beyond the meeting amongst a number of members.

The London Bee situation started as a welfare issue about honey bees but on reflection I had come to realise that the root of the problem was in fact part of the biodiversity crisis and underlying role of human behaviour.

In that respect, it is not solely a London thing and I have found this confirmed when I have talked on the subject to other beekeeping associations whose constituencies are not urban and do not have some of the commercial distortions and exploitations that we have in London. Audiences have not found it difficult to see this interpretation of sustainable beekeeping. In fact, it is almost as if they already knew it but didn't know that until it was presented to them.

A proposition to make beekeeping more sustainable was passed at the BBKA ADM earlier this year. The delegates at that meeting were unable to define what that meant. It was left to the Trustees of the BBKA to work that out. From the interest shown at the summer social and from audiences outside London, it does seem that the time has come to accelerate our efforts to develop this approach to beekeeping and share it more widely with other associations.

But if the issue of sustainability was sensitive before, there is a new "agent of change" that makes it unequivocally existential. The Asian hornet changes everything. We have yet to experience how and we do not have an array of solutions. But I hope that in the coming months LBKA members will be resolute in seeking solutions within the sustainable framework we are seeking.

It is my fear that Asian Hornet, once in the hands of the press and social media, has all the ingredients for justified, careless or indiscriminate mass killing of all insects and a few more besides. Please, please be very attentive to the side-effects of any measures we are encouraged to deploy, particularly on wildlife.

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

September's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting meeting will be on **Sunday (10th September) at 11:00**. We've changed the topic to "**Asian Hornet Briefing and action**". It will be led by Sharon and Luke who have extensive knowledge of the Asian Hornet and experience of monitoring and trapping. It will be at **Battersea Park Children's Zoo** (Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ) at 11:00.

Our Pub Social will be on **Tuesday 26th September** will be at the George Inn (75 Borough High St, Southwark, SE1 1NH) from 18:30. It was built in 1676 and they say they are "London's only surviving galleried inn".

October's Monthly Meeting will be on **Sunday 8th October** on the **Natural History of bees** at Battersea Park Children's Zoo.

Selling honey

Members can list their honey for sale on our website at <https://lbka.org.uk/honey>. Please let me know if you'd like to keep your entry by emailing services@lbka.org.uk and whether there are any updates. I will remove the details of those who do not contact me.

LBKA book lending library

We now have a library and librarian! Thank you to Mary Walwyn for volunteering to catalogue, look after and lend beekeeping books to members. More details are in the members' area of the website at <https://lbka.org.uk/library>.

Old announcements from August

Check our [previous newsletters](#) or contact services@lbka.org.uk for more details.

Extractors. If you'd like to rent out a manual extractors please email Will at resources@lbka.org.uk to reserve.

Old announcements from July

BBKA Bee Basic Assessment. We are delighted to report that **Arthur Starzec** and **William Bunker** have both passed their **BBKA Bee Basic Assessment**. Very many congratulations! Please contact Howard on education@lbka.org.uk if you're interested in taking it next year.

Old announcements from June

Award for Battersea Children's Zoo's partnership with LBKA. We were delighted to hear that Battersea

Think you've seen an Asian Hornet? Report it!



Report through the Asian Hornet Watch app or www.bit.ly/asianhornetreport



Children's Zoo won an educational award for their partnership with LBKA from British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA).

Do you have any announcements?

If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

Help Monitor for the arrival of the Asian Hornet in London

LBKA's advice for helping monitor the Asian Hornet's arrival in London.

The Asian Hornet looks like it's about to start being established in the UK. This is perhaps the some consequential challenge to beekeeping since the arrival of another invasive species: *Varroa destructor*.

Although widely expected, things have a habit of developing rather rapidly and there is a scramble to respond to this threat. Perhaps inevitably, a lot of inconsistency and confusion surrounds how best we respond.


LBKA's advice is that the most important thing for members to do at this stage is to help establish where and when the Asian Hornet arrives in Lon-

don. This needs to be done with baited traps that are checked daily and any creatures caught that are not Asian Hornet released (to avoid the risk of unnecessarily killing other insects – see Mark Patterson's plea on p12). If an Asian Hornet is caught (look for the yellow legs) it should be killed in the freezer (it's illegal to released once caught), photographed and reported. Tracking where nests is best done by those you've been trained once we know where they are feeding.

Please make every effort to come to the Monthly Meeting. In-person demonstration is the most effective means to tell members what they need to know. We will also be providing Asian Hornet monitoring traps (and/or you can make some using the video below).

To be an effective monitor, see the advice below.

- **Learn to identify the Asian Hornet.** Learn to identify the Asian Hornet (yellow legs is one of the characteristic features). We have already recommended members to take the simple Asian Hornet Action Team training linked from the Asian Hornet map page. If you have passed and would like to appear on the Asian Hornet map, email services@lbka.org.uk.
- **Put out monitoring traps.** Put out monitoring traps for Asian Hornets. Come to the Monthly Meeting to find out how to do this and get a trap (or make this one). Tell us where your trap is. We also recommend you join LBKA Asian Hornet WhatsApp group.
- **Find out how to report.** Install the Asian Hornet watch app on your phone or find out alternative ways of reporting it.
- **Monitor your traps daily.** It's important to release other insects so we're not unnecessarily killing



www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Cornwall, Chaf Bony (NNS), Gay Morris, Mike Brown (National Tree Unit) with assistance from Corinne O'Hagan (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland), Stuart Roberts (BBSRC)

Asian Hornet

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to: alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Species Description


Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
AKA: Yellow-legged Hornet
Native to: Asia
Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

Not easily confused with any other species. Dark brown or black, velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden lawn furniture, plant pots, freight containers, or even untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should send a photo to alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.



Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen


Queens up to 30mm, workers up to 25mm long

Entirely dark brown or black with a few yellow bands

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Photos from: J. Haines, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones, Richard Bell

Asian Hornet **European Hornet**





Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment

Asian Hornet 'swarming' for honey bee nest

Similar Species

Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison



- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
- Legs yellow at the ends
- Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
- Head dark from above, orange from front
- Dark coloured antennae
- Entirely black velvety thorax
- Never active at night

Actual size

European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)



- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 30mm long
- Legs brown at the ends
- Yellow abdomen marked with brown on the upper part, not banded
- Head yellow from above, yellow from front
- Yellow antennae
- Thorax black with extensive brown markings
- May be active at night

Actual size

Giant woodwasp (*Ducerus gigas*)



- Larger than Asian hornet, female up to 45mm long
- Legs yellow
- Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
- Long cylindrical body unlike Asian hornet which has an obvious waist
- Long yellow antennae
- Female has an obvious long sting-like appendage (ovipositor) which it uses to lay eggs in trees

Actual size

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)



- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than Asian hornet
- Legs darker than Asian hornets
- Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
- Large, globular eyes

Actual size

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet

Actual size

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made hibernaculae – underneath tree bark in cavities left by beetle larvae, in soil, on ceramic plant pots – potentially any small, well-insulated refuge. Makes very large nests in tall trees in urban and rural areas, but avoids pure stands of conifers. Will use man made structures (garages, sheds etc.) as nesting sites.

For more information visit:
www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeeunit.com

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

other pollinators. If a suspected Asian Hornet is found in a trap, put the trap in a polythene bag and freeze for 12 hours to kill it. Then take a photo, and report using the app Asian Hornet Watch or the method listed on the link above. Also share on our Asian Hornet WhatsApp group.

