



Somerset Beekeepers' Association



NEWSLETTER

April 2018 no.132



Please make sure you read the hornet article on page 10

Everyone needs to know what to look for when they arrive as I'm sure they will. Copy for the next edition should be sent to me by 15th June.

Email: friend.elizabeth@gmail.com

Letter from the Chairman



I am pleased to report that SBKA is in good heart! Membership remains steady at around 860; our finances are sound and at the recent AGM a full complement of willing volunteers were elected to fill all committee positions.

For the first time in a few years we now have an education officer; Master Beekeeper Richard Bache has stepped down from the busy position of secretary to take on a subject close to his heart and I look forward to seeing how his plans develop over the coming months. Also, I wish to record my

thanks for the tremendous work he has done on our behalf for five years in spite of family, work and beekeeping commitments!

On all our radars for the coming season are the invaders from the East, the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*). In recent months neighbouring beekeeping associations have drawn up action plans and there have been lectures and discussions about protecting our bees and the environment generally. Now we have to decide what we do.

You may remember that last year we awarded a £500 grant to support the University of Exeter's Asian hornet research project. Lead researcher Dr Pete Kennedy reported on their findings at the AGM and said the only effective method of control is the identification and destruction of nests before they start reproducing. The challenge is finding these nests, which are often concealed high in trees, between mid-summer, when the hornets may first become evident and before October, when the colony produces reproductive queens and drone hornets.

Last year more than 4,000 reports of Asian hornets were made to the Non-Native Species Secretariat but only one turned out to be real. The onus is on us all to be able to identify the Asian hornet so that resources are spent where they are most needed. It's not easy, but there is a lot of information online, including a phone app, which helps. If you do suspect the worst, take a camera and net to capture the evidence.

The Executive Committee (which will make recommendations to the SBKA Council in May) is exploring a number of options including how we can learn the lessons from Jersey where these highly destructive hornets arrived two years ago; I will keep you informed.

Here's hoping that the monitoring traps remain empty and our bees flourish!

Anne Pike chairman@somersetbeekeepers.org

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



13, 14 and 15 April

Harper Adams University College Campus, Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB

Information about the event including the lecture programme and details of the various workshops are on the BBKA website.

Avon Beekeepers' Association Spring Day School

April 21st

9.45am - 4.30pm

Shipham Village Hall

Lectures by Gerry Hall, Richard Ball and Lynne Ingram

Booking is essential

Details on their [website](#)



SPECIAL LECTURE

25 April 2018

at Edgar Hall, 8 Cary Court, Somerton Business Park, TA11 6SB

7pm for 7.30 start

Tickets are free and there's no need to book

Refreshments will be served and there will be a raffle.

Margaret Thomas, CSP, NDB will be speaking on the subject of
"Swarm Control for the Busy Beekeeper".

Margaret is a retired bee farmer, having begun beekeeping with her husband in Essex in 1970. She is a master beekeeper and obtained her NDB in 1982.

She has lectured all over the country and is currently the secretary of the NDB Board. She is also one of the moderators of the BBKA Exam Board and tutors for the BBKA correspondence course. She is also a member of the Bee Farmers Association, and now lives in Perthshire where she still keeps bees and is active in the Scottish Beekeepers' Association.

THE ROYAL BATH AND WEST SHOW

30 May – 2 June



Without your help and enthusiasm it would be impossible to maintain the high standards set in the Bee & Honey Marquee so please put these dates in your diary now.

Setting up will take place on Sunday 26th May (starting 9.00am) to Tuesday 30th May and stewards are required in the marquee on the following four days, Wednesday 30th May to Saturday 2nd June. The rota for stewards is either all day, 9.00am - 6.00pm, or a half-day, 9.00am - 1.30pm or 1.00pm - 6.00pm.

If you can help with setting up and/or stewarding, please contact me as soon as possible on 01373 464736 or email me at tredg@talktalk.net. The rotas are due for submission to the Show Committee in April, so an early reply will be very much appreciated.

Ken Tredgett

Entries are now open for the show

Last year entries from Somerset Beekeepers enabled us to win the coveted Royal Bath & West County Shield back from Wiltshire Beekeepers. I hope very much that with continued support from SBKA members this year, we will win the shield again. As the Bath & West is one of the largest honey shows in the country, it gives beekeepers a great opportunity to promote our craft to over 150,000 visitors to the show.

