

Alan Taylor, a local beekeeper, has provided the following information on the Asian Hornet, a non-native species, which now represents a significant and imminent threat to the viability of our UK honeybee and other pollinator populations.

The spread of the Asian Hornet *Vespa Velutina*

The Asian Hornet (native to China) is a non-native species here in the UK.

In 2004 this prolific, aggressive and successful predator secretly made its way from China to France. It seems that a single fertile queen gained entry to France, probably inside a plant pot imported from China. That fertile queen went on to produce the first colony of Asian Hornets in France. With no natural predators, the population has multiplied to a point where Asian Hornets are now an ever present threat to French bees and other pollinators. DNA testing has confirmed that the Asian Hornets in France, all originated from a single fertile queen.

Jersey has been the Asian Hornet's next invasion site. Despite their best attempts, authorities in Jersey have, so far, failed to stop the Asian Hornet population from spreading. Last year on Jersey 4 queens were reported and earlier this year that number was already up at 80.

Whilst it might be possible for an Asian Hornet to fly on a favourable wind across the channel, it's thought more likely that the species will arrive here as a stowaway in a car, boat, or aboard a ship. There is thought to be a high possibility of introduction through for example, imported soil products, plants, cut flowers, fruit and or other garden related products.

As we are so close to the channel, with ferries and private yachts plying our coastal waters, we in West Sussex can consider ourselves to be on the front line.

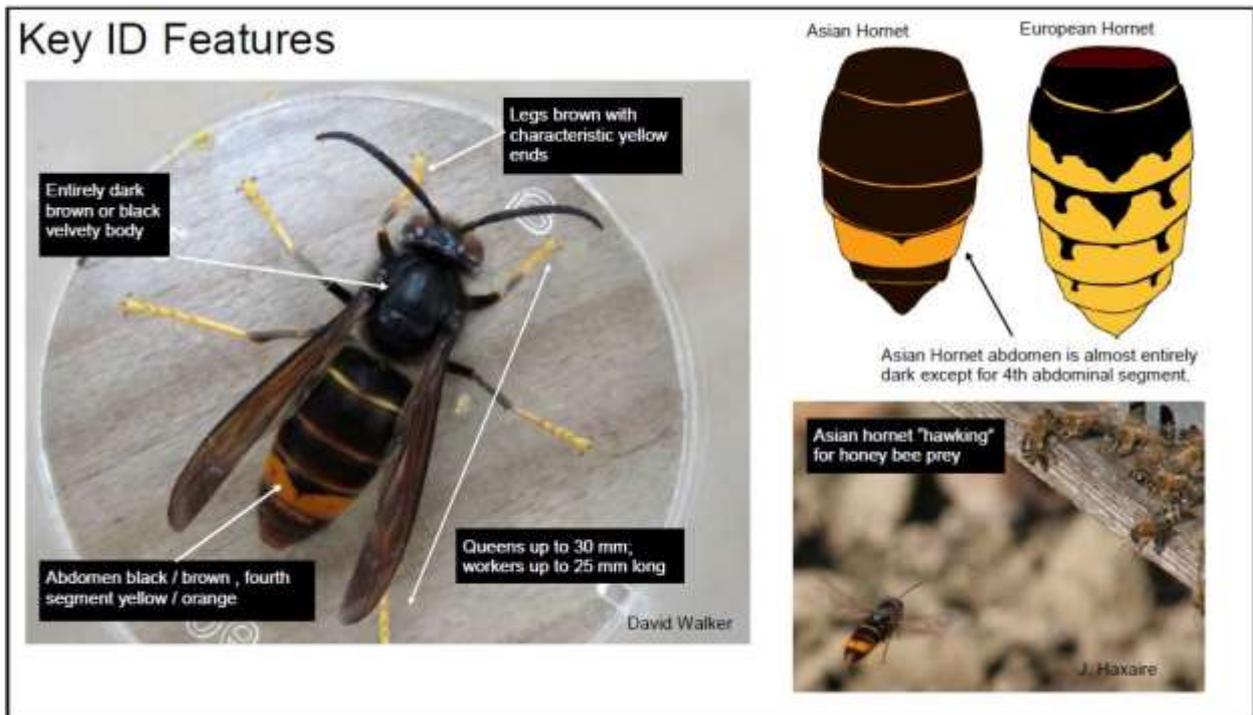
Earlier this summer there was a sighting of an Asian Hornet at New Milton in Hampshire. Authorities swiftly responded and the nest was located and destroyed. No further sightings were reported. However, as I write this article, I've just learned of a second confirmed sighting of an Asian Hornet, reported yesterday, 2nd Sept 2019 in the Tamworth area of Staffordshire. This reinforces the need to have as many people as possible able to recognise the Asian Hornet and importantly, know what to do having seen one.

