

Yellow-legged (formerly Asian) hornet

Autumn 2024

Watch out for hornets

The yellow-legged hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, also known in the UK as the Asian hornet, is a non-native invasive species which has spread across mainland Europe and has an appetite for pollinators, including honey bees.

While there have been no confirmed yellow-legged hornet sightings in Scotland (at the point of publishing this leaflet), 2023 saw a significant increase of confirmed incursions in England, including as far north as Yorkshire.

How do they get here?

It is possible for them to reach the South of England by flying or being blown over from France across the channel. However, the yellow-legged hornet is also a good hitchhiker that can travel through movement of vehicles, ships and goods.

When is the best time to look for hornets?

August to October

We are most likely to spot a yellow-legged hornet once their population is at its highest and they are openly foraging for protein sources, so be alert around trees and vegetation where they might nest, and at potential food sources such as beehives, mammal carcasses etc.

As the colony disbands, individuals are more attracted by sugar sources and can often be found feeding on fallen fruit, compost heaps and ivy nectar as the season draws to a close.



Courtesy The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Crown Copyright

What you are looking for:

- approximately 2.5 cm in length, so bigger than a wasp but not as large as a European hornet
- no 'stinger' – if you see something like that it is likely a wood wasp!
- dark velvety black body with a clear broad yellow band on the fourth segment of its abdomen
- pinched waist and long antennae
- orange face
- yellow tips to legs

If you spot something that you think might be a yellow-legged hornet, please try to take a photo if safe to do so.

For more information visit:

www.nationalbeeunit.com

www.nonnativespecies.org

“ We cannot underestimate the devastating impact this non-native predator has on honey bees and other insects, including important pollinators, and I urge people to be aware of what to look for and report any potential sightings.” Agriculture Minister, Jim Fairlie.

How you can help!

Targeted observations

It is important to spot any incursion quickly to prevent them establishing – and that is where you come in.

Whilst traps are available, the current risk of incursion into Scotland does not merit their use due to the risk of by catch and potential consequential damage to wild pollinators. We encourage focussing on targeted observations. This requires a bit more skill but can be just as successful as trapping and is more environmentally friendly.

To start, download the free Asian Hornet app– this has useful photos to help ID. Alternatively, check out the [BeeBase Asian Hornet page](#) before you start, this has photos to hone your ID skills.

If you are a beekeeper, choose an observation site at the side of your colonies: somewhere you can see bees at the hive entrance, but not too close to attract attention. If you are a non-beekeeper carrying out observations, find a sunny spot at a flowering ivy or under an apple tree where there are plenty of active wasps and hoverflies.

Sit down, get comfortable, and watch the arrivals and departures for at least 20 minutes. Please be vigilant and encourage others to do the same.

You can also get involved with the [UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme \(POMS\)](#) to help gather data on how pollinator populations are changing. The UKPoMS survey season runs until 30 September. If you do see a suspected yellow-legged hornet during a PoMS survey, report it as quickly as possible.



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



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



How to report a sighting

- Through the free Asian hornet Watch app, available for [Android](#) and [iPhone](#)
- Online at www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk