

Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers

A DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

AGM & HONEY SHOW
Wednesday 21 February, 7pm

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2024

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EDITORIAL



Peacehaven, January 2024. Photo: Danny Race

Spring is springing

Despite the early signs of spring already upon us—longer days and very early buds and flowers—we can still be grateful for the cold snap in January. This will have helped reset the ecosystem and, I hope, thin out the numbers of Asian hornet queens that are probably hibernating somewhere in our patch.

More on the AH later in the newsletter where we have [a chunky report from Normandy](#) on what it's like living with the Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) and how they're dealing with the situation. There's lots there we can learn from—and we'll need to.

So next month we have a further feature on the topic of Asian hornet trapping. Together with the preparations being made by the BBKA, we should be ready...

Closer to home, this is a tricky time of year. We have to balance our urge to check on the bees with the need to avoid

disturbing them and so forcing them to break the cluster.

Yet I'm not alone in having a fairly heavy colony loss over the winter as a result of the warm but very wet weather in December combined with high winds. I hope yours came through better than mine.

AGM & Honey Show on 21st Feb

This is also the season for thinking and planning ahead—and for having some fun. Entries for the Honey Show are due by 6 February so get weaving if you want to enter. I look forward to seeing you there.

Spring Convention

This time last year, I decided to attend the [BBKA Spring Convention](#) for the first time, and I'm glad I did. So glad in fact that I plan to go again this year. Not only is the price a bargain for three nights accommodation with superb catering included—Harper Adams University rightly prides itself on the quality of its food—but three days of talking about bees plus a trade show should satisfy even the most avid beek.

Newsletter re-design

PS: the newsletter underwent a subtle re-design last month. If you noticed, award yourself a gold star and a big tick!

Manek Dubash, Editor

EVENTS

- Meetings and more
- See [back page](#) for details

NEXT MONTH

- AGM & Honey Show
- Seasonal hints & tips
- News updates
- Latest events
- Asian hornet update

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS AND STORIES

Do you have interesting photos or video links you'd like to share? Or an insight from your beekeeping that would could enhance the hobby for others? Do you have skills that could be useful to other members? Anything else you'd like to see in this newsletter?

Ideas and contributions welcome; all contact details are on the [back page](#).

ONLINE



[B&L website](#)
[Facebook](#)



QR link to our website

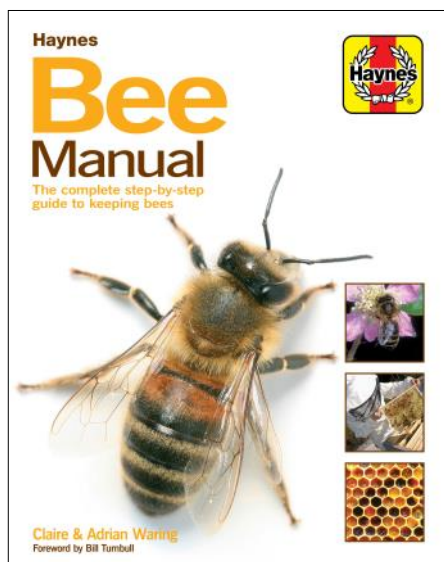
Seasonal tips for February

For the beginner

There's not a lot you can do until you get your bees, so go on holiday and research basic beekeeping.

Education

Knowledge is key: Training Co-ordinator Jude New is running courses in spring including an Introduction to Beekeeping for those still thinking about keeping bees. It's a full day, with guest speakers. For those who have been keeping bees for a couple of years, there's the BBKA Basic Assessment. All courses will be in Brighton and at our apiaries.



There's also a number of excellent books on the market aimed at all levels of experience. Here are just three:

- [Bees & Honey](#) by Ted Hooper: a bit of a dense read but highly informative.



British Modified National hive

- [Beekeeping for Dummies](#): less intense; ignore the bit about bears
- Clair & Adrian Waring's [Haynes Bee Manual](#): our teaching aid.

You could borrow a book from the our library: a [list of titles](#) is on the site, and you can email our Librarian [here](#).