August's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

We discussed our response to the Asian Hornet threat. Firstly, we have switched the subject of the Monthly Meeting Asian Hornet action and Sharon Bassey has agreed to lead it, based on her trip to Jersey. Secondly, we are in the process of agreeing some clear advice to members. We agreed that it is important to distinguish the different types of traps (monitoring, bait, kill), correct identification of Asian Hornet, making it clear that trapped Asian Hornets should not be released and that traps should be checked daily so as not to kill other insects. Thirdly, the Trustees agreed to financially contribute to a visit of 10 people (3 of whom are LBKA members) to Jersey for a 4-day "Track and Trace" course, though there was considerable discussion about what level of funding was appropriate.

Annie reported that the Sustainability sub-group that arose from the Summer Social is continuing its work with a view to a discussion at the AGM.

We also discussed succession planning and future of LBKA which included the suggestion to split Trustee roles (governance) from Executive roles (member services). This could mean that members could be trustees only, committee members only, or both.

We discussed the Introduction Courses. A number of ideas were put forward: that attendees signed up (with payment) before Christmas or early in January; that attendees should volunteer at an apiary from the first inspection, so that they have early practical experience; that the theory sessions should be face-to-face, and earlier in the season, eg. Feb/March, rather than the busy period of Apr/May, as pre-Covid; that if no apiary visits are included alongside the theory sessions, these can be on another day; that Mentoring included as before with a strong encouragement to take BBKA's Basic Assessment as soon as possible and refund the fee for

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

people who pass. More discussion will take place at next meeting.

The meeting agreed that LBKA Swarm Collectors should have Bee Basic as a minimum requirement.

We agreed to make a donation to Bell House for their hosting of our Summer Social.

Last month's Monthly meeting: Summer Social

Last month's Monthly Meeting.

David Hankins with photos from George Kozobolis. LBKA members

We held our annual summer social on Sunday 13 August, at Bell House in Dulwich Village.

It's a bit of a hike for those members living north of the river, so it was great that so many made the journey. (Perhaps next year we can find an equally stunning venue in north London for this event – if anyone has contacts at a potential venue please pass details to a committee member.)

We started with an extended morning tea on the terrace, which allowed time for everyone to arrive and catch up before an updated London Bee Situation paper was presented by Richard Glassborow. The presentation and ensuing discussion was really valuable, touching on many of the threats faced by pollinating insects across London, and on our responsibility as beekeepers to act in mitigation of as many of these risks as reasonably possible. There were a number of concrete suggestions that came from the membership, including the setting up of a small taskforce to develop LBKA's vision for sustainable beekeeping. It is hoped this group will reference existing position papers, guidelines and policies, together with the London Bee Situation document, and be in a position to present a model for Sustainable Urban Beekeeping in London at the AGM in November. Thank you Richard for leading the way on this subject, and to those members now working on a positive response.

The social side of things continued with a fork & finger buffet lunch catered by The Delica Sisters – primarily vegetarian dishes from north Africa, plus homemade lemonade, (perfect for the heat & sunshine of the day), and Baklava made with London honey – thank you to Will Fry for supplying the honey. This year there was no need of the takeaway containers for leftover food, as



it all "came out even", as the saying goes. Thanks are due to Ngone from Delica Sisters for wonderful service as usual, and to those who helped set up and then clear away at the end of the event – many hands made light work.

Overall it was a great day. A good chance to catch up face-to-face with other members, meet new people, enjoy a relaxing social event in great surroundings and get a bit of beekeeping business and education in as well. It would be pleasing to replicate this atmosphere at the AGM on 7th November, so do pen (not pencil) it in your calendars.

A Retrospective of LBKA's Education Offerings this Year

Howard reviews LBKA's offerings for this year... and asks whether members are sufficiently interested in them, but the members' survey we did this year suggests differently. Please help us understand this!