Wanted!! Your exhibits for the Honey show at the Bath & West Show; classes for all aspects of beekeeping for everyone include Mead, Photography, Candles, Beeswax, Honey, Cookery, Arts & Crafts, Cosmetics and more!!

Rewards!! As always there is the chance to win Prize money, prize certificates and trophies and, last but not least, your entry entitles you to sell your Honey and other Hive products at premium prices if you enter the show.

Schedules can be downloaded [here](#)

The fee is £1.10 per entry

Entries close on 10 April at 12 noon

NO ENTRIES, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE

Ed: But do give Bernie a call if you miss it - he has influence!

If you need any help, or advice, don't hesitate to contact me.
Bernie Perkins, Honey Show Steward, Royal Bath & West Show
Tel: 01458 250095 or email bernieperkins.tengor@tiscali.co.uk

THE COUNTY HONEY SHOW and the TAUNTON HONEY SHOW

Friday & Saturday 3rd & 4th August 2018

at Vivary Park



The County Honey Show takes entries from all over Somerset and there are classes for everyone from novices to more experienced beekeepers.

All members are eligible to enter more than 30 classes in the county competitions which span the products from the hive as well as craft, cookery and floral art.

Staging of the entries takes place either on the Thursday evening 6-8 pm or before 7.30 am on the Friday; there is no charge to enter the showground to bring in your exhibits. Entry to the flower show is much reduced after 4pm on Saturday; pick up your exhibits after 6pm when entry is free. Total prize money exceeds £100.

The schedule and entry forms will be available on the website: www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk or from the Entries Secretary - Mrs Jenny Gammon, 500 Cheddon Road, Taunton, TA2 7QX

Tel No: 01823 270465 Email: sidnjen@vodafoneemail.co.uk

Entries close on Wednesday July 26

Somerset Beekeepers Annual Lunch 2017

Sunday 14th October

Long Sutton Golf Club, Long Sutton, TA10 9JU Time: 12pm for 12.30pm



I have, once again, booked Long Sutton Golf Club for our SBKA Annual lunch.

The lunch will be two courses with a Carvery and a choice of deserts. There is a vegetarian

option available on the day. The total cost will be £14. Tea or coffee can be purchased individually after the meal if you wish.

I do hope you can join us this year. They can only cater for fifty people, so to avoid disappointment please book early.

Please send me your bookings (and the numbers who would like the vegetarian option) along with a cheque made payable to Somerset Beekeepers by Monday 8th October at the very latest.

Suzy Perkins

Tengore House, Tengore Lane, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9JL

Tel: 01458 250 095 Email: apicrepe.tengore@talktalk.net



THE 87th NATIONAL HONEY SHOW

Thursday 25th October – Saturday 27th October

At Sandown Park Racecourse KT10 9RT

The schedule will be publicised in August

Details on the [honey show website](#)

The main lecture programme this year will feature Michael Smith, winner of the Ig Nobel Prize for his ability to make people laugh; and Clarence Collison, author of the book, "What Do You Know" and current author of the Bee Culture magazine column "A Closer Look".

The Beginners Programme last year was a tremendous success and we're hoping to build on that this year with an inspiring programme delivered by Lynfa Davies (Welsh Beekeepers), Anne Rowberry (Avon Beekeepers), Bob Smith (Kent Beekeepers) and Roger Patterson (Sussex Beekeepers)

There will also be the usual Friday "Bee Craft" lectures.

For those who can't get to the show, previous lectures can be viewed on the National Honey Show site via YouTube. [link here](#)

EXAM UPDATE



Have you been keeping bees for more than a year, and think about taking the Basic Assessment but not got round to it?

Well, there's still time to take it this year. All you need to do is have a look at the syllabus, it looks daunting, but it only covers everything you should already be doing with your bees, swarm control, disease checks, and looking through a hive.

Download the application form from the BBKA website, pay BBKA direct, the details are on the form. Send it to

me, and I will arrange your assessor. You contact them and arrange a mutually convenient time to take your assessment.

