



Wiltshire BKA

Honey Bee Times

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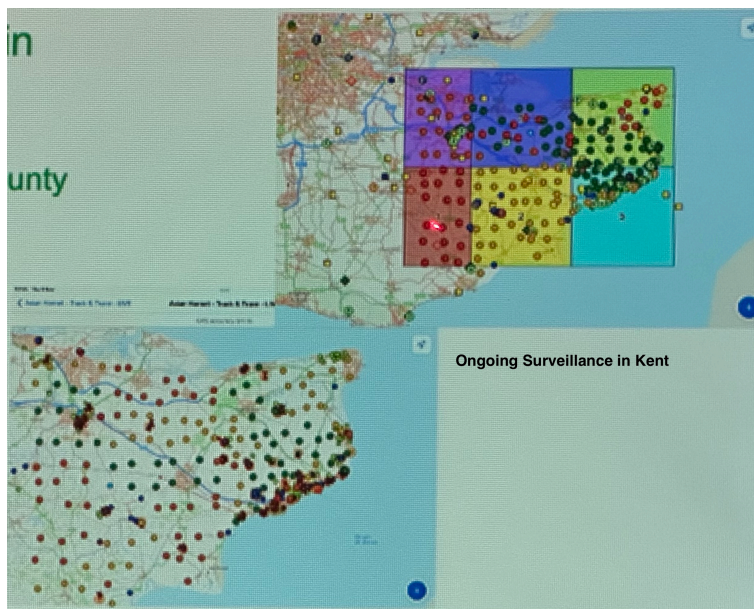
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Asian Hornet - a call to arms

This year some 71 Asian Hornet (AH) nests have been located and destroyed in Kent. Most of the work has been done by teams of NBU inspectors drawn in from all over the country. Surveillance continued until 20th November with each dot on the map representing the location of an AH trap.

Members of Asian Hornet Action Teams (AHATs) from across Kent have only been able to provide limited support to the NBU because more extensive support such as tracking and tracing is currently illegal. This extensive operation has resulted in the NBU being unable to fulfil its primary role of keeping other diseases at bay to the level it would wish. This is not sustainable so at some time, perhaps as early as next year, permission may be given for AHATs to do some of the work such as track and trace.

On Saturday 11th November Hampshire BKA held a conference designed to update their AHATs. As you would expect, the Hampshire AHATs were there in force. The AHATs from Kent, Surrey, London and Somerset BKAs were also well represented.



Main Lessons

1. They have destroyed 332 AH nests in Jersey this year. If that density of nests was applied to Wiltshire, we would be dealing with more than 10,000 nests annually. The two main lessons from Jersey were:

- The need to locate and destroy the nests as early as possible. This requires wide spread public awareness to identify AH, followed by collaboration between a wide range of interested parties.
- This not solely a beekeeping problem. AHATs in Jersey routinely include non-beekeepers; 300 volunteers work with the AHATs.

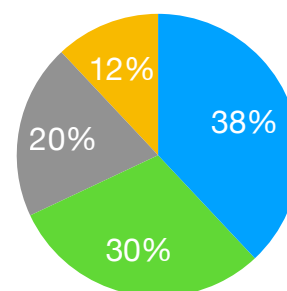
2. Dan Etheridge, the acting Regional Bee Inspector (RBI) for the Central Region, which includes Wiltshire, emphasised the need for public awareness in particular the need to engage at the local level with:

- Natural England, Forestry Commission, RSPB, RHS, Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, MoD, National Trust, major landowners, parish councils etc.
- Dan also stressed to take the message into schools and youth groups as young people are very observant and care about the countryside

3. Stephen Fleming, co-editor of BeeCraft, has spent time with the NBU teams in Kent. His main points were:

- AH is not just a beekeeping problem. AHs' carnivorous appetite will unbalance the food chain for many species including birds. So many other conservation organisations need to join the battle to prevent AH becoming established in the UK.
- Look for the smaller embryo nests from April to June.
- AH forage within 1km of their nest. But the nests are difficult to find.
- Second nests produce the queens and drones late in the season and have the capability to produce hundreds of mated queens. While few will survive the winter, it is so important to find those nests before the queens emerge.

● Honey Bees ● Flies
● Social Wasps ● Other



4. Lynne Ingram NDB is the AHAT coordinator for Somerset BKA. Lynne and her team have produced some excellent material to form the basis of **a roadshow**; some of you may have seen it at the Royal Bath & West Show last summer.

- Lynne added her voice to emphasise that AH is not just a beekeeping problem.
 - It affects biodiversity beyond predation.
 - Modifies the foraging behaviour of pollinators.
 - Displaces native species and
 - Cascades impacts on ecosystems.
- Hence the importance of developing links with other environmental organisations within Wiltshire.