Equipment

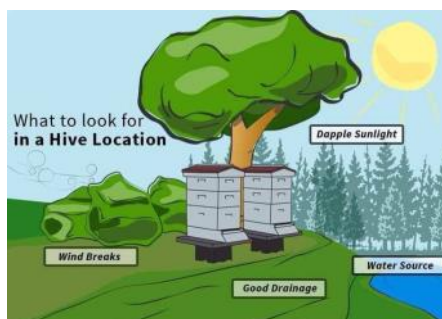
Where to start? There's a number of practical questions, such as the type of hive to use. Most use the Modified National design but there are others. It depends on [what kind of beekeeper you want to be](#).

Make sure the hives and components are readily available, or make your own. Stick with one design; some parts will interchange but not all.

Location

Then there is the question of where to site your hive. There are some [good leaflets](#) available from the BBKA. But in general, allow at least 600mm around each hive to give you space to work and to put things down.

Position hives so they can be approached from the side or rear. Face the entrance into a hedge or fence so the bees have to fly up above head height before orientating. Don't point the entrance across a path; bees are very single-minded and fly in straight lines, so if anyone is in the way they will get a bee in the side of the head. The bee won't be happy.



Make up hive and frames. Save putting foundation in until later but remember to do it—the Swarm Co-ordinator will be miffed if they ring you with a swarm and you're not ready.

For the experienced

As well as all the stuff above, there will be winter tasks to do.

Firstly, it's still not too late to carry out winter varroa treatments using oxalic acid. Either trickling a solution between the frames or vaporising the crystals with an 12V heated wand or gas burner placed at the bottom of the hive. Please follow the manufacturer's directions for each method and complete your Veterinary Medicines Record for each hive.

Just remember, if you didn't uncap all the brood before the treatment, there will be brood in the hive, especially as it's been so mild this winter so you may not get all the varroa.



From the 2023 wax workshop, where everyone had a great time

Cleaning

If you've not done it already, clean and repair your old used equipment from last year. I've just got the last two boxes from last year still to do (plus all the dead colonies I'll find later). Wooden



[Heleniums](#): bee-friendly flowers

parts, especially the larger bits, can be scraped off, then blowtorched or steamed. Smaller items like frames can be boiled in a strong washing soda solution and then rinsed in clean water

(Continued on page 3)

Seasonal tips for February (continued)



Heated wand for oxalic acid

or steamed. If you are feeling flush, burn the lot and start from scratch with new frames and foundation.

Polystyrene hives or plastic bits can be scraped; I use a Stanley knife blade, wash in a strong washing soda solution and rinse.

After cleaning, you're left with a pile of wax. What are you going to do with it? In normal years you would have taken melted and slightly cleaned the wax to a trade show or Paynes in Hurstpierpoint or some other outlet, in exchange for clean foundation. Or, as I've been promising myself for years; do I make candles?

Then there are simple cosmetics (see any article by Dr Sara Robb) or wax wraps (see advice on the BBKA site).

Feeding

Fine still days are ideal times to think of your bees. February is when the days start to lengthen, and the queen starts to lay, and the increasing colony can eat through the stores you left them last autumn.

So, when was the last time you saw them, and do you think they have



Fondant on the frames. Photo: David Evans

enough stores to see them through the rest of the winter? Lift the hive from the side or rear, does it still feel heavy? If not have look under the crown board. Have they eaten all or most of the fondant you put on earlier? If they have put more on. If you're unsure put some on any way. If they are hungry, they will take it if not they won't.

While you're there, check the hive. Are the mouse guards, if you use them, clear of dead bees? If the entrance gets blocked it can stop the bees taking cleansing flights which in turn could lead to diarrhoea or worse. If you use an entrance block, try inverting this so the entrance space is at the top, so any build-up of dead bees will be below the entrance.

Are the hives weather-tight? Is the mesh still in place to deter the Green Woodpecker. Can you still find the hive under all the undergrowth that has accumulated since the summer?

Planning ahead

Which swarm management technique? Will you raise your own queens? Why not plant some bee-friendly flowers? Usually most native annuals or perennials are good, or if you want something a bit more exotic, try something from anywhere that lies in the temperate region. American prairie flowers do well here.