Don't forget, when you pass, Somerset BKA refund your successful application fee. Last date to apply to take the Basic is 20th July. All basic assessments have to be done by end of August.

Later in the year is the Microscopy. This takes a lot more planning, collecting pollen, making up slides of pollen and bee parts. Learning how to dissect bees and disease test. Applications for this need to be with me by the end of August. Again, all details are on the BBKA website.

Start looking at the syllabi for the other exams if you want something a bit harder. Bee Breeding, Bee Health, General Husbandry, and Advanced Husbandry. All will test you and your beekeeping skills, and you have a chance to practice this year and do the assessment next year.

If you want any further information, contact me, and I will try and answer all your questions. If I can't, I know someone who can!

Bridget Knutson, Exam Secretary. Email: examinations@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Somerset beekeeper buzzes with national honour



Somerset beekeeper Milns Priscott receives a certificate to mark 60 years as a beekeeper from Ken Tredgett, President of SBKA

Somerset beekeeper Milns Priscott's 60-year membership of the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) has been recognised with a presentation in front of nearly 200 beekeepers on Saturday (February 17).

He received congratulations and a commemorative certificate from Ken Tredgett, President of Somerset Beekeepers' Association (SBKA), on behalf of the BBKA, at a lecture day held in Somerton on Saturday (Feb 17).

Afterwards Milns said he enjoyed beekeeping with two friends as much today as when he took up the craft and had no plans for retirement.

"There are more problems now than when I started, but we still enjoy it too much to stop!" he said. Milns, from Milverton, has been Taunton division Chairman and President and Somerset's Vice Chairman. He has given many beekeeping talks and demonstrations across the county and has been a very successful competitor at honey shows.

West Country Honey Farms Award, 2018



The West Country Honey Farms Award was presented to Bridget Knutson at the AGM for her outstanding contribution to beekeeping.

The chair of the judging panel, Milns Priscott, read out the citation

"Bridget has demonstrated her ability as a beekeeper to a very high standard. She has set new bench marks for the quality of her exhibits at honey shows and has always been generous with her support to help beekeepers to extend their knowledge," he said.

"She is Chair of the Wedmore and Cheddar Division, manages the visual aid library for the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA) and teaches and mentors on local beginners, improvers and specialist courses."

"If Bridget did not exist, we would have to invent her! The quantity, quality and level of contribution to beekeeping in Somerset is outstanding, and an example to us all," he added.

"Also, she is Somerset Beekeepers' yearbook editor and exams secretary and has passed all BBKA theory modules and practical exams putting her one step away from becoming a master beekeeper."

PAST EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There was a good turnout at the AGM, held at Wedmore Golf Club.

The new people elected are: Stewart Gould as Vice-Chair, Elizabeth Friend, Secretary, Richard Bache as Education Officer. All other posts are as printed in the year book.

Thanks to Wedmore and Cheddar for arranging the AGM.

Next year it will be hosted by Quantock division – details next time

Report from Richard Bache on the talk by Peter Kennedy:

Dr Peter Kennedy of the University of Exeter discussed progress in controlling the invasive predatory hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, at our AGM on Saturday (March 10).

He reviewed many of the techniques that have been employed since it first appeared in France around 2004 and showed that only identification and destruction of nests before they produce reproducing hornets is effective.

The challenge is effectively finding these nests, which are often concealed high in trees, between mid-summer, when the hornets may first become evident and before October, when the colony produces the reproductive queen and drone hornets.

Traditional methods of tracking such as triangulating flight lines have limitations where few hornets are around and traditional techniques such as suzembachi, where hornets are marked with a flag and followed don't seem to be tolerated by this species of hornet. Harmonic radar can help track hornet back to the nest, but the equipment is expensive and requires specialist operators.

Dr Kennedy discussed more readily available alternatives that are much easier and cheaper to operate and discussed limitations such as signal echoes from buildings and shadowing from trees. Attendees were grateful to be able to see specimens of this exotic hornet alongside our native hornet.

LECTURE DAY



Report from Anne Pike

This year's lecture day was the most well attended ever with more than 180 beekeepers from Somerset, Dorset and further afield packing into Edgar Hall, Somerton.

