West Wilts BKA News

News, the planned activities, and some advice for members of West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association

IN THIS ISSUE

I can hardly believe that it is time for the May edition of the WWBKA newsletter. I hope all your hives have "overwintered" well and are thriving? What about swarm control? Are you on top of that? Have you entered the Royal Bath and West Show? The closing date for the Royal Bath and West Show was May 1st – although last year (if my memory serves me correctly) the date was extended to allow late entries – so watch out for that if you are a bit behind with your plans.

Registered Charity No. 1198735.

DIARY OF EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE - **PROVISIONAL DIARY DATES FOR APIARY MEETS ARE ON PAGE 11**

May 2025

The Royal Bath and West Show 2025 Thursday 29th May to Saturday 31st May 2025. Royal Bath & West Show | The Bath & West Showground

June 2025

Honey Bee Health Day on Saturday 28th June at Market Lavington Community Hall

August 2025

"Taster Day" on 2nd August at the apiary – please contact Nina for additional details.

September 2025

West Wiltshire Branch Honey Show Saturday 27th September. Bratton Jubilee Hal, Melbourne Street, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 4RW

October 2025

Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025: Saturday 11th October 2025. 10am to 4pm Wiltshire Beekeepers Association Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day 2025 - Wiltshire Beekeepers Association at The Devizes Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS (incorporates the County Honey Show).

BBKA National Honey Day: on 21st October, each year **The British Beekeepers' Association celebrates National Honey Day**

National Honey Show 2025: Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th October 2025 at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey, UK National Honey Show homepage - National Honey Show

Need to know

Lectures

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

20th May: 'Building a Strong Colony' with Roger Paterson

Further details for talks will be available nearer the time.

Good to know

Plant of the month – May

This month there seems to be plentiful forage on trees – Horse Chestnut, Apple Blossom, and Hawthorn in particular. Those of you visiting the club apiary might have noticed the characteristic orange/brown pollen on the bees collecting from the Horse Chestnut flowers around the site.

RHS plants for pollinators offers this information – Horse Chestnut otherwise known as Aesculus hippocastanum will provide nectar and pollen for bees and the many other types of pollinating insects. The Horse Chestnut (used to get our conkers from this to play with at school break times) is a large, broad-crowned deciduous tree. The leaves are described as being large, with 5-7 leaflets, turning red-brown early in autumn. Flowers creamy-white with a yellow spot that turns red with age. Fruits are large and spiny, with shiny brown seeds inside. The height is around 12 metres with 8 metres spread.

(Plant of the month – May contd.)

I have read that Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) can be a good source of early pollen for bees – not always as reliable for nectar though – the weather and conditions have to be just right – the right amount of sunshine and warm enough temperature – and enough rainfall – and we all know that bee will do what they want to do without our advice or interference! Anyway – it is such a wonderful sight in our hedgerows – I thought it was worth a mention!

Extending thanks to all those helping out at both of the kit building sessions – much appreciated – Den assures me that the job is now complete.

Wiltshire Honeybee Health Day: Saturday 28th June 2025 - 9.30-4.30

Market Lavington Community Hall, Saint Mary's Road Market Lavington SN10 4DG

Tickets to Wiltshire members are FREE. Only 76 tickets remain. First come, first served.

Tickets go on sale to the BKAs outside Wiltshire on 1 June.

This is an amazing opportunity to see AFB and EFB up close; an opportunity to come away with tons of new insight and knowledge about bee diseases.

Would you be able to recognise the signs of American Foulbrood (AFB) or European Foulbrood (EFB) in your colonies? Spotting the telltale signs is one of the crucial parts of our weekly beekeeping inspections during the spring and summer months.

Wiltshire Honeybee Health Day, run in conjunction with the National Bee Unit, is designed to help beekeepers better understand the threat of honeybee diseases and what to do if they manifest in your hive. The day will give beekeepers an opportunity to handle frames infected with AFB and EFB and learn more about honeybee health.

Tickets are available on a first come first served basis from here: https://bit.ly/hbt2806

Spaces are limited and so book now.

Bring your own lunch. Teas and coffees available.

Tickets will be available to beekeepers outside Wiltshire BKA from 1st June 2025.

Important Message: Honey labelling at Wiltshire BKA shows and events.

"Every year at the Wiltshire Bee & Honey Day we have wrangles with people wishing to sell their honey at the show but using incorrect labels.

So, I have consulted with Wiltshire Trading Standards and propose the following guidelines for everyone to follow at ANY of the events where we represent Wiltshire BKA include sales of honey at fetes and fairs.

These rules will also be used for shows in classes where own labels are used.

If we all work to the same hymn sheet, the poor people manning the stands won't spend hours arguing with BKA suppliers. I hope.

Find them under Education on the WBKA website.

https://www.wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk/honey-labelling-guidelines/

Pondering my new apiary site!

Having recently moved my hives to farmland what a pleasure it is to see the wild flowers and grasses beginning to come into flower – we have had some cold nights and rather dry conditions, but towards the end of April we had some nice warm daytime temperatures and a reasonable amount of rainfall that stimulated plant growth. I am currently seeing White Dead Nettle, Buttercups, Bluebells and Ground Ivy in flower on the pasture. I have spotted one or two orchids in front of the hives too – what a treat! There are a large number of grasses and there seem to be thistle leaves – an interesting year in front of me as far as forage for the bees is concerned - and there is a field of oil seed rape opposite – additional challenges I presume!

I am spending time looking upwards at the trees in case any hornets have settled "up there"! I am seeing oak and Chestnut flowers overhead – don't forget not all forage is at ground level!

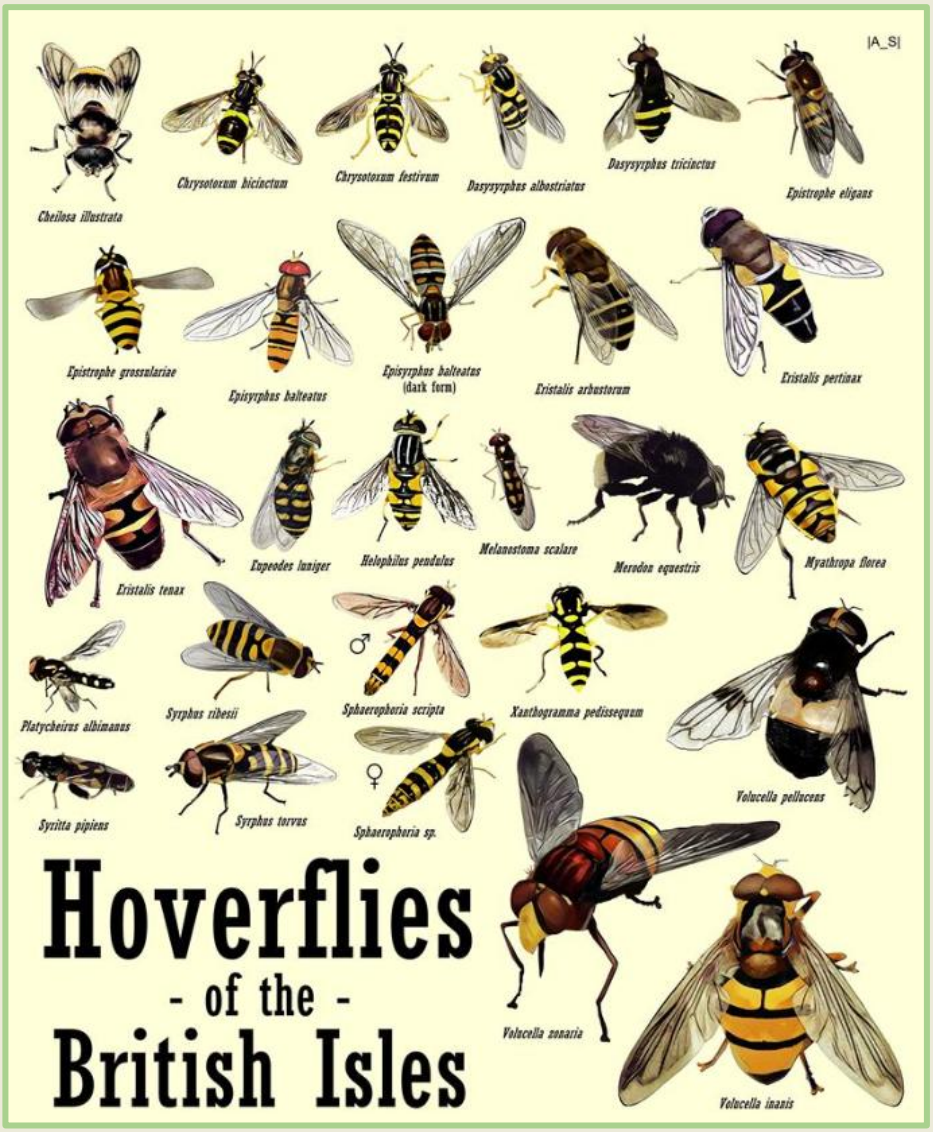
Perhaps you will drop me a message about your own apiary – no need to give geographical reference as to where you are located – it would be pleasing to have more material offered from club members for publishing in the newsletter.

Elaine Mairis

Pollinator of the month – May

Those of our members participating in the club WhatsApp group will see that I have had my "thunder" stolen this month by a recent entry!

Have you spotted the different types of Hover Flies in your garden, along the hedgerows and in the parks? Those not sharing the same interests in bees and other pollinators may be confused and concerned about some of the specimens they spot. I have seen postings of photographs on "Facebook" where there have been concerns voiced about what they are spotting. Have a look at the following poster – there is a link to the source if you are unable to decipher the writing.



(Pollinator of the month – May contd.)

You can find out more about hoverflies by following the link Hoverflies: Fauna of the UK - Flora and Fauna of the UK

If you find the names on the poster difficult to decipher - The poster itself can be found at

https//andyunderscore.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/hoverfly-poster-a3.pdf

Following on from the previous item about pollinators and hoverflies in particular David Raines (WWBKA Swarm Coordinator) sends us this…

Have our girls been swarming?

The swarming season got well underway in mid-April, and at the time of going to print (30 April) there have been at least eight requests for assistance. Not all were for honey bees, but the one involving hover flies provided some head scratching and a good educational opportunity. It's never too late to learn in beekeeping. Newbies take note! As the new Swarm Coordinator, I have been taken aback by the number of people who think we are a freebee removal service. One customer said "As the bees are stinging my animals and children, I just want rid of them. I'm going to Devizes in an hour so can you come before then?" Diplomacy, tact, and firmness appear to be part of the skill set - especially when I invited this particular enquirer to contact a commercial pest controller. "What!" He said, "and pay money." Hey Ho - such is life.