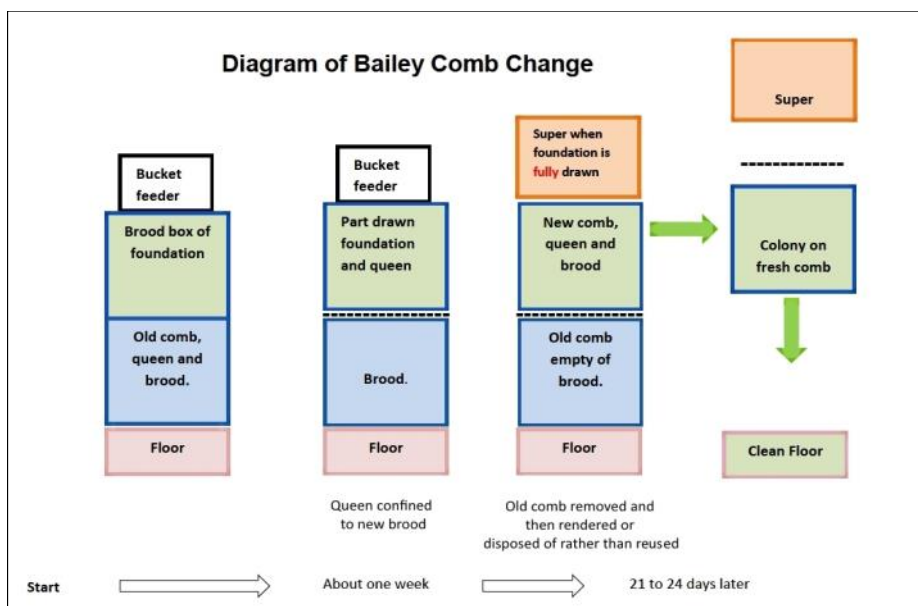
Frame cleaning, from an open-air collective session in April 2023

Do you need to change the brood comb this year, if so, what method will you use, shook swarm or Bailey comb change? Apiary Managers will be carrying out shook swarms this year as part of integrated varroa management, so why not come along to a meeting and see how it's done.

All the answers to these, and many, many more questions can be found in a library, on our, or any of the other beekeeping web sites, Facebook, YouTube or by phoning a friend or asking the audience.

Hope to see you later.

Another Veiled Beekeeper



Bailey comb change, by the Shropshire Beekeepers Association



*Graham Bubloz
Chairman*

Words from the Chair

Honey Show and AGM

This month we have our own Honey Show combined with the Annual General Meeting. The details for the Honey Show are here in the newsletter, overleaf, and on the website. These events both take place on 21 February. Make sure you put in at least one entry! Please try and come along to the Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Lewes (7.15pm for a 7.30pm start) to support us.

Volunteers required

We shall need someone from our membership to get involved on the committee for the next year or so. Bob Curtis and I are standing down and so also is Barbara Summerfield, who is relinquishing control as Librarian. Please do consider offering some help. Either chat to me or anyone on the committee to find out more.

Losing your bees?

I've been monitoring the conversations that are currently ongoing amongst some of the membership, and I know that quite a number of our experienced beekeepers are

experiencing colony losses. If your hives have survived: congratulations. I am sure that we all commiserate with those who have had losses.

Meetings

Looking forward to March, our divisional parent organisation (Sussex Beekeepers Association) is holding its Annual General Meeting. This is on Saturday 2 March from 1pm at Five Ashes Village Hall, Five Ashes TN20 6JA. Bring an Asian hornet trap to win a prize!

And we are currently developing B&L's meeting programme for summer 2024, so if you have any suggestions or ideas that would be of interest, please get in touch.

Spring is on the way

It's not long before we'll all be opening up the hives for a peek after the winter months, and so I suspect if you're like me, your time will be filled this month in getting equipment cleaned up and ready.

The evenings are getting lighter. I'm looking forward to the spring...



*Manek Dubash
Asian Hornet
Team Co-ordinator*

Asian Hornet report

Last month I highlighted the Asian Hornet Action Team, membership of which is open to all. All you have to do to join is [complete a simple questionnaire on the BBKA website](#). And you can complete it as often as you like until you get it right. There are a couple of questions whose answers aren't completely obvious but none of it is onerous. It's a 10-15 minute job. Please join if you can.

What does the AHAT do?

On Jersey, where the path towards eradicating or at least stemming the tide of this invasive species is well-trodden, they have found that public participation is critical to the process of finding nests.

Once identified, the hornets can be attracted to a bait station and tracked back to their nest, which can then be destroyed by experts.

The job of the AHAT is to help the public identify and report Asian hornets. To that end, I have a pile of posters ready to be put

up in public places and in house windows with the aim of raising awareness.

AHAT team members may receive a phone call or text from me or a member of the public, hopefully reasonably close to their location, asking for help with identification and what action needs to be taken next.

Put simply it's this: download the Asian Hornet Watch app. Possible hornet seen? Trap and photograph it; don't destroy it. Use the app to ensure identification. Report it via the app.

On a wider level, we're helping the public with the task of protecting the ecosystem, because of course the Asian hornet—*Vespa velutina*—isn't just a killer of honey bees but a wide range of other pollinators too.

Crunch time

'Look up', is the watchword for the spring, because that's where we'll find the AH queens building primary nests. Check your garages, sheds and eaves.

AGM & Honey Show: Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 7pm

The Annual General Meeting will take place during judging for the Honey Show.

Venue: Eastgate Baptist Church Hall, Eastgate Street, Lewes BN7 2LR

Invitation to submit

Are you prepared for the B&L Honey Show?

There is still time to make a nice set of candles, sort and select your best photographs and select put aside your best jars of honey. If you feel adventurous you could try designing a new label for yourself or showing us a new gadget you have made to improve your beekeeping.

New Gadget Class

The Gadget Class is new this year and will be run after the AGM. This is a fun class to show us how clever you can be. To enter, you need to have made an improvement to an existing piece of kit or designed something new that will improve your beekeeping. As long as it's your idea there is no restriction on what you can bring (but it must fit through the door!). You will be given

the chance to explain your gadget to the audience and they will vote for the one they like best. There will be a certificate for the winner.

If you haven't entered before, please give it a go, you never know you might be a winner. It's just a great way to improve your appreciation of your hobby.

Bob Curtis, Meetings Secretary

How to apply

Email your Entry Form and Photographs by Tuesday 6 February 2024 for free entry to all classes to Bob Curtis: poshpix@me.com

Bring your entries for Classes 1-9 to the AGM/Honey Show at 7pm. On the night entry fee is £1.00 per class.

Photographs for Classes 10 & 11 must be submitted digitally to Bob Curtis: poshpix@me.com

Schedule for Classes

- Class 1: One 1lb Jar Clear Honey
- Class 2: One 1lb Jar Naturally Crystallised honey
- Class 3: Two 1lb Jars of similar honey

- Class 4: One Honey Jar Label of your own design on an empty 1lb jar
- Class 5: One Moulded candle
- Class 6: One 1oz block of wax
- Class 7: One Honey Cake: As per the recipe below
- Class 8: Six Honey Biscuits: Your own recipe to be provided with biscuits
- Class 9: A wax wrap big enough to covering an orange or similar
- Class 10: A bee related photograph
- Class 11: A close-up shot of a bee
- Class 12: An invention relating to beekeeping or the bee hive (Fun Class—does not contribute to final point, and judged by the audience).

Prizes

Points are awarded for each class. The member with the most points across classes 1 to 11 will be awarded the Dixon Hurst Cup.

- 1st prize: 5 points
- 2nd prize: 3 points
- 3rd prize: 2 points

The Novice with the highest points will be awarded the Novice Tray, awarded to the person with the most points who has not won a first place in a previous B&L Honey Show.

The Best Honey Cake will win the Honey Cake Salver.

Rules

- All classes may only be entered by individual members of B&L.
- No entry fee for classes with Entry Forms received by Tuesday 6 February 2024, otherwise £1.00 per Class.
- Classes 1-3, 5-6, & 9-11: maximum two entries, only your highest score counts for the Dixon Hurst Cup.
- Class 4: One Honey Jar Label of your own design on an empty 1lb jar (max. one entry).
- Classes 5 & 6 & 9: The Wax must come from your own apiary.
- Classes 7 & 8: Maximum one entry
- Honey: must be from the member's apiary.
- Jars: must be unlabelled, 1lb glass jars with gold lid (except for class 4).

- Cakes and biscuits: to be presented on a plate and covered with cling film. (The Honey used should be from the member's own apiary or locally produced honey.)
- Classes 10 & 11: Photographs to be submitted digitally preferably jpg. Max 4MB; larger files accepted if sent by email. All entries remain the copyright of the author. Entries may be used in the B&L newsletter and website and will be credited to the author.

Recipe for Class 7

Honey Fruit Cake must be made using this recipe:

Ingredients

- 50g Honey
- Two eggs
- 150g SR Flour
- 60g Demerara sugar
- 200g butter or margarine
- 200g mixed fruit
- 1 tablespoon milk

Method

- Put honey, sugar and milk together in a warm place and leave until honey is dissolved. Beat in remainder of ingredients.
- Bake in cool oven for about 1¼ hours at 150°C, Gas Mark 2 (this time and temperature is only a guide).
- Size of round tin to be used should not exceed 7½" (19cm) diameter.

B&L hears about rewilding at Knepp



Neil Hulme, from the Knepp steering committee, gave us a fascinating talk on rewilding on 17 January. Despite the freezing weather, 27 members turned out to listen, while Ross Eager provided tea and nibbles (thanks Ross!).

Neil first made the distinction between conservation and rewilding, pointing out that both work, but the former is more expensive though can be quicker to return results.

Rewilding about ecosystems is not individual species, he said. The smaller the scale, the more management is needed, so large-scale and long timescales are best. Though it can be high risk, it is cheap—much cheaper than concentrated conservation.

Where to start? Semi-natural habitats shaped by people are not ideal,

as it can lead to loss of rare species which have grown up next to, for example, coppiced hazel. Low grade agricultural land, such as grouse moors are best. He noted that some golf courses such as the one at Pyecombe have wonderful pockets of wildlife, making them candidates for rewilding. Possibly a better use for a golf course?

Scrubland is a good thing usually, even though it looks untidy. It locks up carbon—4.8 tonnes annually per hectare at Knepp. It also promotes tree growth because jays and squirrels distribute seeds and acorns; the thorn is the mother of the oak.

Rewilding benefits include flood plain enlargement, water and air purification, soil restoration, and soil erosion reduction.

Neil then provided examples from [Knepp](#) how rewilding has developed. Herbivores have been left to their own devices, such as Old English Longhorns. They self-medicate, and deliver organic cowpats with up to 30 species of dung beetles and act as vectors for seeds.

Other species include Tamworth pigs, Exmoor ponies, Roe deer, Fallow



deer, Red deer, and beavers, the ecosystem engineers.

At Knepp it works financially too as camping and glamping are very popular, while wildlife tourism is a growth area.

Other income comes from selling meat—the law forbids leaving carcasses to be consumed naturally—plus income from buildings, and activities such as weddings.

The biomass of insects and rodents is now huge, with other creatures attracted to Knepp including bats, birds of prey and the famous storks. The dawn chorus is amazing, he concluded.

Words by Manek Dubash. Photos by Graham Bubloz

Isfield Apiary report: incursion of the rat



The Isfield shed in 2022, fully fitted with Apiary Manager. Photo: Manek Dubash

At one of my early inspections this year, I noticed an accumulations of empty acorn shells and rodent droppings and the occasional piece of chewed foundation in the shed at Isfield.

It was not until I found the crown board with a large section of edging missing and a pile of wood chips, that I had no option but to empty the shed and go through every bit of kit. I found

the culprit at the bottom of a stack of poly nucs.

A rat had enlarged the entrance hole in the nuc and made a cosy nest of leaves inside, having pushed a bag full of honey jar lids to one side. Total damage, a couple of chewed frames and sheets of foundation, chewed crown board, three shredded bee jackets, 72 jar lids and a poly nuc and the faint odour of rat.