There was a packed programme of entertaining and informative lectures from honey farmer Ged

Marshall, pollen expert Michael Keith-Lucas, biologist and master beekeeper Pam Hunter and Paulo Mielogo from Vita (Europe). Simon Jones (SW Regional Bee Inspector) also gave an update on the Asian Hornet.

Trade stands were run by David Pearce who brought a great selection of beekeeping equipment and Jeremy Burbidge of Northern Bee Books. A small band of volunteers served teas and coffees at intervals during the day. Many thanks to them for doing so.



Simon Jones showing a hornet trap

COUNCIL MATTERS

I'm sure that you all get reports back about what goes on in Council meetings from your excellent delegates, but the following two articles from the Treasurer expand on what's being discussed (Ed)

Changes in the Data Protection Legislation

In May 2018 there will be changes following the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) affecting how the SBKA and divisions manage the personal data they hold for members. We will be issuing guidelines shortly to membership secretaries/treasurers and all members will be contacted in how the changes affect their personal data. When you do receive notification please respond, if required or appropriate, so that we can safeguard your privacy.

Proposal to change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

You will have seen that an item for discussion at the recent AGM was to progress the change of status of the SBKA from an unincorporated membership charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This resolution was carried by the members attending.

Over the next few months we will be preparing a new constitution based on the template provided by the Charity Commission and when it has been legally checked we will be holding an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members to adopt the change should you think fit.

So why are we doing this?

All twelve delegates and the three executives are currently trustees of the SBKA. The legislation, which currently applies to the SBKA, is Trust Law. Some members have expressed concern about becoming a delegate because there can be liabilities that fall on trustees in carrying out their duties.

Being a Trustee could be considered onerous but provided the trustee, together with their co-trustees (other delegates and officers), act reasonably and within the Charity Commission guidelines and decisions are properly conducted at meetings and accurately documented by the secretary of the meeting, they should have nothing to fear. However, in the unfortunate event that liability could be attributed to the Trustees under Trust Law for any negligence or wrong doing by the Charity the Charity, through the BBKA, carries Trustees liability insurance for up to £2m to provide protection in the event that an action was brought. Its important to note that any one or more than one trustee can be brought into an action even if the incident didn't involve them, under the rules of joint and several liability, applicable in Trust Law.

OK, so now you're nervous. Well, provided we do everything properly there shouldn't be a problem, but if we change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation **generally its trustees aren't personally liable for what it does**. This is the main reason we are looking to make the change. Also the current unincorporated status, which is just governed by the 'rules', isn't adequate for the SBKA to own and buy land/buildings without putting the Trustees (Officers and Delegates) at unreasonable risk.

At present the SBKA don't employ staff, and we have no plans to do so, but should we need to in the future then we would have to consider changing the status as we don't have legal capacity to employ anyone. These issues were highlighted at a previous Council meeting following a recent article in the BBKA news which stated that the BBKA status needed to change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. If anyone has any constructive input or would like to get involved in this process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Christina Kennedy, County Treasurer email: treasurer@somersetbeekeepers.org.uk

NEWS FROM THE DIVISIONS



It's nice to see how many divisions are holding their own honey shows. Do try and get along to as many as possible. They all need your support.

Yeovil: July 14-15 at the Yeovil Show
Taunton: August 3rd and 4th at the Taunton Flower Show
Central: August 19th at the Mid-Somerset Show
Exmoor: October 7th at Dunster Tithe Barn
Burnham: November 15th as part of their AGM

Readers are reminded that Bernie Perkins wrote an excellent article about preparing honey for the show, which was in last year's newsletter (April 2017) and is now available on the SBKA website.

From Central Division

Forthcoming events. Paula Carnell is teaching a Skep making course over 2 days at The Old Kennels in Dunkeswell: <https://theoldkennels.co.uk/product/rye-straw-bee-skep-wednesday-18th-thursday-19th-april-2018> I believe that there are 1 or 2 spaces left on that course.

Paula is also organising an event at The Market House Castle Cary on May 20th for World Bee day between 10am and 2pm and would like to hear from anyone interested in being involved with demonstrating, or helping with educational boards, making teas and cakes etc. Further information can be found at Paula Carnell Creating a Buzz Facebook page, or she can be contacted at paulacarnell@me.com or 07891 189834

Other news. We have continued to collect white spilt sugar from Tesco, Shepton Mallet throughout the winter which means that our bees will have a good start once Spring arrives. We filled all the places on our Beekeeping for Beginners' Course, which runs from February - April, and the students are a very enthusiastic and committed bunch.

Quantock Division.

Ed: I hope to have some news and photos next time about an exciting new development on their apiary site

Wedmore and Cheddar

Many thanks to Council for granting the money towards a new projector – a great asset to our excellent and well-attended beekeeping course run by Jonathan Friend and Bridget Knutson.



**Get your entries ready for the Honey Shows
Volunteer to help at the Bath and West
Book a place at the County Lunch
Go to the Special Lecture
Take some exams**

Late News: We have a beautiful edible flower garden at Manor Farm, Chesterblade, BA4 4QX and I wondered whether anyone might like to keep a hive or two of bees here?
Please call Caroline Gent on 07770 902363, E: caroline@carolinegentcatering.com

Finally and be no means least - HORNETS - BE VIGILANT!



First: Keep an eye out for nests. Hornets' nests look very much like squirrel and magpie nests or mistletoe at a quick glance, but have very distinct edges, as opposed to the ragged ones of other nests and the transparency of mistletoe. Large nests in bare branched trees will only tell you where they were last year, but it is a massive clue to their presence in the area. Hopefully we won't see any this spring in Somerset but do make sure that you know what to look out for just in case.



Close up of an old Asian hornet nest now covered in moss on the left and in the tree on the right, from Stewart Gould, taken in Brittany

Considering the huge number of hornet nests in Brittany it's highly likely that some hornets will find their way to the UK this year. **All divisions MUST make sure that ALL their members are familiar with what the hornets look like.** The Asian hornet is smaller than the European hornet but, as we were told at the AGM lecture, there is a large variation in size and so this can be misleading. In some descriptions, emphasis is placed on the yellow legs, but, according to Stewart Gould who has seen many hornets and nests in France, that is among the last things you notice. What catches the eye is the predominantly black colour, and a marked orange patch on the abdomen.



Asian hornet on ivy in Brittany c Stewart Gould

WATCH THIS SPACE!

The executive committee is currently considering a number of ideas to educate beekeepers and the wider public about the threat from hornets - details will be sent to all divisions as soon as possible.

The following two pages are the www.nonnativespecies.org Asian hornet poster

If you would like more photographs of the Asian hornet try <http://aramel.free.fr/INSECTES14ter-2.shtml> and compare the photographs of *Vespa velutina* and *Vespa crabro*

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.

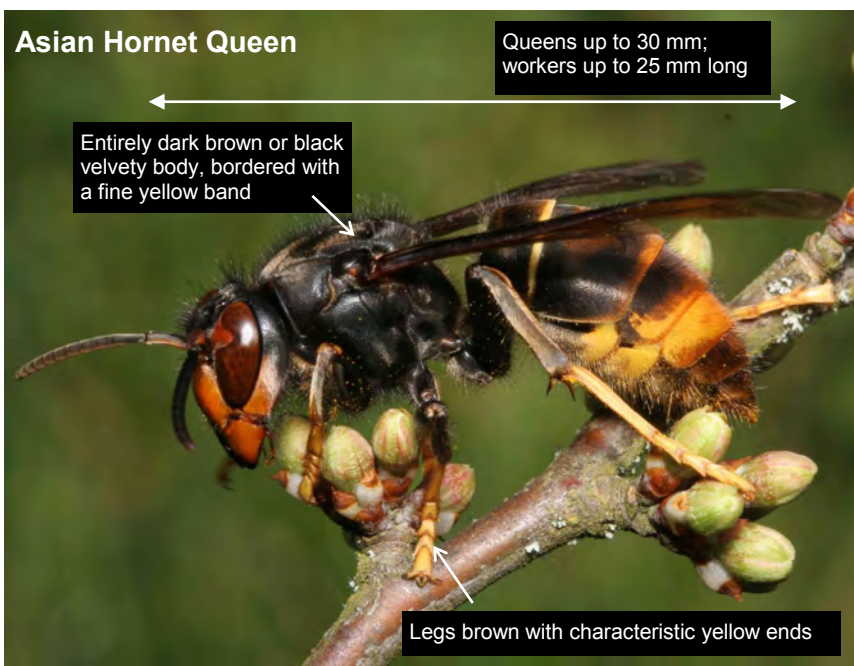
Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or in/on 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 alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

