

Volume 13, Issue 9

December 2023



MEMBERS' COUNTY NEWSLETTER

West Sussex Beekeepers' Association

Est. 1973



A Very Happy Christmas

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Another year almost at an end. A year that has seen the incursion of the Asian hornet into the UK brought one step closer. It's a very sobering thought that notwithstanding the tremendous efforts taken by Jersey residents and beekeepers over the last few years it now appears that the hornet has become established on the island.



It is beholden on us all to protect our bees and prevent the Asian hornet from becoming established for as long as possible. Your local Asian Hornet Action Team under its new County Coordinator, Ben Hewson has been working hard to establish a strategy liaising very closely with Hampshire Beekeepers who have experience of the Asian hornet in their county.

Have a *Very Happy Christmas* and while your bees are safely tucked away for the winter enjoy the festive season.

Asian Hornet Update

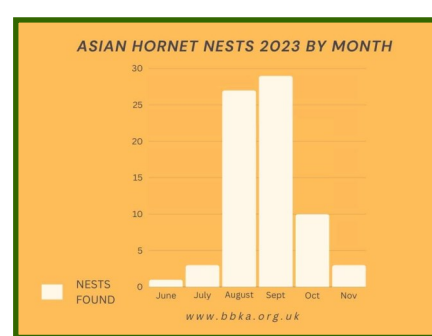
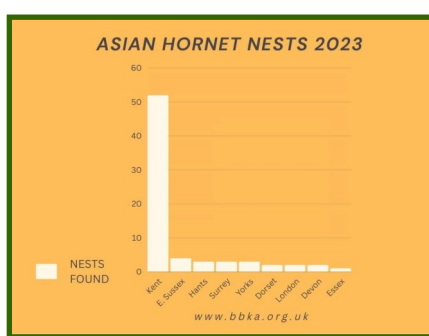
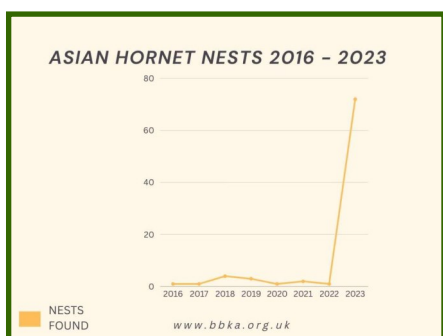
Credible reports have continued to decrease and West Sussex has apparently remained Asian hornet—free, for the time being at least.



There is no change to the number of sightings reported by the NBU as may be expected at this time of the year. 72 Asian hornet nests have been found in 56 locations during this year.

The last reported incident was the location of a nest in Rye, Kent which has been destroyed by the NBU. The NBU surveillance was closed down towards the end of November as the current season has drawn to a close.

A number of members recently joined Hampshire Beekeepers at their Asian hornet conference near Winchester. It was a day of discussion and reflection on the past season and will no doubt influence our own strategy for dealing with the Asian hornet in 2024. Graphs below courtesy of the BBKA—a chilling reminder of what may lie ahead!



West Sussex BKA 2024 Convention



Saturday 24th February 2024
9:30am – 4:30 pm
Lodge Hill, Pulborough, Waters-
field, West Sussex, RH20 1LZ

Planning for our February Convention is now almost complete. Chrissy Blakeman provides a 'taster' to this annual event.



The Convention has again attracted exceptional speakers to cover a wide range of topics with the main lectures being presented by Professor Lars Chittka, Margaret Murdin and Lynne Ingram. There is something for everyone, beginner to expert.

Lars Chittka is the author of the book *'The Mind of a Bee'* and Professor of Sensory and Behavioral Ecology at Queen Mary College of the University of London. He is also the founder of the Research Centre for Psychology at Queen Mary. He has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of animal cognition and its impact on evolutionary fitness studying bumble bees and honey bees. Lars regularly appears in the media, gives lectures and is author/co-author of books and many journal articles. Lars will be giving a main talk on *'The Mind of the Bee'*.

Margaret Murdin holds a degree in biological sciences, is a Master Beekeeper and holds the National Diploma in Beekeeping. She was previous Chair of the BBKA Trustees and past president of BBKA, but for all the high positions she has held, describes herself as an ordinary, practical beekeeper who is naturally interested in furthering the education and training opportunities available to our BBKA members. Margaret is an examiner for all levels of BBKA exams and also moderates the practical exams. Margaret will give a main talk on *'The Queen'* and will also run a seminar on *'Keeping Healthy Colonies'*.