But it goes further. If you are working in an area where there are AH and disturb a nest then the result can be very painful at best and fatal at worst. Farm workers, fruit pickers, tree surgeons, utilities workers, the list is endless, all need to be made aware and recruited to the cause: "See it. Snap it. App it".

The Call to Arms

5. The first sightings of AH in the UK in 2016 and 2017 were in Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Sensing the danger, Wiltshire BKA was an early leader in forming AHATs. Wiltshire may not be on the front line but with AH the situation can change very quickly. Just consider what happened in France.

6. What can you do?

- If you haven't done so already download the Asian Hornet Watch app.
- Complete the AHAT exercise. For insurance purposes, AHAT team members must be Registered, Partner or Honorary members and must have completed the Asian Hornet Team Exercise. However, *everyone* can complete this exercise so that we are *all* better informed. It will take you ten minutes and will help prepare Wiltshire to better manage Asian Hornet incursions. Find the test here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSff5lvkbPdxHieeNFvbth5VDpGi_XOhGIJ0FXJo-81S455qZw/viewform
- During the winter months learn all you can about AH and the steps being taken to prevent it becoming established in the UK.
- There is good information on:
 - The BBKA website: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/Listing/Category/asian-hornet-vespa-velutina>.
 - The NBU website: <https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/asian-hornet/>
- During this year's Asian Hornet week the BBKA hosted two truly excellent talks by Andrew Durham of Cambridgeshire BKA that are now available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mx3LhC2fnoc&t=2210s>.
- Join or help recruit non-beekeepers to your your branch AHAT. Tracking and tracing AH adds a new dimension to Geocaching or Orienteering. Birdwatchers, gardeners, visitors to National Trust sites could have their interests upset by AH in future. They and others with similar interests once they are aware of AH may be willing to help find nests.
- Inform your children, nephews and nieces and grandchildren about AH. Young people are excellent observers and interested in the environment.

AH poses a very real threat to many eco-systems.

We need to do all we can to prevent AH becoming established in Wiltshire.

As beekeepers we will not be able to do this on our own. We need to enlist the help of the general public.

Learn about AH. Talk about AH to all and sundry.

Just one AH found/trapped/killed saves up to 50 honey bees or other insects.

AHAT members attend the 2nd South West AH Conference on 6th January 2024.

Beekeeping Tips

Checking for stores



Heft your hives on a regular basis and if light feed with fondant

No doubt you all checked the stores remaining in each of your colonies after you had harvested the honey at the end of the summer flow and fed syrup accordingly. A normal sized colony with, say, 30,000 bees at the end of the season might consume some 18kg of honey over the winter months. That said it's not easy to calculate what's left in the hive and the rate of consumption will vary from hive to hive and the weather conditions.

We have had more days with rain than without in recent weeks making it difficult for the bees to forage. It is good practice to heft your hives every fortnight or so. Take off the roof and raise the hive front and back. This will give you a feel whether the hive is light or heavy. If light feed fondant, making sure it's over the cluster and so easily accessible.

Varroa Control



We are approaching the time of year when the queen might stop laying and there is a brief broodless period in our colonies. This means that any Varroa mites will be on the adult bees. This is the ideal time to treat for Varroa. Sublimating with oxalic acid or trickling an oxalic solution on the bees (see photo) will cause any phoretic mites drop off and so reduce the Varroa load in the colony. Either let the mites drop through the mesh floor or to assess the drop, insert the Varroa tray so that you can count the mites. Smear the edges of the tray with vaseline to stop the mites crawling back into the hive.

Review 2023 & Plan for 2024

This is a good time to go through your records and consider what went well and what went less well in 2023. What could you do in the hope of having a better season next year?

What are your aims for next year?

- To have calmer colonies?
- To produce more honey?
- To produce your own queens?

These type of questions can be answered by assessing your current queens and their colonies so that you can decide which you want to use to replace existing queens or to increase your stock.

Having considered how you could improve your colonies, what steps you could take to become a better beekeeper? Practical experience is best achieved by joining fellow beekeepers at the branch apiary during the season but knowledge can be acquired by reading books, magazine articles, blogs by respected beekeepers and watching videos taking care to check that they are by respected beekeepers.

You could also join a study group. Rachel Banyard will be running a course based on the syllabus for the BBKA's Module 3: Honey Bee Diseases, Pests and Poisoning. Richard Oliver will be running similar course for Module 6: Honey Bee Behaviour. Attending such a course will increase your beekeeping knowledge and help you become a better beekeeper. With this in mind, there is no expectation that you will have to sit the exam we just want to help you become better beekeepers. (See the Education section for details.)