So the learning point is: it may be worth checking your out-apiary soon for unwelcome visitors.

Queen rearing

Isfield was part of the queen rearing programme this year and we attempted to graft directly into plastic cells. We weren't as successful as other apiaries but with no developed queen

cells but it did give the participants a chance to try their hand a grafting. We also set up mating Apidea, again giving those present a chance to understand the process and practicalities of using them.

As early season prep for this, and to make sure that I didn't get any surprises later in the season, I checked the varroa mite drop last week and am happy to report that all three hives had an average of less than one mite per day, over seven days.

As I write now, two have succumbed to the wet/cold/disease. This was discovered during the recent round of winter varroa treatments using oxalic acid sublimation, vaporising the crystals with an 12V heated wand.

(Continued on page 7)

Isfield Apiary report: incursion of the rat (continued)

2023 roundup

Regular weekly visits commenced in late April and continued throughout the year. The original two hives were split as part of my swarm management programme, with one being donated to a beekeeper on the swarm list. The remaining three hives were joined, in late June, by a swarm. All four hives continued to thrive through the summer and I was able to extract a modest 30lb of honey. After the honey was removed, I treated again for varroa

using Apiguard and fed them syrup to ensure they were as ready for the winter as possible.

Apart from the specific activity of grafting, there were three general out apiary days at Isfield. The first in May was well attended but the latter two where very poorly attended with very few visitors, it was almost 1:1 at times. This led to a discussion within the committee as to whether Isfield, in the northeast of the B&L area, was the

right place for an apiary, taking into account the proximity of Barcombe.

In the event a new site was found in Rottingdean, and it is hoped that this will offer a better location suited to the members. All of the equipment and hives will be transferred to Rottingdean in late February (weather permitting) and I wish Jeff Rodrigues all the best for 2024. I will continue to run my own apiary at Isfield.

Ian White, Apiary Manager

Beekeeper required at Jamie's Farm



Lewes-based charity [Jamie's Farm](#) is looking for a beekeeper to help set up beehives. The following is what they're looking for.

About Jamie's Farm

Jamie's Farm acts as a catalyst for change, enabling disadvantaged young people to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. We do this through a unique residential experience and rigorous follow-up programme, combining 'Farming, Family, Therapy & Legacy'.

Summary

We are looking for a volunteer beekeeper to help set up two hives and oversee the bees, alongside working with our visiting young people to introduce them to the world of beekeeping and honey production.

This is a new project for our Lewes Farm. We are lucky to have a volunteer beekeeper at our Bath Farm who is happy to provide advice. We anticipate being ready to take on our first swarm from early spring.

There is plenty of scope for the right person to have a real input into

direction of the project. We would love to be able to produce our own honey on-site.

Core responsibilities

Responsibilities of the role include, but are not limited to:

- Choosing the best location of the hives
- Leading (once confident) sessions with one or two young people
- Helping source necessary equipment
- Overseeing the health of the bees

Requirements

- Experience of beekeeping
- Passion and enthusiasm for sharing knowledge and encouraging young people

Time frame and location

Ideally a weekly commitment, but we are happy to discuss what works best as this is a new role.

Address: Jamie's Farm Lewes, Allington Farm, Allington Lane, BN7 3QL.

What we offer

- We pay all reasonable travel expenses to and from the farm
- A delicious lunch provided by and shared with our friendly team
- An opportunity to utilise your existing skills and learning new skills



- Be part of a welcoming, vibrant team located on a beautiful farm environment

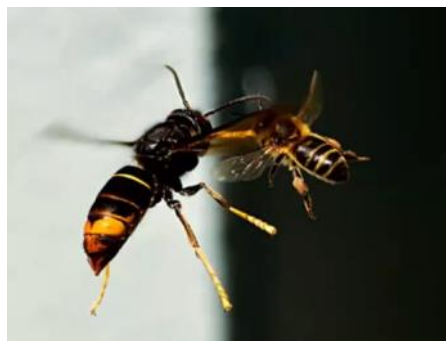
Next steps

Start date: as soon as possible. We would like to be set up and ready to run this year.