Joking apart, as a local Association, we have so far collected three swarms and found homes from them all. There are four people on the list requesting a swarm so we may be able to meet their needs.

Any other members who would appreciate a swarm should contact me on david.raines@hna.uk.com or the WWBKA Members WhatsApp Group.

Are you "up for it"?

Some ecologists urge refraining from the use of mowers and ""cutting back" in your gardens and hedgerows until the end of June in order to support pollinators. Either date you choose – perhaps you could "do your bit" to support wild life – and drive carefully – the verges along some narrow lanes get a bit long sometimes don't they!

No Mow May

is planned for 1st to 31st May

are you joining in?

WWBKA

is considering compiling a directory of members' contact details – give it some thought - more information will follow shortly from the WWBKA secretary…..

Provisional dates for the club apiary sessions 2025.

So here we are – May again – lovely warm weather outside as I sit here writing the newsletter – (I think I would prefer to be in the garden today rather than sitting in front of the computer)!)Please remember that the dates below are dependent upon the state of the bees, and the weather etc… so watch out for additional messages.

These dates are, as always, provisional. If her weather isn't good enough to open the hives dates might be cancelled, sometimes at short notice. If for any reason sessions are cancelled, a mailshot will be sent out and the club webpage will be updated. Our plans are to open on the following dates:

10th May

24th May

7th June

21st June

5th July

19th July

2nd August

16th August

30th August

13th September

Come and join us, we're looking forward to welcoming you to the apiary, finding out how your bees are faring, and working with our bees together.

(Don't forget to bring your cup for a drink!)

Above - All quiet before hive inspection

APIARY NEWS: Den Pictor – our apiary manager - reports that so far this year apiary "meets" have been well attended – probably seventeen members at each meeting so far. It has been great to see you all – hoping your own colonies are well under control?

Looks like there is plenty going on in this hive!

Above - A pleasant and absorbing afternoon at the apiary

Are you thinking about changing brood comb? Perhaps you have already done so… read on for some reminders ….

National Bee Unit

Replacing old brood comb

(Article from April 2024)

Regular replacement of brood comb is an important part of routine colony management. As the brood comb ages, it may become embedded with traces of cocoons, faecal matter and propolis. Regular comb replacement also helps prevent disease and accumulation of residues from varroacides. This fact sheet provides advice for rotation and recycling of frames from hives.

Why should I change old brood combs?

As the wax in the frames ages, it begins to accumulate pathogens, and chemicals from varroacide treatments. The frames may also become damaged or may contain extensive amounts of inconveniently placed drone comb.

How often should I change them?

It is best practice to replace brood comb at least every three years. However, more frequent replacement is advised if you have had disease in the colony, or after frequent use of certain varroacides. Varroacides that contain the active ingredients thymol or tau-fluvalinate can leave residues within the wax. Regular use of these products may lead to a build-up, or residue, of the active ingredient in the wax, so frames that have been in regular contact with them should be replaced more frequently.

(Replacing old brood comb contd.)

How do I replace frames that are in the hive being used by bees?

There are two easy and effective ways to swap out old frames for new frames:

A. To replace old comb with prepared drawn comb

B. To perform a 'Bailey Comb Change'

A. Replacing old comb with drawn comb

To create drawn comb, a brood chamber is filled with frames of foundation and placed over a queen excluder on a strong, queen-right colony. This should be done during a honey flow, otherwise the bees won't draw it out with wax. When the combs have been drawn out, they can be stored for use as replacement combs.

Towards the end of the season, frames that need to be replaced should be moved to the ends of the brood chamber. During winter, these frames become free of brood. In early spring, before the colony is expanding rapidly, they can be removed and replaced with drawn combs. Use of foundation at this time is not possible, as without a honey flow or extensive feeding, the bees will not draw it out. This exchange can take place on a warm day in March. Ensure that sufficient stores remain and, if not, feed the bees.

B. How do I perform a Bailey comb change?

Prepare a clean brood chamber filled with frames of foundation. Place this chamber over the existing brood chamber on a strong, queen-right colony. Unless there is a strong nectar flow, feed with sugar syrup made from 1 kg of sugar per 650 ml of water. When the bees

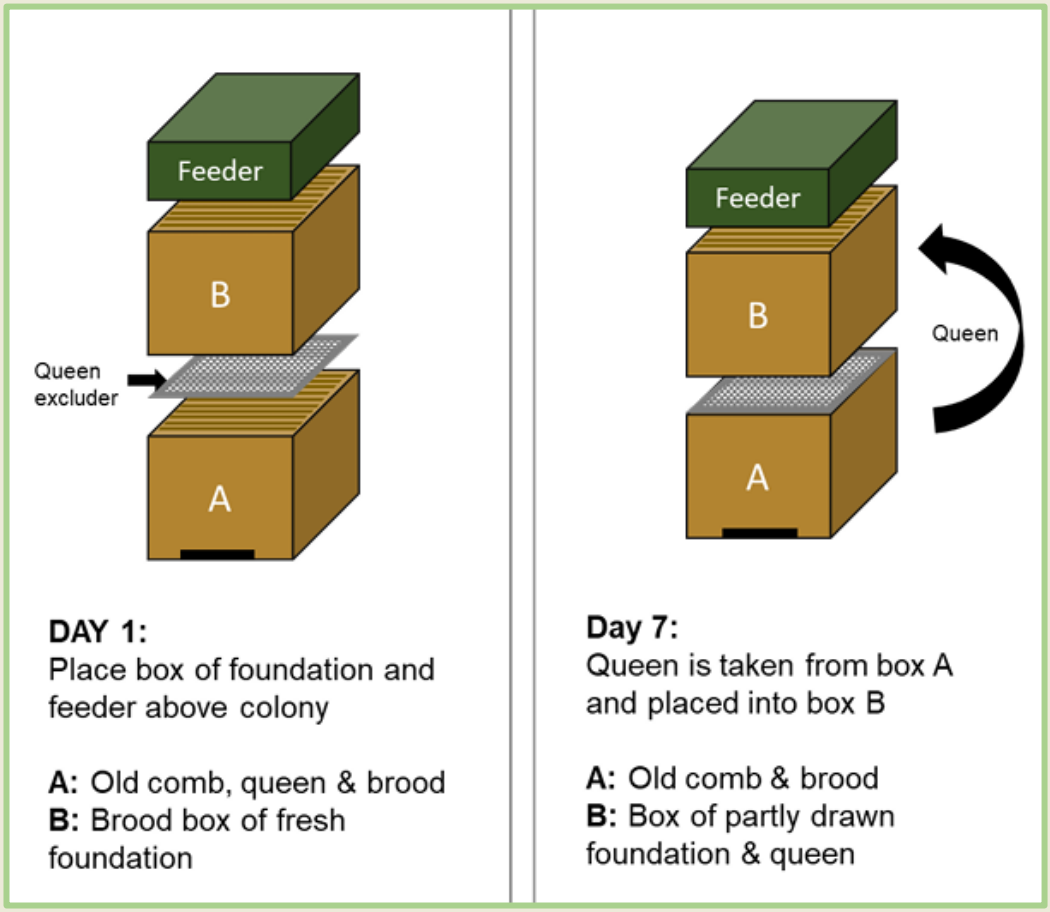
(Replacing old brood comb contd.)

have drawn out some of the foundation, find the queen and place her in the top chamber. Put a queen excluder over the old (bottom) brood chamber, trapping the queen in the upper chamber. If possible, arrange a new hive entrance between the two brood boxes and close off the old entrance. This helps to reduce the amount of pollen stored in the old lower combs. After three weeks, remove the old brood chamber. The brood will have hatched, and the comb can then be rendered to recover the beeswax. A diagram demonstrating the Bailey comb change is shown in Figure 1. This system is ideal for replacing all the combs at once and is best performed in spring, provided the weather is warm. March is suitable, but remember to keep feeding, so the bees have the energy they need to build the wax comb.

Can I replace the brood comb with foundation?

Care must be taken when introducing frames of fresh foundation into established colonies with brood. This can create problems, especially in smaller colonies, as a large number of worker bees are needed to draw out the wax. In double brood colonies, foundation placed in the bottom brood chamber may be spoilt, as the bees may nibble the foundation away, leaving holes between the comb and the bottom bars of the frame. In double brood colonies, a small number of frames of foundation can be put into the upper chamber to avoid this from occurring. Don't place foundation it in the centre of the brood nest, it is best placed close to the edge of the brood nest. Don't place too many frames of foundation into the brood box; use two or three at most. It is always preferable to replace old comb with drawn-out comb in colonies.

(Replacing old brood comb contd.)



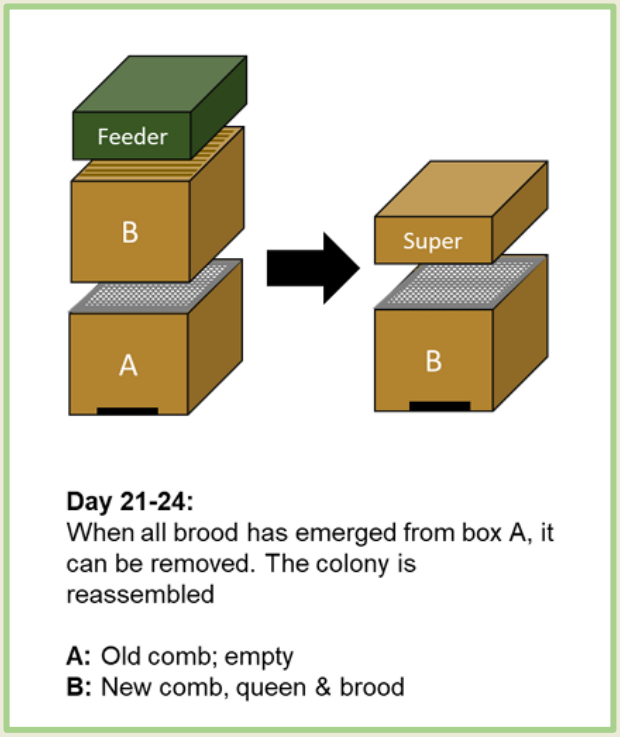


Figure 1. A figure demonstrating how to perform a Bailey comb change.

(Replacing old brood comb contd.)

How do I replace frames of plastic foundation?

Although plastic foundation can be treated in a similar way to wax foundation, before adding it to the colony, plastic foundation must be coated with a layer of wax. Fresh, clean wax should be gently melted in a bain-marie before being rolled onto the plastic foundation; alternatively, the frames can be dipped in the wax. The bees won't readily draw out the foundation without this thin layer of wax. Plastic foundation can be re-used many times; the wax, with any associated contaminants or residues, is scraped off and a fresh layer of melted wax is applied to it.