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

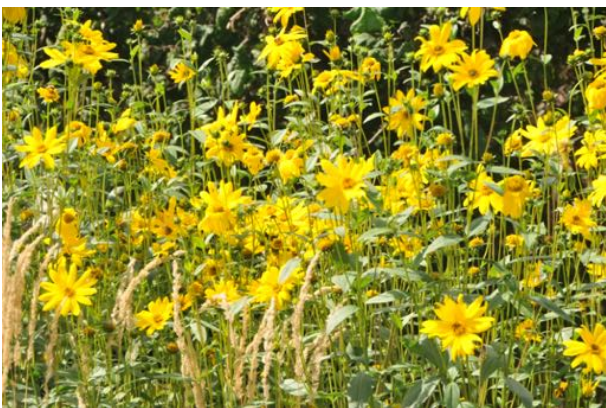
The beekeeping season has finished for 2023 and at this time of the year I usually set out what we have achieved in this area as an association. Unfortunately, lack of engagement from members has reduced our education offering. It makes it look like members are not interested. **If that's not the case, please let us and what could be done differently.**

My view is that the problem appears to be brought about by the advent of zoom and social media. LBKA is not the only beekeeping association to experience this problem. Zoom is a very useful tool and now part of my own everyday life. I attend a minimum of 2 zoom meetings per week although not regarding beekeeping. On line meetings also have their place in beekeeping but there are limitations as to what can be taught on line. I would not attempt to learn to drive a car on line (although simulated driving could be helpful) and neither would I solely rely on youtube and WhatsApp for learning and improving my beekeeping.

YouTube

When I was new to beekeeping I needed guidance and, had youtube been around, I would have relied upon it and probably suffered from lack of meeting, socialising and discussing issues with other LBKA members at our monthly meetings. At that time I did not have the experience of separating the wheat from the chaff. Out on the far lunatic fringe we have items such as the naked





beekeeper. Moving inward from that there is a mixture of good and bad information. When new I could not have distinguished between the two. By contrast, at the LBKA July monthly meeting we were fortunate to have John Chapple speaking to us about honey extraction and presentation for the National Honey Show. This was a solid, no gimmick, talk based upon his many years' experience. In my view, it could not be replicated via youtube or Zoom.

WhatsApp

Extremely useful as a communication tool but not necessarily as a teaching tool. LBKA members frequently ask questions and receive answers to specific questions on WhatsApp but do they learn the wider and deeper principles which they would learn in a face to face discussion with others or at a question and answer session within an LBKA monthly meeting? It reminds me of an old African proverb – "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Give a man a fishing rod and you feed him for life".

The above mentioned is my personal opinion only, not the opinion of the LBKA Committee as a whole. Other members may hold different opinions. However, let us look at some facts and data covering the LBKA educational programme made available to our members for the last beekeeping season. Our objective has always been to produce competent and confident beekeepers. The 2023 education plan again tried to meet this objective. The acid test is did we achieve this? I will let you be the judge. A summary of this year's events is as follows:



Monthly meetings

The primary function of the monthly meetings is as a social meeting point but we also incorporate these meetings into our education programme. Although we need to include essential topics such as Varroa management and swarm control we try to introduce more intermediate and advanced topics. Pre Covid typical attendances were 35 to 40 people. This year it has been 8 people and sometimes less.

Bee Health Day

This was an entire day and held in May at Brockwell Park. It was a comprehensive programme, both theory and practical. Thanks must go to Petros and Larry for letting us use the hives at the park and several other members who organised this and gave freely of their time and knowledge. In the past it was always full and could accommodate 24 people in the morning and 24 in the afternoon. This year 30 people registered but only 22 turned up thus meaning that other who would have attended could not. Nevertheless 22 was a satisfactory number.

Intermediate Learner Day

This was a new initiative and took a lot of work to organise and produce material. It was held at our Mudchute apiary. Tristram made sure the apiary was up to standard, David set up the event and transported equipment across London. I spent a lot of time devising the content. The list was closed at the 20 persons limit. Only 8 eventually attended which means it is not worth running again in the future.