Due to the nature of our work with young people, on acceptance of offer all Jamie's Farm employees and volunteers are subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

To apply, please contact Jessie Thomas at jessie@jamiesfarm.org.uk if you are interested or have any questions. Suitable applicants will be contacted to arrange an informal chat over the phone/video call to get to find out more about you. Thank you for your interest.

The Asian Hornet in Normandy



Know thine enemy

The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) arrived in France about 20 years ago and in Normandy 10 years ago. Its numbers quickly built up and in Normandy more than 10,000 nests were officially destroyed in 2022. Just three or four years ago, a beekeeper might ask a fellow apiarist if there were any hornets around his hives but now



Hive in the Rouen area destroyed by Asian hornets

we don't ask that question because they're EVERYWHERE.

The aim of this article is to see what we can do to minimise the impact of the hornet on our hives. I repeat, only reduce the impact, not make it go away.

Hobby beekeepers suffer most. If there are only two or three hives in an apiary and the hornets attack them, it's often necessary to move the hives because of the level of attack the bees will come under. In a larger apiary, the effect on the bees is less severe because the impact is spread over a number of colonies.

From August, hornet attacks are most aggressive because it is then that the numbers of hornets per nest increases: there can be as many as 3,000 at the end of the season.

Asian hornet attacks

At the beginning of October 2023, we destroyed a nest which measured 80 cm in diameter and was more than a metre high. The bees stop foraging, staying grouped at the entrance in defensive mode and highly stressed. They don't go out and build up their stores for the winter and neither do they collect nectar and pollen. If you don't do anything and attacks increase, colonies can be completely eliminated, as the hornets don't hesitate entering the hive. The following spring you will find a very weak colony or even a dead one even though there had been plenty of bees in the autumn.



The start of a nest by a foundress queen

Spring trapping

From the outset, you need to think about trapping. The most important thing is to try and capture foundress queens in the spring—from March through to May. These queens were fertilised at the end of the season to carry the genes through to the next season and create a new colony.

A single nest can produce one hundred foundress queens; even if 90 percent die there are still going to be 10 or more at the beginning of the season.



A very selective trap



The bottle trap: it's non-selective and not very effective

Trapping is sometimes argued against by some—not by beekeepers—believing that natural selection will create a balance between hornets and bees, an equilibrium that took millions of years to achieve in the Asian hornet's native ecosystem. In the meantime, we're experiencing exponential growth in the numbers of hornets in Europe.



The entrance reducer

The second phase of trapping will take place around the hives that are under attack August onwards.

The most important thing to bear in mind is to use selective methods. The aim is to catch only hornets, not other insects.

The best traps can be 90 percent selective. The worst ones are only 30 percent effective.

Note that non-selective traps can become selective if a critical number of



A simple muzzle

The Asian Hornet in Normandy (continued)



Another way to make a muzzle

hornets are inside, because the presence of those hornets make other insects go away and attract more hornets due to release of the alarm pheromone.

Summer & autumn trapping

At the end of July, after the honey harvest, it's important to reduce entrance blocks on all hives.

These entrance blocks will prevent the hornets—not all of them because sometimes there can be small ones—from getting into the colony. They can also cut down on robbing between hives. Note that if there are drones in the colony—and there likely to be—

they will be prevented from entering or leaving the hive.

The use of a muzzle positioned in front of the hive is a good method to reduce the stress on the colony; stress is a major cause of colony failure following an Asian hornet attack. The principle of the muzzle is quite simple: you put wire netting on the hive that lets the bees fly in and out but not the hornets, which can only enter the hive by walking in.

The bees continue flying and the colony is able to build up its stores for winter even if the hornets continue to attack the hives.

The hornets tend to go underneath the hives and so as much as possible you should prevent them doing so by using boards or any other means at your disposal. Growing the grass long can help.