Can bees draw out comb all season?

Bees do not draw out comb all-year round or in all conditions. The colony needs to be queen-right and there needs to be a good nectar flow to meet the high energy demands of creating wax. In addition, if the colony has ample space for storage in empty cells, they are unlikely to be stimulated into drawing out further comb. For wax to be drawn out, the following conditions need to be in place: – a good nectar flow or sugar syrup feeding – warm weather (to enable the bees to secrete wax) – a laying queen – a lack of space in the colony for further stores – an abundance of young bees (young bees make the wax)

What if my foundation is too old?

Old foundation tends to become hard and brittle, and bees tend to chew it into holes. It can be restored by carefully warming it, which releases the oils and makes it usable again.

What do I do with the old frames?

Spent frames and old comb are easily destroyed by burning and replaced with fresh frames

(Replacing old brood comb contd.)

and foundation. If you wish to salvage the frames, the wax can be rendered down in a steam boiler, and the frames cleaned for re-use. To do this, the wax can be cut out of frames and separated into two piles: clean looking wax, from super frames and lesser used brood frames, and dirty-looking wax, from old brood frames. The wax is then rendered down by gently heating up in water; caution is needed as hot wax presents a fire hazard and a risk of burning. Hot wax should not be left unattended or allowed to boil. When melting wax, heat protecting gloves and eye protection should be worn at all times. Once the wax is rendered down, it can be disposed of if it's dirty or recycled if it's clean. Any undamaged, left-over frames can be washed in hot water (approximately 80°C) mixed with washing soda/soda crystals (mixed at 1 kg soda crystals per 4.5 litres of water) before being re-used with fresh sheets of foundation or starter strips. Please do not dispose of unclean frames or wax in the household waste. If the wax and frames are not disinfected by boiling or burning, any pathogens present in them could pass into the environment.

Is there anything else I should be aware of?

Make sure that you only use 'narrow' spacing between the frames; this is the standard spacing on Hoffman frames for National hives. Combs at the end of the box tend not to be drawn on the outer face. This is because the bees find it hard to cluster there and generate wax. Turn the frame around or move it further into the box so that they can draw it out.

Fact sheet 21 Fact_21_Replacing_Old_Brood_Comb.pdf National Bee Unit APHA, Room 11G03, York Biotech Campus, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LZ Telephone: 0300 303 0094 Email: nbu@apha.gov.uk Web site: www.nationalbeeunit.com April 2024

Membership of a Beekeeping Club

For those fascinated by the world of bees, joining a beekeeping club can offer a myriad of advantages that extend beyond the mere enjoyment of this ancient practice. Beekeeping clubs provide a supportive environment for both novice and experienced beekeepers, promoting education, community engagement, and sustainable practices.

Educational Opportunities

Access to Expertise

One of the principal benefits of membership in a beekeeping club is the access to a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Clubs often host workshops, seminars, and lectures by seasoned beekeepers and entomologists, offering members the chance to learn from the best in the field. This educational support can be invaluable, especially for beginners who are navigating the complexities of beekeeping.

Hands-On Learning

Members can participate in practical sessions that provide hands-on experience with hive management, disease control, and honey extraction. These interactive sessions help build confidence and competence in beekeeping practices.

(Membership of a beekeeping club contd.)

Community Engagement

Building Connections

Beekeeping clubs foster a sense of community among their members, allowing individuals to connect with others who share their passion. These connections can lead to lifelong friendships, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative projects. The collective knowledge and experience within the club can be a powerful resource for solving challenges and advancing individual beekeeping goals. Members offer informal talks to improve knowledge of the community about honey bees, the production of honey and the care of hives. Beekeepers often have additional knowledge about other pollinators which they are able to share. Chats and presentations are made to residents of nursing and care homes, members of the U3A, and various other community organisations..

Support Network

Having a support network is advantageous, especially for novice beekeepers, when faced with difficulties such as bee diseases or environmental challenges. Club members may be able to offer advice, share experiences, and provide moral support, making the journey of beekeeping less daunting and more enjoyable. Our club has a mentorship scheme in place to support and encourage the development of knowledge and confidence in the handling of honeybees and their hives. WWBKA occasionally makes bulk buys of equipment and supplies and shares the opportunities to reduce the costs of beekeeping by sharing the chance to buy supplies at reduced prices.

(Membership of a beekeeping club contd.)

Sustainable Practices

Promoting Biodiversity

Beekeeping clubs often emphasize sustainable practices that promote biodiversity and environmental health. Members learn about the importance of bees in pollination and the impact of beekeeping on local ecosystems. Clubs may engage in community projects such as planting bee-friendly gardens or collaborating with local farms to enhance pollination efforts.

Advocacy and Conservation

Many beekeeping clubs are involved in advocacy and conservation efforts to protect bee populations. By joining a club, members can contribute to these vital initiatives, helping to raise awareness and support for measures that safeguard bees and their habitats. Our club has a stand at the Royal Bath and West Showground at the show at the end of May – knowledgeable and motivated members of the club staff it, and they engage the general public and share their enthusiasm with them.

Access to Resources

Equipment and Supplies

Members often benefit from discounts on beekeeping equipment and supplies through club partnerships with vendors. Clubs may also offer rental programs for expensive equipment, making it more accessible for hobbyist beekeepers.