Module tuition

The association always provides tuition based upon one of the BBKA modules in January. Attendees are members who want to sit a BBKA Module examination in March or simply wish to extend and deepen their knowledge without taking the exam. Usual attendance is about 5 people. This year it was cancelled as only 1 person had shown an interest.

Basic Assessment

Typically, pre-Covid we had between 15 and 20 members taking this assessment. This year it was 2 only. Yes, 2. This is not a misprint. I have run and organised these assessments for at least 15 years. Never had less than 6, even before it became popular and established.

Microscopy course

This is run every winter for 3 evenings. It involves dissecting bees in order to identify and learn about the internal organs and external appendages and their functions. It is always limited to 8 people due to the number of microscopes and necessity for one to one tuition. In the past it has always been fully booked, sometimes within 24 hours of being announced in the monthly newsletter. This year was cancelled as only 2 people expressed an interest. These 2 people were keen to attend but it was simply not practical to run for such a low attendance.

The Committee is responsible to its members and listens and tries to act in accordance with members' needs

and wishes. I cannot put my fingers in my ears and not listen to what the members are saying. Actions speak louder than words and members are saying that they are not interested in these activities in sufficient number as to make them viable. The 2024 Education Programme will need to be tailored to reflect this.

September in the Apiary

Where we should be with our colonies at this time of year.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

The bees' techiness subsequent to the end of the honey flow should now have ended and colonies likely to be a lot calmer and easier to inspect. The bee population will continue to decline in September but the new bees now being born will need to live for up to 6 months through to next April, instead of 6 weeks. They need to be healthy, free of varroa mites and associated viruses and with plenty of stores. Those members who diligently applied a proprietary varroacide throughout August should now be the custodians of newly born healthy and mite free bees.

Feeding the colony

This is always the main job for September. A full sized colony needs to have 35 lbs. of honey to see it through to next April. A National brood frame holds 5 lbs. and so the equivalent of 7 frames is needed. Hence they need to be wintered on a brood and a half (or a deep brood National) at least as a standard brood box is insufficient to ensure survival without the necessity to feed fondant. If, say, you estimate 5 frames of honey is currently in the hive then this is 25lb and a further 10lb is required. 1lb of sugar will make $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of stores (stores are 80% sugars and 20% water). Therefore, using this example syrup should be made from 8lbs of sugar to complete the stores. Any surplus will not be wasted as it will be used by the bees next spring. Other bullet points about feeding include:

Feed now. Feeding fondant in winter causes the cluster to break up and is an unnecessary disturbance. It is preferable to feed in September and so ensure that there are sufficient stores for the winter. Fondant in winter should only be used as an emergency feed, not part of a planned strategy. The best time for winter and subsequent spring feeding is in the preceding autumn! If feeding is left until October then the bees are less

likely to be able to evaporate down the water content to less than 20% and then cap the stores. This will lead to the syrup fermenting over the winter period. All feeding should be completed by the end of September.

Use white granulated sugar. Sugar must be white granulated sugar. Any other sugar is harmful to the bees. Sugar prices in the discount supermarkets is currently £1.09 per kg compared with £0.65 for the last few years.

Use a strong syrup. A stronger syrup should be used at this time of year as this means the bees have less work to do in evaporating off the water. This syrup is not for the bees' immediate consumption but for winter and early spring stores. 1kg of sugar dissolved in 660ml of warm water is the desired strength.

Wear a veil. If the feeder needs to be topped up then it is essential to wear a veil. Bees may not appear to be very active if late in the month or if it is cooler but they will still surge through the feedhole if the feeder is disturbed or taken off when refilling.

Feed at same time in early evening. Better to commence feeding all colonies in the apiary at the same time and in early evening or dusk. This should prevent an outbreak of robbing. The reason for this is that in "bee speak" there is no vocabulary for "it is immediately above you". The nearest language is the round dance which is saying that it is in a 50m to 100m radius. If fed in the middle of the day then bees will start foraging for the syrup. If done when they are settled in early evening they seem to acquaint themselves with it without foraging. Once they know the source they then just continue to go back until it is depleted.

