



The London Beekeepers' Association LBKA News

October, 2023

As the summer ebbs away, the main conversion has been on the Asian Hornet. Find out LBKA's advice on p3 and what LBKA is doing on p4. For more chatter, check out the WhatsApp groups. Away from the Asian Hornet, Howard reminds us what we should be doing in the apiary and Mark tells us what flowers are out at the moment. Also, please renew your LBKA membership!

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

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

Announcements

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

October's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

This month's Monthly Meeting meeting will be on **Sunday 8th October** on the **Natural History of bees** at Battersea Park Children's Zoo at 11:00.

Our Pub Social will be on **Tuesday 31st October** will be at **The Grenadier** (18 Wilton Row, London SW1X 7NR), a former Officer's Mess. According to their website, "Legend has it that Grenadier is named after young Cedric, a soldier who was caught cheating at cards and punished by being beaten to death. No one knows exactly when this ghastly deed occurred, but it is thought to have been in September as that is when ghostly happenings are rife. Visitors hang money from the ceiling in an attempt to pay his debt, but poor Cedric seems to remain trapped on earth." Sounds perfect!

Our AGM will be on **8th November** and it will replace November's Monthly meeting. Please put into your diaries.



Ivy bee on ivy. Photo: Vane Milanov.

Membership renewal time

All members' memberships expired at the end of September. If you would like to rejoin, please click on your personalised membership link that will be in your email (search for "renew"). If you don't have it, check your spam folder and if not there, email services@lbka.org.uk.

Sustainable Beekeeping working group

At the Summer Social (13 August), the case for developing an LBKA position on Sustainable Beekeeping in London was made. A small group of volunteers was convened and a first draft of such a position was emailed to members last week in order to get their opinions before putting it to the members at the AGM in November 2023. We would be grateful to hear views.

Annual General Meeting and Social

Please save the date of **Wednesday 8th November** for the **Annual General Meeting and Social** at **The Sun**, 47 Old Town, Clapham, SW4 0JL. The agenda includes Trustees Annual Report, Election of Trustees, Sustainable Beekeeping in London, Asian Hornet Update - all preceded and followed by a social event in relaxing surroundings. Look out more details soon, including the invitation to nominate trustees.

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>.

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.

NNSS
GB non-native species secretariat
Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Olaf Booy (NNSS), Gay Marrs, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWNSS)

www.nonnativespecies.org

Asian Hornet

Alert! Report sightings of this species to: alertnonnative@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 items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or in/on 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 alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.



Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen

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

Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Asian Hornet vs **European Hornet**

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

Asian hornet 'hawking' for honey bee prey

Photos from: J. Haxaire; Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones; Richard Ball

Similar Species

<p>Asian hornet (<i>Vespa velutina</i>) for comparison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Actual size</p> <p>Q. Rome</p>
<p>European hornet (<i>Vespa crabro</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen up to 35mm 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 	<p>Actual size</p> <p>Roger Burgess</p>
<p>Giant woodwasp (<i>Urocerus gigas</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Actual size</p> <p>Q. Rome</p>
<p>Hornet mimic hoverfly (<i>Volucella zonaria</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>Actual size</p> <p>Didier Descouens</p>
<p>Median wasp (<i>Dolichovespula media</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than Asian hornet Yellow markings on thorax unlike Asian hornet 	<p>Actual size</p> <p>Q. Rome</p>

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harboursages – 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: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Asian Hornet Identification leaflet. Source: BBKA website.

Help Monitor for the arrival of the Asian Hornet in London

We repeat our advice for helping monitor for 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 London**. 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. 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.

To be an effective monitor:

- **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 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.

Octobers' 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

The Annual General Meeting was discussed. It will be on 8th November which will replace November's Monthly Meeting (which is cancelled on the Sunday). We will need quorum of the greater of 20 people or 10% of membership. A provisional booking of The Sun (Clapham Old Town) has been made. It will involve a short presentation from the Sustainable Beekeeping group that was formed in the wake of the Summer Social and a presentation of LBKA members' work on the Asian Hornet. Official email will need to go out in a timely manner and we will need to encourage more members to stand for committee.