The threat of the Asian Hornet

Asian Hornets will typically 'hawk' in front of a bee-hive picking off the heavily laden foraging bees as they return with nectar and pollen. The hornets kill and eat the bees. With thousands of young to feed, the Asian Hornet is an aggressive and efficient predator. Relentlessly killing bees at the hive entrance gradually weakens the bee colony until the Asian Hornets gain entry to the beehive. Once in the hive they eat both the bees and their larvae, thus destroying the entire colony.

At this time of year Asian Hornets might also be seen foraging near or on ivy plants.

What to look for



- Size:** Workers are about 25mm long and queens a little larger at 30mm
- Legs:** Upper parts brown with lower parts yellow
- Head:** Black as viewed from above, with an orange face
- Thorax:** Black/dark brown and velvety
- Abdomen:** Mainly black with one obvious yellow/orange band on 4th segment
- Activity:** from early February to November (Never active at night)

Asian Hornet nests

There are two types of nest, the 'Primary' nest and the 'Secondary' nest.

Primary nests have been seen in garden sheds and garages, in hedgerows, anywhere sheltered and accessible. The 'Primary nest' is a little larger than a tennis ball, hanging usually from a beam or branch and looking a little like a small wasps' nest. There will be an access hole on the underside.

A Primary nest of a queen Asian Hornet



If you see one of these Primary nests, please do not damage or destroy it but report it:

Report sightings of this species:

Alert!

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: **Asian Hornet Watch**
- online at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Later in the year the much larger 'Secondary' nests start to appear and these are typically found in trees, but not exclusively. They can be under eaves, under decking, on balconies, in hedgerows etc., but (for our convenience!) can also be 70ft up a tall tree. The 'Secondary' nests can be up to a metre in diameter. Do not approach a nest of this type under any circumstances. The individual hornet will not be a danger to you unless you are allergic to its sting venom.



However, if you disturb the Asian Hornet's secondary nest, then it's likely that thousands of hornets will come out to 'protect' their nest. This is definitely not something you want to experience as they have a very painful sting!

A secondary nest, similar to, but larger than a wasp's nest.

If you see one of these secondary nests, please do not damage or destroy it but report it:

Alert! Report sightings of this species:

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: **Asian Hornet Watch**
- online at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

How to report a possible Asian Hornet sighting:

If you have an iPhone or Android Smart Phone then please consider downloading the Asian Hornet Watch app now, today, such that if in the future you see such a hornet, you can use the app to upload both a photograph and the location.

The app is a recommended reporting system and the photographic evidence helps to eliminate a number of false alarms. If in doubt, please report it. We prefer to know about all possible sightings.

If you don't have a smart phone you can email details of your sighting to: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

Follow this link to download this free app for iPhones:

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/asian-hornetwatch/id1161238813>

Follow this link to download this free app for android:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.ac.ceh.hornets>

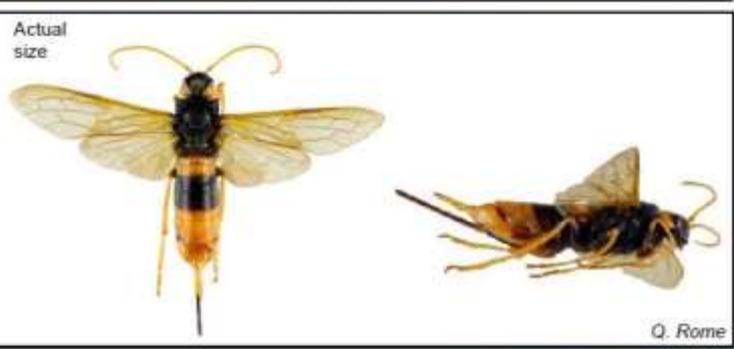
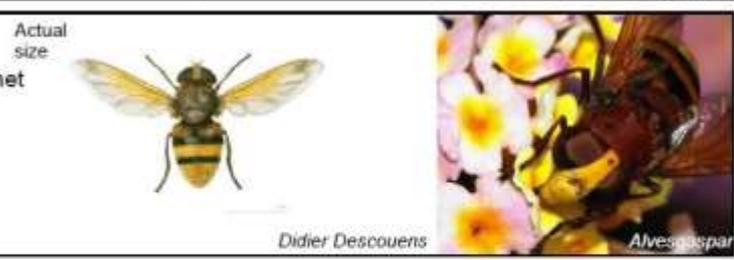
Alternatively you can report your sighting via the internet:

www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet

Don't be confused!

What not to confuse the Asian Hornet with:

Similar Species

<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 Max Tonge, National Bee Unit</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 Alves&par</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>

Our bees thank you.

3rd Sept 2019

Photographs courtesy of www.nonnativespecies.org