Other actions

Other actions to be taken this month include the following:

Mark the queen. If the colony has a new queen born this summer but not yet marked then now is the best time to find and mark her. The colony is currently contracting with the brood limited to just a few frames and this makes it a much easier proposition. If the queen is marked then next season's swarm control will be so much easier.

Checking the hive. The hive body should be stable and draught free and the roof should be waterproof. Now is the time to repair or replace any defective or ill fitting equipment before the onset of winter.

Protect against wasps and robbers. Entrance blocks must be in situ with the smallest entrance size in use. Many beekeepers reduce the entrances to as little as 2 or 3 bee spaces. If a colony is being robbed it is extremely difficult to stop. Best option is to move the colony being robbed more than 3 miles but this is tedious. Prevention is better than cure.

Fumigate supers. These should have been fumigated immediately after having been returned to the bees for cleaning and removed again. Fumigated supers should

be put in a place secure from wax moth and vermin. I fumigate then also freeze for 24 hours to deal with waxmoth.

Cut back encroaching vegetation. I spent 2 hours in my own apiary on 1 September using the strimmer on the grass and secateurs on the brambles. All leading towards the goal of ensuring the hives are clear of encroaching vegetation for the winter.

Asian Hornet Please make an effort to attend this month's talk about the Asian Hornet problem. It will be led by Luke Wyatt and Sharon Bassey. Both will have been to Jersey for training and are at the leading edge of our response. Dealing with Asian Hornet is going to become an integral part of beekeeping and is no longer an academic matter. To paraphrase Cato the Elder in ancient Rome, "Vespa velutina delenda est" or "The Asian Hornet must be destroyed".

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

Flowers out this month include many North American prairies species. Many varieties of **Rudbeckia** are in flower. Rudbeckia 'Prairie glow', Rudbeckia speciosa, Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum', Rudbeckia 'Little gold star' and Rudbeckia 'Summerina yellow' are just a few of the varieties which are great for bees. Similar in appearance to Rudbeckia and equally attractive are the **coneflowers** in the genus Echinacea. Varieties 'Magnus', 'Purpurea', 'Flame Thrower' and 'Sundown' are among my favourites.

In scientific trials the **North American daisy** (Helenium) regularly comes out on top as the best garden bee plant for late summer and into autumn. The variety 'Autumnal' is the best but 'Moerhiem beauty', 'Gold', 'Sahins Early' and 'Chelsea' are also very good. Other good bee plants for autumn include Aster Twilight, Aster 'Amelia', Most of the Solidago Golden rods are good for bees particularly solitary bees, any of the single flowered Coreopsis, Kalimeris madiva, Sedum 'Spectable' and Sedum 'Purple Emperor,' Saffron Crocus, Japanese Anemones, Hebe 'Autumn Joy,' and Symphyotrichum novi-belgii.

By far the most important flower for pollinators this season is **ivy** (*Hedera helix*). It is one of the most important late season sources of forage for our pollinators and is greatly underrated. It's not just honey bees which rely on the ivy blooms, a whole host of insects rely upon the them to stock up before winter. Bumblebees and social wasp queens rely on ivy flowers to



Helenium.



Aster.



Hebe.

fatten up before their long winter hibernation, Hoverflies and butterflies also rely on the ivy to feed up before their winter sleep. Honey bees will bring back the nectar and store it as honey to feed on during the cold winter.