The Sustainability sub-group's work was commended by the committee and members have been given the opportunity to comment on the draft. The committee are very supportive of the work being done by the sub-group.

LBKA's Asian Hornet Action Group – Sharon Bassey, Luke Whyatt, Rebecca Teare, Lucie Chaumeton, Simon Saville and Annie McGeoch (plus David Hankins and Richard Glassborow) – have been doing a lot of work and a short-term action plan in place: Strand 1 (raise Awareness), Strand 2 (trapping) and Strand 3 (track and trace training).

The meeting agreed not to change the governance structures of the LBKA. As usual the AGM will elect trustees from those who wish to stand (and are proposed / seconded). The trustees will appoint an executive committee to carry work forward. Not all trustees need to be on the committee.

Executive business was that discussed. An LBKA Facebook account will be created to help with getting out our messages. Sunday's "Natural history of bees" will be going ahead at Battersea Park Children's Zoo. The November Monthly Meeting has been cancelled and will be combined with the AGM. Elliott will run the Christmas Quiz on 10th December.



Spotted by George. "Can you spot the bees? A late summer - autumn blooming parental is this bushy bee friendly American Aster (*Symphyotrichum dumosum*). It can be seen grown abundantly this time of year and it provides a rich source of pollen and nectar to the busy foraging bees. In my area (Greenwich) these plants seem to grow like wild plants as they appear in strange places amongst other plants. The mixture of dead as well as flowers of all ages on the plant makes it difficult to see the bees visiting its flowers. You have a 20/20 vision if you can spot the two bees on two of its flowers! ". Photo and caption: George Kozobolis.

Asian Hornet Update

Update on what LBKA is doing about the Asian Hornet.

David Hankins
treasurer@lbka.org.uk

This is the first of a new monthly feature updating you on the Asian Hornet situation. As we write over 50 nests have been destroyed so far this year on the UK mainland. The Asian Hornet will change the way we keep bees as profoundly as varroa did thirty years ago, but this time we are better prepared. This regular piece will cover:

- What the LBKA is doing
- What other relevant organisations are doing
- What you can do as a beekeeper to help
- What the wider public can do

During the summer of 2023, Sharon Bassey sponsored Luke Whyatt to attend a training course in Jersey,

where AH is now established and where volunteers have organised themselves to help the authorities contain it. The training Luke received subsequently enabled he and Sharon to make a number of confirmed sightings along the Kent coast and anticipate the arrival of AH in the London area this autumn. Sharon and Richard Glassborow discussed the threat, and under Sharon's management with LBKA funding, a further 10 members of several BKAs in the southeast of England were sent on a similar training course in Jersey.

The training centred on tracking and tracing hornets from feed stations to secondary nests. This is a tactic that is essential in late summer/autumn, but with minor modification will be essential in tracking queens to primary nests in spring also. It is envisaged that the LBKA members now trained in this technique will be able to train others in anticipation of large scale tracking in the London area next year – more on that in future newsletters.

At the same time as the team training exercise in Jersey, we shared BBKA and NBU guidance on AH identification and use of monitoring traps with all LBKA members, recommended that they join the LBKA AHAT WhatsApp group, and encouraged them to install the Asian Hornet Watch App for reporting confirmed sightings. We also advertised the exceptionally good BBKA

lectures delivered by Andrew Durham on 6 & 7 September – these are still available to view on youtube here [here](#) and [here](#).

The September monthly meeting on AH was delivered by Luke with assistance from Sharon, and was followed the same day by a confirmed AH sighting in Hackney. LBKA members assisted in tracking individual hornets and the nest was destroyed by NBU staff within a few days. Public awareness was also a factor in this early success, so having saturated LBKA members with information and advice the AH action team turned its attention to a more public-facing campaign.