Education, Exams and Training

Basic Assessment

Congratulations to the nine members from across the county who took their Basic Assessment this year. Once again we had 100% success with three distinctions, four credits and two strong passes.

Obtaining the Basic is an indication that you are a competent beekeeper. During their training at BBKA HQ, assessors are encouraged to run the assessment in such a way that it is as much a training session as an assessment. The pass rate nationally is 97%. If you have been keeping bees for two years or more a pass should be well within your capability.

Modules

Congratulations to Trudi Granger (Kennet) and Gloria Pilz (West Wilts) in obtaining Distinctions in Module 5: Honey Bee Biology in March. Gloria also earns her Intermediate Theory Certificate.

Module 3. Rachael Banyard will be running a course for those wishing to learn more about Honey Bee Pest, Disease and Poisoning. For details e-mail Rachael: rachael.banyard@gmail.com.

Module 6. Richard Oliver will be running a course for Module 6 which covers Honey Bee Behaviour. There will be seven sessions all on Zoom on the following Mondays from 7 to 9pm: 11 Dec 2023: 8, 15 and 22 Jan 2024 and 5, 12 and 19 Feb 2024. (raoliver.64@gmail.com).

Microscopy Group.

The group will be meeting in Easterton Village Hall, SN10 4PS on Sunday 3rd December, Sunday 4th February, 3rd March and 7th April from 9.30am to 12.30pm.
(raoliver.64@gmail.com).

BBKA Learning Platform. There is a wide range of material available on this site which is accessed via the 'Beekeepers' section of the BBKA website. <https://www.bbka.org.uk/bbka-learning-platform>

Events

National

National Honey Show 'Big Give Christmas Challenge'. 28th November-5th December 2024. The National Honey Show is participating in this year's event. The target is to raise £16,000 that will be used to enable more videos of the show's lectures to be placed on YouTube and to help improve other aspects of the show. To donate visit: <https://donate.biggive.org/campaign/a056900002RXvpcAAD>

BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting. Saturday **13th January 2024** starting at 9.30am. This is in effect the BBKA's annual general meeting when each area association is represented and votes on a series of proposals that will determine adjustments to how the BBKA is run in the next 12 months. The meeting is filmed and, should you wish, you can follow the proceedings by going to this webpage and following the instructions: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/bbka-compliance>.

Spring Convention. 2024 marks the BBKA's 150th anniversary. The BBKA's Spring Convention 2024 will include a number of events to mark this special milestone. It will be held at Harper Adams University in Shropshire from **12th-14th April**. Bookings will open online on **29th January 2024**. There is a full programme of talks and workshops with a trade show on the Saturday.

Regional

2nd South West Asian Hornet Conference. This conference is being held on Saturday **6th January 2024** at The Canalside Conference Centre, Marsh Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 6LQ from 09.30 to 17.30. There is a full programme of talks and workshops. This is an event which AHAT members and those wishing to learn more about Asian Hornets should attend. To book a place go to: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/2nd-south-west-asian-hornet-conference-tickets-737292932007?aff=eemailordconf&ref=eemailordconf&utm_campaign=order_confirm&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eventbrite&utm_term=viewevent

Wiltshire BKA

Annual General Meeting and Lecture. Tuesday 30 January 2023 starting at 7pm in the Wessex Room at the Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS.

After the meeting, Stephen Fleming, co-editor of BeeCraft, will give a talk on "The Magic and Mystery of Drone Congregation Areas".

Please email the Secretary if you would like to attend: secretary@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk
WBKA members will be sent the Agenda, a copy of the minutes of the last AGM, and any relevant papers in advance of the meeting.

Branch Events

Kennet BKA

Friday 1st December. Annual Christmas Skittles evening. Probably now fully booked but if you would like to come contact the Secretary: secretary@kennet-beekeepers.co.uk.

Wednesday 3rd January 2024. Kennet holds its monthly meetings in person at Bishops Cannings Village Hall, 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Coffee, tea and biscuits always available. This meeting will be devoted to discussions on the threat of Asian Hornets to beekeepers.

Melksham & District BKA

MBKA meetings are held in Broughton Gifford Village Hall, The Street, Broughton Gifford, Melksham, SN12 8PN (see map below) from 7:00pm - 9:30pm usually on the last Monday of the month.

Monday 29th January 2024. 'Spring into Summer'. A talk by Richard Oliver to get us thinking of the year ahead.

Swindon & District BKA. Club Meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month in the Skittle Alley at the Haydon Wick Club, Blunsdon Road, Swindon SN25 1JD, start time 7:30pm. All members are invited.