(Membership of a beekeeping club contd.)

Information Sharing

Membership of the WWBKA includes access to informative newsletters and other publications. Our club secretary regularly sends out mailshots to the membership circle – the apiary manger shares regular updates about the apiary as appropriate and attention is drawn to activities hosted by the British Beekeepers Association, such as zoom lectures on subjects appropriate to the beekeeping calendar (but all beekeepers know that whatever you think is going to happen with your hive of bees – the one thing you cannot do is rely upon it – bees are notorious for being unpredictable and having several hundred minds of their own). Membership will draw attention to online forums where members can stay updated on the latest research, trends, and best practices in beekeeping. The club shares details of insurance and encourages members to engage with National Bodies with regard to disease, bee development and research activities.

Networking and Collaboration

Events and Gatherings

Throughout the calendar year beekeeping clubs organise various events, including honey {and mead) tastings, competitions, and social gatherings. Events such as these provide an opportunity for members to display their products, share tips and tricks, and celebrate their achievements.

Collaborative Projects

Clubs frequently engage in collaborative projects such as community apiaries, research studies, and educational outreach programs. Projects like this allow members to

(Membership of a beekeeping club contd.)

giving back to the community. Joining a beekeeping club offers numerous advantages that enrich the beekeeping experience. From educational opportunities and community engagement to sustainable practices and resource access, the benefits are extensive and impactful. For anyone passionate about bees and beekeeping, membership in a beekeeping club can be a gateway to growth, learning, and a deeper connection with both the beekeeping community and the natural world.

What can be done to improve membership numbers?

Is beekeeping perceived as an activity for older members of the population? There are those amongst us who would disagree – beekeepers encourage all ages of their own families to share their interest in looking after the hives and learning about the management of bees. However, with the drive to consider maintenance of a sensible balance of pollinators and an ecological balance in the younger generation, perhaps more could be done to encourage greater interest, at an earlier age, in our bee population. Some schools keep bees upon their grounds and encourage their pupils to share an interest with leading members of staff. This is probably not a usual occurrence. As a previous school governor of a primary school, I can say for sure that there are opportunities to draw attention to bees in the curriculum of primary schools. Such activities and involvement will hopefully foster interest as children grow and learn and become responsible adults.

What about adults though? Is beekeeping and interest for mainly men or women? I rather hope that there is an equal balance on this – though I may be corrected by the membership secretary on this point. Accessibility may be a problem for club members – a potential argument for possible members may be that the club apiary is too far away.

(Membership of a beekeeping club contd.)

Some members might feel the apiary meetings are not on convenient days or times. "Give and take" on this matter Is essential – proposed dates and times are never going to be suit every member –the vote must go with the majority.

From what I have observed, our club in particular is composed of a friendly bunch of people, within which lifts are freely offered and shared between venues - given and received with good humour and good grace.

We currently have 89 active members at our club. Is membership considered to be too expensive? The club managed to minimally reduce the cost of membership last year. Why do members cease membership? Well, I suppose it must be accepted that there are regular changes in individual circumstances – people move house, if not totally committed to keeping bees they may be seduced away to other activities. Illness and infirmity may cause particular pressures and ultimately beekeeping may be the thing that has to give way…

We all have our own financial pressures and a budget that we have to stick to (or stretch a little) I suppose that there are some personal circumstances at different times of our life cycle, which have to take priority over keeping bees.

We want our bee keeping club to be healthy, active and to grow. If you are a member and you have ideas of how things could change or improve, contact a member of our committee for a chat. I feel pretty certain you will be listened too. You may have some good ideas that haven't been thought of or considered before, not all ideas can be taken on board or acted upon, so sensible ideas only please! WWBKA tries to plan activities to suit members of all age groups and ideas are sought for winter activities in particular.

Elaine Mairis

As if you needed reminding – but just in case!

NNSS
GB non-native species secretariat

www.nonnativespecies.org

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**

Yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet)

Species Description

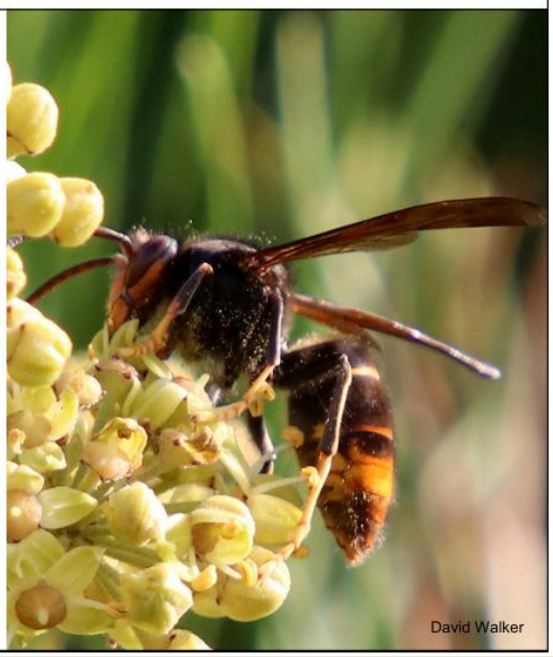
Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*
Native to: Asia
Habitat: Nests usually high in trees and man made structures, sometimes closer to the ground; hunts honey bees, other insects and also feeds on fruit and flowers.

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.

