

TASC Talk - Bees and Beekeeping

By Darren Jeacock

Darren gave us a very interesting and in fact captivating talk about the life of bees and what it takes to be a bee keeper. You could sense the passion he has for his subject.

Darren has his own apiary in Syresham, and produces his own (well his bee's own) honey which he sells.

I must admit I did not realise just how much work and preparation went into keeping a hive of bees. I thought you just left them to their own devices and every now and again you tap off some honey and possibly wax. I was wrong, there is a whole science behind bee keeping, from the types of hives that are used, are evidently there are three main designs, to how to make sure your queen doesn't decide to leave, taking half the bees with her.

Darrin showed us one of his hives and explained why he used this type and how the bees organised themselves within and how they kept the hive cool and clean. He also described the, I think it was 3 different types of bee waggle dance that bees use to communicate there finding of a suitably good crop of pollen to the rest of the hive.

It came as a surprise and a shock to some of us, that bee keeping may also involve physically killing off an older queen, by what seemed to be in quite a cruel manner, to allow a new queen to be hatched for the continuing health of the hive.

Darren also introduced us to some of the dangers bees face. One of them is the Asian Hornet. Below is some information about this pest.

At the end of his talk a number of us purchased his honey and will be giving it a try over the coming weeks.

Asian Hornet

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alert_nonnative@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.

Not currently present in GB, but recently introduced to France and rapidly extending its range. 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 alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk.



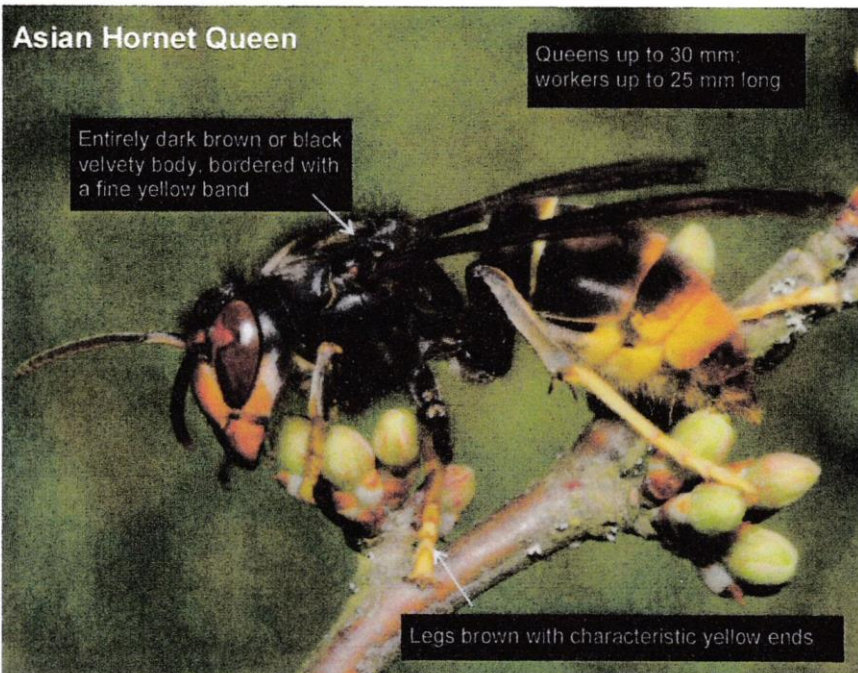
Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen

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

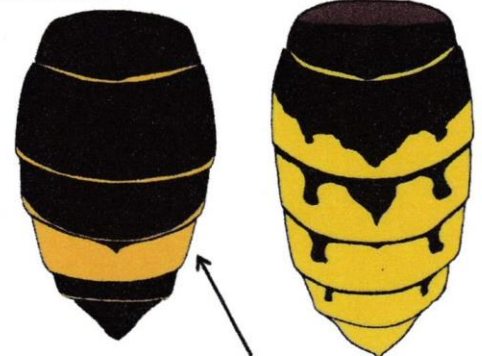
Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

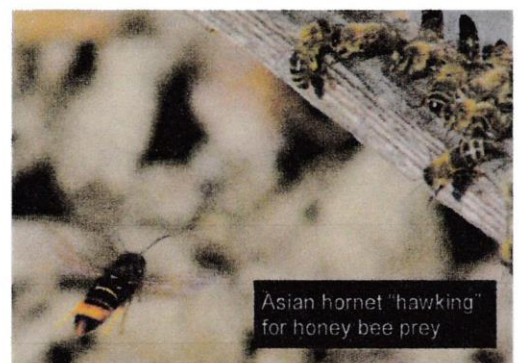


Asian Hornet

European Hornet



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



Asian hornet "hawking" for honey bee prey