Lynne Ingram is a Master Beekeeper with over 30 years' experience in beekeeping. She is an active participative member of Somerset Beekeepers' Association, where she is very involved in the education of fellow beekeepers and is also the Asian Hornet Co-Ordinator. She recently organized the first South West region AHAT training event. Lynne was elected to the BBKA Exam Board in 2019. She is an examiner for the Basic, General Husbandry, Microscopy and Bee Health assessments, as well as for the written Module exams and is also a Correspondence Course tutor. Lynne will give a main talk on the Asian hornet, titled *'Know your Enemy'* and will also run a seminar on *'The Importance of Drones'*.

Apart from the three main lectures, you can choose to attend two out of the six seminars, and in between times it is a great opportunity to catch up with beekeeping friends throughout the County and beyond. Seminars:

- Margaret Murdin — *'Keeping Healthy Colonies'*
- Lynne Ingram — *'The Importance of Drones'*
- Sue Remenyi— *'Where do Honey Bees Travel for Pollen? - results of a community study'* and *'Wasp Control in the Apiary'*.
- Andrew Gibb — *'Environment, Bees, Food'* and *'Simple Queen Rearing'*

The day promises to be both entertaining and stimulating. Tea and coffee will be served during the breaks and also a simple lunch. Advance booking per person for WSBKA members, £30. Members of other Associations and non-members, £37. On the day if space allows, £37.

Further details will be available on the [WSBKA website](#) at the beginning of January and the Booking Form and Programme will also be included in the January newsletter.

Bumble Bee Strategy Against the Asian Hornet



New research shows bumble bees have a remarkably successful method for fighting off Asian hornets, the University of Exeter has revealed. When attacked, buff



-tailed bumble bees drop to the ground—taking the hornets down with them. This either causes the hornet to lose its grip, or the bee raises its sting and tussles until the hornet gives up. University of Exeter scientists witnessed over 120 such attacks, and were stunned to find

that bumble bees fought off the hornets every time. Despite this, they found bumble bee colonies had reduced growth rates in areas with high numbers of Asian hornets—suggesting the hornets still had a negative impact, even if their attacks at colony entrances usually failed.

A paper describing their findings, published in the journal *'Communications Biology'*, is titled *'Quantifying the impact of an invasive hornet on Bombus terrestris colonies.'* Asian hornets (also known as yellow-legged hornets) have already invaded much of mainland Europe and parts of east Asia, and have recently been reported in the US for the first time. Sightings in the UK and continental Europe are at record levels this year—raising fears for pollinators and prompting substantial control efforts. *'Asian hornets prey on a wide range of insects, including honey bees, but little is known about their impact on other pollinators,'* said Thomas O'Shea-Wheller, of the Environment and Sustainability Institute on Exeter's Penryn Campus in Cornwall. *'With honey bees, the hornets do something called "hawking"—hovering outside the bees' nest and attacking returning foragers as they fly past. We recorded hornets doing the same thing to bumble bees, but with the surprising difference that in our observations, they were entirely unsuccessful.'*

In the study, commercially reared bumble bee colonies were placed at 12 locations across the province of Pontevedra, Spain with varying local Asian hornet densities. Colonies were weighed every two days (weight change is a measure of colony growth) and those in areas with higher Asian hornet densities grew more slowly. *'We can't say for certain why this is,'* O'Shea-Wheller said. *'It's possible that some external factor is good for Asian hornets, allowing them to thrive, but bad for bumble bees. However, it's perhaps more likely that the presence of Asian hornets limits the success of bumble bee colonies. Although the attacks we witnessed at colony entrances were unsuccessful, bumble bees have been reported in the diet of Asian hornets, and the hornets are known to prey on them elsewhere. Furthermore, defending against such attacks is likely energetically costly—and when hornet abundance is high, this could be a major problem for bees out foraging. Hornets also consume nectar from flowers, meaning they compete directly with bees for food and harass them at flower patches via constant attacks.'*

Commenting on the hornets' low success rate during attacks, O'Shea-Wheller said, *'I have seen hornets attack bumble bees of all sizes, including some that are larger than them. They are very persistent and generalist predators, so these attacks may still be worthwhile despite the high failure rate, as long as they sometimes get a kill.'* Buff-tailed bumble bees (*Bombus terrestris*) have not evolved alongside Asian hornets (*Vespa velutina*), so O'Shea-Wheller said their successful defensive strategy may well be an *'evolutionary coincidence.'* *'While honey bees are often unable to escape the clutches of Asian hornets once grappled in the air, the bumble bees' defensive response of dropping to the ground appears to be more successful,'* he said. In addition to the University of Exeter, the research team included scientists from the University of Vigo and the University of Santiago de Compostela.