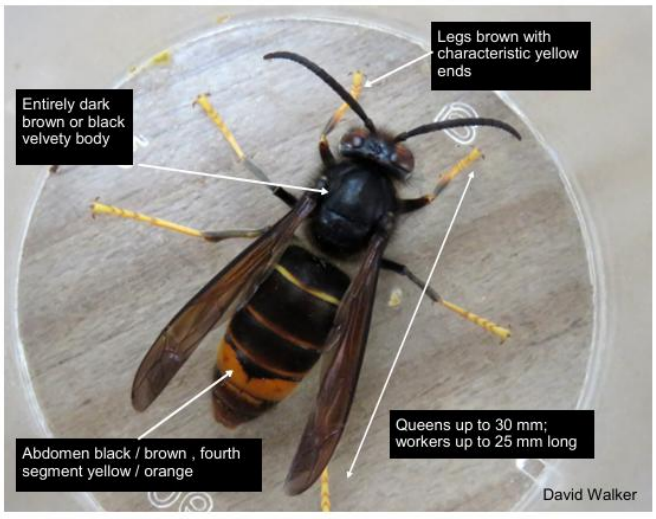
Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. A number of sightings have been recorded in the UK since 2016. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, in vehicles, or in/on untreated timber. The possibility that it could fly across the Channel has not been ruled out.

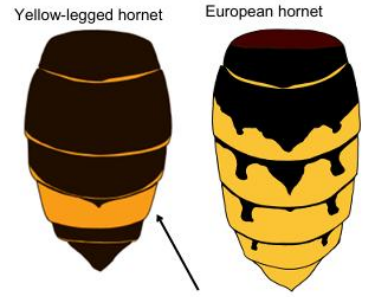
A highly aggressive predator of native insects. Poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found a yellow-legged hornet should report it with a photo using the details provided in the red box at the top of this ID sheet.



Key ID Features





Yellow-legged hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment.

Version 6. Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Olaf Booy (NNSS), Gay Marris, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWARS)

Yellow-legged hornet, aka Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) for comparison

- Queen up to 30mm long, worker up to 25mm long
- Legs yellow at the ends
- Dark brown / black abdomen with a yellow / orange band on 4th segment
- Head dark from above, orange from front
- Dark coloured antennae
- Entirely black velvety thorax
- Never active at night

Actual size

Q. Rome

Similar Species

European hornet (*Vespa crabro*)

- 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

Actual size

Roger Burgess

Mia Tonge, National Bee Unit

Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)

- Larger than yellow-legged hornet, female up to 45mm long
- Legs yellow
- Distinctive yellow and black banded abdomen
- Long cylindrical body unlike yellow-legged 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

Actual size

Q. Rome

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)

- Abdomen has more yellow stripes than yellow-legged hornet
- Legs darker than yellow-legged hornets
- Only one pair of wings (hornets and wasps have two pairs)
- Large, globular eyes

Actual size

Didier Descouens

Alvespaspar

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

- More extensive yellow and orange colouration on abdominal segments than yellow-legged hornet
- Yellow markings on thorax unlike yellow-legged hornet

Actual size (queen pictured)

Rasbak

Rasbak

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.

For more information visit:

www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeeunit.com

Alert! Report sightings of this species:

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

May in the apiary (Written May 2023 by Karl Colyer – mentions the weather Feb/March 2023)

With an abundance of forage and flying days, colonies grow very rapidly. The natural impulse to swarm will need to be managed.

With swarms, there are three overall approaches: let them swarm if they want to, but this is not recommended unless you live on an island or a very remote area; manually prevent them swarming or, allow the swarm process to be proactively enacted but under 'artificial' or controlled circumstances.

Swarming is a natural process

It is normal for bees to want to swarm. It is their sole method of naturally replicating the colony. In nature, it is thought that only around a fifth of swarms would become a viable additional colony to the point where they could successfully overwinter. So, bees will instinctively want to swarm if the conditions are appropriate. If there is an abundance of bees, eggs or larvae, forage, and available flying drones, it will incline bees to swarm. If the hive has a lack of space for eggs to be laid, or if the queen is three or more years old and her pheromone levels fall, or perhaps if the bees are diseased, or if they are genetically 'swarmy,' it may compel the bees to swarm.

Unexpected swarms happen

With the warmer weather in February and March this year, several colonies will have increased their bee populations earlier than usual. Anticipate swarms if the brood box is packed with bees. The swarm impulse can be delayed or negated simply by adding more brood space and making sure that the brood box is not congested with excess nectar or honey.

(May in the apiary contd.)

Additional supering is helpful if the bees are numerous and forage plentiful. There are two ways to help mitigate any swarming mishaps. Consider having a bait hive or two in your garden or grounds. If a swarm does pour out, it may be attracted to this as a new home, albeit sometimes only temporarily. Another option is to clip one set of the queen's wings. A swarm may still occur, but the bees will return to the hive and the queen may often be found on the ground surrounded by attendant bees. Both these options help reduce the risk of swarms getting into a neighbour's building.

Manual swarm cell removal

Before you decide what to do about queen cells in a colony, you must consider what is going on. Are the queen cells for swarming, supersedure, or emergency re-queening. If, on inspection, you conclude they are swarm cells, then you must act quickly to prevent the colony swarming. Knocking down queen cells each week is a common but mistaken approach to offset swarming. All it does is give the beekeeper a week to get the equipment ready for their preferred method of swarm control in time for next inspection. But knocking down queen cells will not prevent swarming; ultimately the action can demoralise the bees and the colony can still swarm.