Lucie Chaumeton [re-designed a poster](#) initially developed specifically for Kent – a printable version has been sent to all LBKA members with encouragement to make it available as widely as possible this autumn. The poster includes a 1-click reporting link - <http://bit.ly/asianhornetreport>. Lucie has also written an article for the November issue of BBKA News – BBKA members should receive that toward the end of October.

There is considerable ongoing discussion about AH on LBKA's AH WhatsApp group and on Bee Banter. Many thanks to Geoff Hood for providing those groups with regular NBU updates on confirmed sightings and nest destructions for the year.

LBKA now has a small AH steering group taking responsibility for a number of strands in this battle. The group will:

1. continue to forward information and advice to members this autumn and develop a training program for LBKA members to be rolled out this winter and during the course of next year;
2. continue discussions with BBKA and NBU in order to advocate for a more collaborative approach to combating AH from next spring onward;
3. raise public awareness via all available social media platforms using the poster as a basis;
4. organise AH trapping as appropriate, including providing guidance on modifying kill traps to eliminate by-catch;
5. explore further track & trace training for LBKA and other volunteers next year.

What do we all need to be doing now?

1. Be vigilant when in the apiary, in gardens, on walks. If you see what looks like an AH, report it via the Asian Hornet Watch app or bit.ly/asianhornetreport. If you're in doubt, take a photo and share it with LBKA's AHAT WhatsApp group – you'll get quick responses either confirming or discounting the sighting;
2. If you have time to spare, set up a wick-style bait station while the weather remains mild. Don't put it near an apiary, monitor it during the day and report sightings as above. Encourage friends with-

out apiaries to put them out and observe insects - it's good fun anyway.

3. Share the poster as widely as reasonably possible – allotment sites, parks, anywhere really, but please seek the land owner's permission before displaying the poster in any permanent manner. There is also a social media version you can pick up from the website and share.
4. Finally, please be aware that none of the work we do now and in the near future will stop AH becoming established in the UK, but we will reduce the speed at which AH advances through mainland Britain over the next year or so, while we all learn how to minimise its impact on beekeeping and on wild insect populations.

October in the Apiary

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

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Feeding syrup to the bees should have been completed by the end of September as the colony will now find it difficult to process and cap the syrup due to the colder temperature. If left uncapped then there is the risk of fermentation leading to dysentery over the winter months. A colony should go into winter with at least 15kg (35lb) of stores if possible. This will avoid the possibility of the bees dying of starvation in a cold spring. A full brood frame can hold up to 5lb of honey and a super frame up to 3lb. The last colony inspection of the year needs to be made and the quantity of stores detailed in the colony records.

The bees will now start to cluster as temperatures fall. Clustering starts at about 18°C and the cluster becomes smaller and more compact as temperatures continue to fall. They form a complete cluster at 13°C. Other than this the colony will continue to operate as usual but on a much smaller scale. The queen will still be laying a few eggs, nurse bees nurturing a smaller amount of brood and bees should still be flying in the day throughout October. Bees should start to forage on Ivy, which is the last flowering plant of the year. This leaves the beekeeper to make final preparations for winter. The objective is to put the bees in the best position to deal with winter by trying to do small things to tip the scales in their favour.

Secure your hives. Check that hives are secure,

straight and stable. If using a wooden floor then the colony should be slightly tilted slightly forward. Bees have evolved over millions of years to deal with cold temperatures and do this with relative ease. They cannot deal with damp and condensation. During winter they need to uncap and metabolise honey to keep warm. As a result of this, water vapour is produced. If the hive is not adequately ventilated then dampness will build up leading to fungi growth. It is essential that the hive interior remains dry throughout the winter. This is another advantage of using an open mesh floor.

Mouseguards. Once the night frosts commence then mice will look for a dark, warm place to hibernate. The smell and disturbance will upset the bees and, in more extreme instances, the colony can die out. Use of a mouseguard is extremely effective but there must be no way the mice can bypass it. Please note that the mouseguards should be put in place before it gets cold as the mice are often ahead of the game compared with humans. I put mine on by the 1st week of October.