Above (3): the Jabeprode trap



A reservoir of water and washing up liquid is placed below the harp to drown hornets

Trap types

There's a number of trap types either for sale or that beekeepers have built:

The electric harp

This is relatively effective and any handy beekeeper can put it together. An electric current is passed between two wires 24 mm apart with a reservoir of water below (washing up liquid added to drown the hornets and vinegar to put off the bees).

The bees can fly between the wires without being killed whereas the hornets get electrocuted and fall into the tray below.

You need two harps for 10 hives. The harps need to be placed perpendicular to the hives, and one should ideally put a barrier in front of the hives to create a corridor which forces the hornets to go through the harps. The current is provided by a solar panel, and you will need to spend €40-€60 for a harp.

The Jabeprode trap

This trap is made up of two cones which forces the hornets to go into a box containing the bait. The bees can get out of this trap by going through the



The Véto-Pharma trap: cheap but not selective when used in the spring



The electric harp

The Asian Hornet in Normandy (continued)



Beevital velutina trap

holes on the sides of the cones. A piece of queen excluder is often added to allow non-target insects to get out. A trap ready for use costs between €40 and €50 but if you just buy the cones they cost €10 for two.

The Vêto-pharma trap

It's simple and doesn't cost a lot (a few euros). It's a plastic cup with two vertical entrances and a small roof, you put the bait inside, either made by you or sold to you by the supplier, and you catch hornets. Be careful because at the beginning of the season you can catch non-target insects, but in August there will only be hornets in the trap.

The Beevital velutina trap

This trap which is rather bulky is quite effective. It costs €38. All small insects can get out and there is no contact with the product (the bait) which is diffused by the wicks. The hornets follow the light and get trapped. They stay alive and their pheromones attract other hornets.

Only the European hornet cannot get out, just like with other selective traps.

A variety of cones

There's lots of them and one can buy them individually quite cheaply (a few euros). The beekeeper has to build a

trap which can be a simple canister (see the the Beevital trap on the previous page) or a wooden or plastic box.

You have to make sure you add a piece of queen excluder to allow the bees to get out and to prevent the insects coming into contact with the product.

Baiting the trap: spring

The answer to this question isn't easy because a product that works one day may not work another!

Usually at the beginning of the season, we use sweet products like the classic mix of one third beer, one third white wine and one third grenadine syrup (blackcurrant).

There are also "miracle" products that you just need to dilute in water and sugar. A mixture of water/sugar/and bread yeast give quite good results.

Baiting the trap: summer & autumn

In August hornets are only looking for meat products so give them what leftovers from a barbecue or fish. Melted wax also works a treat because it gives off the smell of the hive and attracts loads of hornets.

Conclusion

It's plain to see that we haven't seen the last of the Asian hornet and it's not straightforward getting rid of it. We are going to have to learn to live with it and to try and cut down its impact on our colonies. After 10 years in Normandy we can only deplore the way that its numbers have increased.

Each year thousands of nests have been destroyed but still their numbers increase. The authorities are now less keen to help pay for their destruction.

The toll on our hives was already heavy due to varroa and now the Asian hornet will equally take its toll on our bees.

Christophe Gautier

Translation by Malcolm Wilkie.



Various traps using cones

Editor's note

This article first appeared in the High Weald BKA's newsletter, so thanks to HWBKA for permission to reproduce it.

Look out for a feature next month on Asian hornet trapping.





B&L Events 2023-24

Winter meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Wed 21 February		AGM & Honey Show
Wed 20 March	Pam Hunter	Poisonous Honey
Wed 17 April	Francis Ratnieks	Ivy Bees

Next Bee Chat

7pm, Wednesday 7 February, Open House 146 Springfield Road, Brighton BN1 6BZ

Spring meetings

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Saturday 2 March	Sussex BKA AGM	Asian hornet talk
Saturday 20 April	Barcombe	Out-apiary meeting

Deadlines

Please send all contributions for the newsletter, **including photos**, to the Editor (details on right). Max. length: 500 words.

Copy deadline: 18th of the month before the publication date (except December: 11th). Email photos etc. for the website to Webmaster Gerald Legg (details on right).

Publication date: 25th of the month.

Disclaimer

The Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged by the Division.

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* Stepping down at the AGM