Artificial swarming

A preventive action for swarming is to proactively create an entirely new colony by splitting a large colony under controlled conditions. There are many ways to do this, and it is worth learning one or two methods and having a few goes at it. In essence, they all cause the bees to create new queen cells under what is often referred to as the emergency impulse, which is caused by a sudden absence of queen pheromone in a

(May in the apiary contd.)

colony. All splits require young nurse bees and some eggs or young larvae to make into queen cells. The split must start off queenless. The larvae for the queen cells can be chosen by the bees or be manually transferred from another colony and presented to the queenless colony in a vertical position. This allows an opportunity to rear queens with larvae from your favourite colony.

Get to Know Your Bees

Swarms are entirely natural, and the instinctive process can offer some advantages for the sustainable beekeeper:

By removing three or four frames of brood and bees from a populous, healthy colony, new frames and foundation can be put in their place, cycling the frames and causing the bees to invest effort in comb creation and bee replacement rather than swarming.

If a split is made, the colony that is queenless for a while has a brood break which disrupts the growth of Varroa numbers in a colony; an entirely natural form of temporary Varroa suppression. If you want to increase your colony numbers or replace an aging queen, making a new colony is very cost-effective and will use local genetics rather than genetics from another area. The best bees for your area are most likely already in your area. By making an extra colony or two during the summer, you have an additional queen available if one of your other hives has problems during the season. You can also try overwintering the spare colony, effectively having bees to replace any winter losses before they happen. (Find the above article at (reproduced from the BBKA website - https://www.bbka.org.uk/blog/may-in-the-apiary-2023)

Honey recipe of the month – May

Prep Time:10minutes mins Cook Time: 40minutes mins

INGREDIENTS

500 g mixed dried fruit, sultanas, currants, raisins, cherries

250 g unsalted butter, cut into small cubes

250 ml cold water

200 g caster sugar

80 g runny honey

2 large eggs, beaten

280 g self-raising flour, sieved

½ tsp bicarbonate of soda

½ tsp mixed spice

METHOD

1.Preheat the oven to 180C gas 4.

2. Pop the fruit, water, butter, honey, and sugar into a saucepan and JUST bring to the boil, stir well, cover with film and leave to cool.

3. When cool, stir in the eggs then the flour and finally the bicarb and mixed spice and stir well but do not overwork.

4. Pop into a lined 28cm square baking tray bake, then bake in the oven for about 30-40 minutes.

5. Cool then turn out and leave to cool completely before trying to cut.

Phil Vickery suggests it is served with clotted cream and a drizzle of runny honey – to be honest I think there are enough calories there without adding any more!

This one is a winner with me -  - quick to make and tastes good.

REMEMBER!

Members wanting to buy WWBKA clothing can now order directly from the suppliers as the link to ordering clothing is now "live" on the shop website.

All four Beekeeper Products (Fleece, Sweatshirt, Polo Shirt and Cap) are available to order from the OHM website using the following link: **https://ohmclothing.co.uk/shop/workwear/wiltshire-beekeepers/**

Alternatively, you can go onto the OHM website, click 'Workwear,' then 'Wiltshire Beekeepers' and you will find all the items listed there.

Please note that all queries will be handled by the shop.

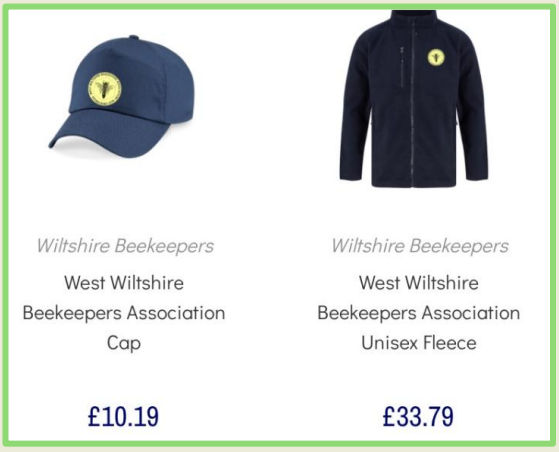
Customer Support - Devizes | OHM Clothing Ltd and OHM Charities

01380 825355

Opening times: 10-5 Tuesday-Friday, 10-2 Saturdays.

Shop: 31 Sheep Street, Devizes, SN10 1DJ

Workshop: Unit 6, Axis Business Centre, Westmead Ind Est, Swindon, SN5 7YS



An ideal birthday gift for your nearest and dearest?

Beekeeping supplies.

Contacts and services

Contact details for committee and officers

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WWBKA Asian Hornet Action Team Coordinator: AHAT-WWBKA@outlook.com
WWBKA Newsletter Editor: Newsletter-WWBKA@outlook.com

Services available to members

The following services are provided by West Wilts BKA to members:
Bee Bank (for sale or purchase of queens, nucs and colonies). Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com
Bookers Wholesale Customer Card. Contact the WWBKA Secretary: Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com
Equipment loan (microscopes, extractors, etc.): Contact the Branch Secretary at Secretary-WWBKA@outlook.com
Library: Contact our Librarian (either direct or through the Secretary)
Swarm Collection Register: Contact Branch Swarm Coordinator (David Raines on 07711 018440 and david.raines@hna.uk.com).

Find us on :West Wiltshire Beekeepers Association