Edited article courtesy of Lune Valley Beekeepers via ebees

BB Wear Christmas Discount



BB Wear is offering Christmas discounts to WSBKA members on their bee wear.



- 10% off of the Ultra Bee Suit
- 20% off of the Polycotton Full Suits and Polycotton Gauntlets
- 30% off of the Polycotton Jackets, Ultra Gauntlets, and range of gloves

Visit the website for full details and to purchase www.bbwear.co.uk/shop/christmas-offers

WSBKA does not endorse this product but passes the offer onto members for their information.

BeeBase Annual Hive Count

Please don't forget this year's Hive Count!

To update your BeeBase record, click on the link www.nationalbeeunit.com/hive-count/. Log in and submit your response by 31st December 2023. It is important that you update your record, even if this is to confirm that you currently have no colonies.



If you have any further questions, please visit the Hive Count page on BeeBase www.nationalbeeunit.com/bees-and-the-law/hive-count/ or contact us at Hive.count@apha.gov.uk

Thank you for your assistance

National Bee Unit



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

BBKA News Update

Microscopy Training

The following 2024 courses will take place at the BBKA offices, Stoneleigh and are now available for members to book:

'One day Microscopy Beginners' Course', cost £75 - Saturday 3rd February or Sunday 4th February.

'Two day Intermediate Microscopy', cost £150 - Saturday & Sunday 10th-11th February.

For more details and to book a place go to the BBKA website:

www.bbka.org.uk/pages/shop/department/training-courses and for any other questions please contact Sharon Brooks: sharon.brooks@bbka.org.uk



Your talks about Beekeeping to the Wider Community

The Education & Husbandry Committee would like to hear from members who give talks about beekeeping. E&H are seeking to develop and share resources that might be useful to anyone giving talks to the public. To help them understand what resources would be useful, please answer a few questions in the survey: <https://forms.gle/Qsk6nptmE3H3nrQa7>

BBKA Vacancy

The BBKA is seeking to recruit an **Outreach Officer** with an initial focus on the Asian hornet. The purpose of the role is to identify, make and maintain contact with organisations or other target audiences that can help the BBKA tackle key issues which impact honey bees and/or are of concern to beekeepers.

The initial focus of the role will be the Asian hornet but could at times switch to other key issues for the BBKA such as honey authenticity or neonicotinoids.

The officer will have at least 3 years' experience working in an Outreach, Communications or Marketing role including direct customer contact and be a strong communicator (written and verbal) who is comfortable making initial contact with new organisations.

This is a rolling 12 month contract on a self-employed basis, working from home or the BBKA office at Stoneleigh. Communication with BBKA staff and Trustees during normal office working hours is essential. Part-time hours: 25 hours per week for the first three months reducing to an average of 15 hours spread over the year. It is noted that this time may peak during the spring and autumn months.

Rate of pay: £15/hour.

For a full job description and an application form please email Leigh Sidaway: gen.manager@bbka.org.uk.

Diane Drinkwater

Chair, BBKA



New UK Coins

New coins have recently been released by the Royal Mint. This set of eight coins range from 1p to £2 and feature designs of British flora and fauna reflecting the King's interest in the environment and conservation.

This collection includes the bee on the £1 coin - although this is probably a stylised design of the bumble bee.



Measuring the Moisture Content of Honey

As seen in a recent BBKA News from Somerset BKA's, Joe Bleasdale.

An easy and accurate way to measure the moisture content of your honey is by checking its density.

1. Weigh a full jar of honey (H)
2. Weigh the same type of jar empty (J)
3. Weigh it full of water (W)

$$\text{DENSITY} = (H - J) / (W - J)$$

Honey should be over 1.45kg/litre

It works!



Chairman's Chat



Chairman, Roger Patterson writes for the *County News*.