West Wilts BKA.

Wednesday 17th January 2024. Roger Patterson "Observation. Interpret what you see". Zoom talk. Details to members a week before the event. Roger's talks are always good value.

Ron Hoskins 1931-202

Telling the Bees – BeeCraft August 2023

Ron Hoskins first learnt beekeeping as a twelve-year-old evacuee, but after retiring he dedicated the latter part of his life to bees and beekeeping.

After varroa was first recorded in the UK in 1992, it took only a year to be found in Swindon, and colony losses were catastrophic. Studying fallen mites collected from under his hives, Ron noticed that they were often damaged and concluded that his bees were uncapping brood and pulling the varroa out. Using a brilliant set up of microscopes, cameras and homemade kit – including a converted SodaStream for anaesthetising queens with cO2 – he was the first to realise that bees could manage the mites themselves through grooming, hygienic behaviour and uncapping sealed brood. Even though he wasn't a scientist, Ron employed scientific methods of analysis and was ahead of the leading scientists of the time. He founded the Swindon Honeybee Conservation Project to study and breed the varroa-crunching 'Swindon Honey bee' and decided to stop treating his colonies in 1995, inspiring many to follow suit. He humbly taught that "if I can do it, so can you."

Ron had a resilience and charm that was admirable. He would joke that he'd survived two heart attacks, had once died and come back to life, had his apiary and research, 20 years in the making, burned to the ground, and he was still going strong. In 2020 he lost much research and many bees after vandalism and an arson attack on his apiary. The local community raised thousands to help set him up again and his work continued.

Ron frequently spoke at beekeeping events and gave many new beekeepers advice and training. Recently, he'd been helping with studies of deformed wing virus as his bees appeared to have an immunity. Indeed, his generosity and influence were global; just last summer he was advising Australian beekeepers on varroa mite resistance strategies. Ron Hoskins was a local legend, and his legacy will live on through generations of bees and beekeepers who benefitted from his work.

Chris Park



Wiltshire BKA Bee & Honey Day

The Bee and Honey Day was held in The Corn Exchange, Devizes on Saturday 7th October. With nearly 250 entries in the county Honey Show, visitors enjoyed lectures on beekeeping, as well as sampling the delicious Honey Days Beer brewed especially for the event by Wadworth Brewery.

Entries to the honey show came from beekeepers from Swindon to Trowbridge, Chippenham to Salisbury in classes ranging from clear honey to honeycomb, and from candles and beeswax flowers to mead, cake and honey sweets.

The event was organised by Wiltshire Beekeepers Association (WBKA) and was sponsored by Eden Renewables, who build solar farms, and consulting engineers Buro Happold, which is working with many cities now enacting policies, programmes and regulations to drive decarbonisation. Before awarding cups on the day, the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor John Stevens CBE and his wife Mary Stevens MBE, spoke about how much the event opened their eyes to the role bees play in our lives and how fascinating these little insects turn out to be.

Paul Jupp of Meadow in My Garden spoke eloquently about planting wildflowers for bees and other pollinators. Andy Pedley went into detail on food safety for the beekeeper, explaining all sorts of pitfalls for the unwary. Marin Anastasov, NDB, explained how to manage a colony of bees if it ever becomes over defensive. In addition, Richard Rickitt, co-editor of BeeCraft and a beekeeper from Corsham, gave a talk to over fifty people thinking of taking up beekeeping as a hobby.

Nearly 100 children enjoyed themselves rolling a beeswax candle while their parents browsed the stalls selling bee-related gifts, wildflower seeds, honey and candles. The Mayoress herself tried her hand at rolling a candle and both the Mayor and Mayoress enjoyed the Wadworth honey beer and Hive Mind mead.

You can see photographs of the event here <https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/events/wiltshire-bee-honey-day/>

Wiltshire BKA Honey Show 2023 - Trophy Winners

(Source West Wilts BKA Newsletter)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Trophy/Cup</u>	<u>Awarded for (and notes)</u>
Elaine Irvine	Methuen Trophy	Most individual points
Sophie Butcher	King Shield	Best honey in show
Sue Rawlings	Kennet Perpetual	Best non honey
Elaine Irvine	Norman Lovegrove Trophy	Best mead
Chris Rawlings	David Wicks Trophy	Best frame for extraction
Karie Carrington	Novice Cup	Best novice class winner (run honey)
West Wilts Branch	Applegate Trophy	Most Branch points
Chris Rawlings	Teal Cup	Service and Achievement
Sophie Butcher	Geraldine Lennert	Best wax exhibit
Elaine Irvine	BBKA Blue Ribbon	Best entry in show