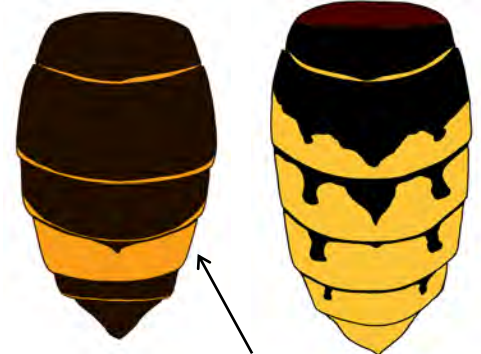


Key ID Features



Asian Hornet

European Hornet



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



Asian hornet "hawking" for honey bee prey

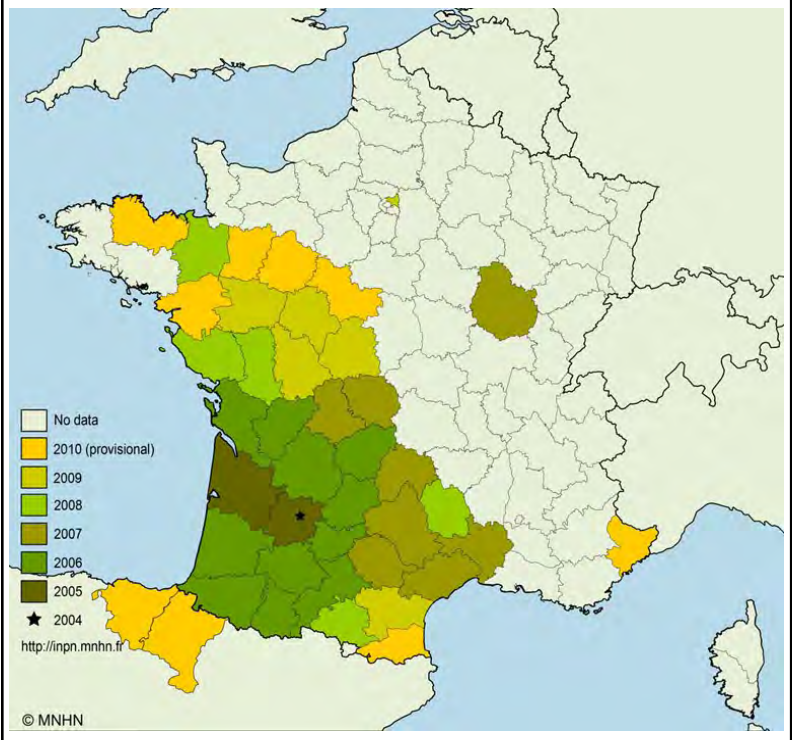
Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbourages – 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.



Distribution in France and Spain



Similar Species

Most likely to be confused with European Hornet. Less likely to be confused with queen Median Wasp. Main difference between European Hornet and Asian Hornet is the latter is slightly smaller, has characteristic yellow legs, a dark velvety thorax and a dark abdomen with a distinctive yellow band on the fourth segment. Asian Hornets are never active at night whereas European Hornets may be. Median Wasp queen is smaller, has some yellow on the thorax (unlike Asian Hornet) and lacks the characteristic feet and abdomen of Asian Hornet.



Median Wasp

Non-native
(*Dolichovespula media*)



References and further reading:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=208>

http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info_sheets_2010/08_Vespa_crabro_1col_infosheet.pdf

http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info_sheets_2010/09_Dolichovespula_media_1col_infosheet.pdf

http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info_sheets_2010/12_Vespa_velutina_1col_infosheet.pdf

See also the Asian hornet pages of the National Bee Unit website, BeeBase (www.nationalbeeunit.co.uk)

For more information visit:

www.nonnativespecies.org

www.nationalbeeunit.com