WSBKA '*County News*' was started many years ago because there were items of information that came to the secretary by post that needed to be distributed to members. These were copied, then posted to Divisional secretaries, who passed them on to newsletter editors. A process that is considered very long-winded today. Since then, electronic communication has meant that members often have access to information from a variety of sources that weren't available in the past. An example is updates from the NBU regarding Asian hornets, that can now be sent direct to beekeepers very quickly. In addition, *BBKA News* now publishes BBKA related matters.

The WSBKA executive committee (made up of representatives from the Divisions) recently discussed if there is still a need for *County News*. It was agreed that although it no longer satisfies the original purpose, it still serves as a good reminder to all members of the existence of WSBKA, that gives us representation to BBKA through our county BKA. It was decided to keep *County News*, **but it needs articles and snippets from members.**

Roger

chairman@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



Remember to recycle your used postage stamps from all those Christmas cards to support the work of Canine Partners in Heyshott.

For full details and where to send your stamps:
caninepartners.org.uk/recycle-used-postage-stamps/



This year's Carol Service at Arundel Cathedral will be on **Thursday 14th December**. For full details visit Canine Partners website:
<https://caninepartners.org.uk/event/carol-service-arundel/>

Around the Divisions

All Members are welcome to attend any Divisional meeting, but please advise the organiser if you plan to attend.



Central Sussex Division



Wednesday 6th December - 'Swarm Collection' with Dr Nadia Ziyada at the Millennium Hall, Crawley Road, Roffey, Horsham, RH12 4DT from 7pm. Full details of the Division's activities from: secretary@centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk or the Division's website: <https://centralsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Chichester Division



Wednesday 6th December - 'Christmas Social and Honey Tasting' at 7:30pm, Boxgrove Village Hall, The Street, Boxgrove, PO18 OEE. Further details of the Division's activities from: Cheryl Barton, secretary@chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk or the Division's website: www.chichesterbeekeepers.co.uk.

Wisborough Green Division

Full details of the Division's activities from: Martina Hendry, secretary@wgbka.org.uk or the Division's website: www.wgbka.org.uk.

Newsletters may be viewed here: www.wgbka.org.uk/Newsletters.html

Worthing Division



Thursday 14th December - 'Christmas Social' at the Glebelands Centre, Greystoke Road, Ferring, BN12 5JL at 7:45pm. The speaker is Daisy Day, 'Tips for Winter and Bee Folklore'. Further details of the Division's activities from: Debra Edwards, dmcd.edwards@gmail.com or the Division's website: www.worthing-beekeepers.org

'Share your Division's activities with readers of the County News'

...and Dates for your 2024 Diary



Saturday 24th February - 'West Sussex Beekeepers' Annual Convention'. From 9:30am at Lodge Hill, Pulborough, RH20 1LZ. www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/convention.html

Saturday 27th April - 'West Sussex Beekeepers' 48th Bee Market & Auction'. From 8:30am at Brinsbury Campus, Pulborough, RH20 1DL. www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/auction.html



Friday 12th - Sunday 14th April - '150 years of the BBKA. Spring Convention', Harper Adams University, Shropshire, TF10 8NB. www.bbka.org.uk/pages/category/about-spring-convention

We are on facebook so if you would like your events featured please send details to the Editor.



...and finally

Noochii Hive Launched at the NHS



www.noochiihive.com

I suspect many of you will have seen the Noochii Hive at the National Honey Show.

This is made in Chelmsford in Essex using Accoya wood www.accoya.com/uk/ which is guaranteed for 50 years outside without paint or treatment.

It is a long hive and could be considered the Rolls Royce of the beehive with a price tag to match!

However, the manufacturer, Mark Meadows is offering Association members free delivery and assistance with installation. He will also demonstrate the hive to any Divisions that are interested in knowing more.

Full details on their website.

Please note that the Association does not endorse this hive but passes on details for the benefit and interest of members.

MEMBERS' COUNTY NEWSLETTER

Thanks to all this month's contributors. If you don't have access to the internet and want further details of anything in this newsletter, please contact the Editor & County Secretary. Likewise, if you would like to contribute to future newsletters please send articles and photographs to:

Graham Elliott, Editor & County Secretary, no later than the 20th of the preceding month.
secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk

We're on the web:

www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



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Previous newsletters from the last 12 months are available on the website.