Several of our pollinators are migratory and rely on ivy to fuel their long autumn migration south to warmer climes. One of the most spectacular examples of autumn insect migration is that of the Painted Lady Butterfly. For decades their migration was a mystery and scientists assumed that butterflies migrating north in spring climaxed and then perished before they could return south leading to a dead end population. Thanks to advances in modern radar technology the mystery has now been solved. Using sophisticated radar, scientists have been able to track the butterfly's migration from central Africa through sub-Saharan Africa, across the Mediterranean and through Europe where 6 million butterflies cross the English Channel into the UK. Some of these butterflies make it as far north as Greenland. Using radar technology, scientists were then able to track 29 million butterflies making the return journey south in late September. The butterflies fly at an altitude of 500-1000 feet and are propelled south by high altitude wind currents enabling them to make the journey to Africa in under a month. The longest insect migration in the world is fuelled largely on ivy nectar.

Another insect which relies almost exclusively on ivy is the Ivy Mining Bee (*Colletes hederæ*). This attractive stripy bee is a relatively new addition to the British Isles. 40 years ago this was a very rare vagrant but in the past few decades it has expanded its territory north into the UK and is now increasingly common throughout southern England. This bee emerges from its 9 month hibernation in late August/early September and when it emerges it seeks out ivy blooms to collect nectar and pollen to provide for its offspring. They nest underground in burrows often in large congregations. You can help map their expansion in the UK by [submitting your sightings](#) to the Bee Wasps and Ants Recording Society

Whilst ivy is loved by many of our pollinators, it is not universally loved by beekeepers. Ivy honey is rich in Glucose sugars which means it readily granulates and can turn very hard as set honey in the comb. It can be difficult to extract. It also has a flavour which is unpalatable to many but to a few who find the strange flavour a welcome change. Personally I quite like ivy honey, once it has aged a little the flavours mellow and it's much nicer to eat. It makes good seed honey for creaming.



Cosmos.



Anemone.



Ivy bee on ivy blooms.



Coreopsis.



Sunflower.

Readers' Letters

Our third ever Readers' Letter.

Mark Patterson
 LBKA Forage Officer
forage@lbka.org.uk

I'm very concerned about a lot of the indiscriminate trapping being done by many beekeepers and their encouraging the public to do the same.

I'm seeing some horrific images of hundreds of native hornets and all kinds of other insects including ivy bees in traps on some beekeeping social media outlets and WhatsApp groups.

Non-trapping bait stations checked daily at home apiaries is way to go.

If kill traps are used at out-apiaries the entrance diameter should be reduced to 8mm to exclude European hornet but easily allow Asian hornet to enter. 6mm escape holes along the collection chamber walls allows native wasps and most flies to exit but prevents Asian hornet escaping. These are the findings from France which I strongly urge our members to follow.

The entomology world are getting very upset by the vast non target bycatches been shown in social media images and beekeepers may end up getting cussed out for this.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

Walworth Garden is closing its apiary has equipment surplus to its requirements. 2 colonies of bees, a number of spare hives, bee suits, and extraction and wax processing equipment. None of the hives are particularly good quality and some are not in good condition. If you're interested in any of it, please email chair@lbka.org.uk.



Some of the Walworth Garden equipment

Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date list.

Sunday 10th September: Monthly meeting: Asian Hornet Advice and Action

11:00-13:00 at Battersea Park Children's Zoo, Battersea Park, London, SW11 4NJ (meet at the main entrance)

Sharon and Luke will lead this meeting on doing our bit to help slow the progress of the Asian Hornet, including how to identify Asian Hornets, how to make and use traps, and how to report sightings. This is an important meeting for members to attend.

Tuesday 26th September: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at the George Inn (75 Borough High St, Southwark, SE1 1NH)

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at the [George Inn](#) (75 Borough High St, Southwark, SE1 1NH). It was built in 1676 and they say they are "London's only surviving galleried inn".

Sunday 8th October: Monthly meeting: Natural History of bees

11:00-13:00 at Battersea Park Children's Zoo, Battersea Park, London, [SW11 4NJ](#) (meet at the main entrance)

Natural History of bees. Meetings are for members only,

but you're welcome to come as a guest to find out more about our association.

Committee

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Simon Saville, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