Gardening measures. Check there are no branches grown up over summer and now overhanging the hive. If so then prune to remove. Also check that grass and weeds have not grown up around the hive and these will both reduce ventilation and promote damp. A quick trim with a strimmer or garden shears should be sufficient for the winter.

Other jobs. Make sure that spare brood and super boxes are cleaned and put away in a cold place for the winter to deter wax moth. Placing combs in a deep freeze for 24 hours, if possible, kills all 4 stages of wax moth. Other equipment such as queen excluders, crownboards, entrance blocks, etc should also be thoroughly cleaned and stored the same way.

National Honey Show Finally, October is the month for the National Honey Show. As usual it is being held at Sandown Park which is only a short train journey from London Waterloo and full details are in the bee-keeping press. The show does not just judge honey exhibits and other entries include essays, inventions, wax products, mead. There are also related trade stands, including some of the major bee equipment suppliers who have selected discounts for the National Honey Show. For anyone who has not been before it is well worth a visit. It runs from Thursday, 26th October to Saturday, 28th October. The LBKA has tried to encourage members to enter exhibits into the show and this was the subject of the July 2023 monthly meeting.



Autumn crocus

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

October signals the end of the active foraging season for our bees. By the end of the month our colonies must ensure they have sufficient stores of honey and pollen to last them through until spring. Pollen becomes available again when the crocus and snow drops bloom but the weather is often too cool for the bees to fly to take advantage of it. Nectar is an even longer wait. It's usually April when the first substantial nectar sources begin to flow so October really is a "make-or-break" month for our bees if they still need to pack away winter stores.

Apart from ivy, substantial blooms of any particular plant are becoming rare this month. In gardens **Dahlias**, **Echinacea**, **Rudbeckia** and **Cosmos** persist but they will soon begin to keel over as the first frosts hit.

Winter flowering shrubs like **Viburnum tinus** are however starting to bloom and will peak at around New Year. These offer the bees pollen and sometimes nectar when winter days are mild enough for them to fly.

In about a month's time we should see the first **Mahonias** begin to bloom. These are frequented by honey and buff tailed bumble bees on mild winter days.

Jobs to do in the garden this month include propagating semi ripe cuttings from your favourite flowering shrubs. Lavender, rosemary, hebe, flowering currants



Golden rod



Ivy blooms

are all easy to propagate in this way. Push 6" cuttings into gritty compost and keep cool and moist over winter.

If you're planting bulbs for bees, October is the best time to do this.

As leaves start to drop from trees, collect and bag to make leaf mound to mulch plants next year. Mulching helps prevent plants drying out in dry weather and helps to keep them flowering and your bees well fed.

As perennials begin to die back you may want to begin clearing the old stems. Some plants benefit from having their core exposed to the cold over the winter whilst others benefit from the insulating properties of their dead stems and leaves.



Sedum Autumn joy

Upcoming events

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

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.

Tuesday 31st October: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at *The Grenadier*, 18 Wilton Row, London [SW1X 7NR](#)

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at a former Officer's Mess. According to their website, "Legend has it that Grenadier is named after young Cedric, a soldier who was caught cheating at cards and punished by being beaten to death. No one knows exactly when this ghastly deed occurred, but it is thought to have been in September as that is when ghostly happenings are rife. Visitors hang money from the ceiling in an attempt to pay his debt, but poor Cedric seems to remain trapped on earth."

Tuesday 8th November: Annual General Meeting and Social

18:30 at *The Sun*, 47 Old Town, Clapham, [SW4 0JL](#)

Our Annual General Meeting. The agenda includes Trustees Annual Report, Election of Trustees, Sustainable Beekeeping in London, Asian Hornet Update - all preceded and followed by a social event in relaxing surroundings. Look out more details soon, including the invitation to nominate trustees. Membership runs until October, so don't forget to renew your membership if you haven't already done so.

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.

