

2024 Surrey Yellow Legged (Asian) Hornet Report for Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM

This report is submitted to inform the wider membership of the Surrey Beekeepers Association (SBKA) of all the activity that the Yellow Legged (Asian) Hornet co-ordinators have been undertaking within our county, mounting a defence against incursions of Yellow Legged (Asian) hornet.

We are fortunate that we have suffered no known incursions of Yellow Legged Hornets (YLH) thus far in 2024

Thanks are due from all Surrey beekeepers to their divisional Yellow Legged Hornet Leads, some of whom have stepped forward and some have stepped aside during the year due to a variety of other commitments, but have ensured a consistent representation and action when needed.

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| County Co-ordinator | Helen Worwood (Epsom) |
| Croydon Lead. Deputy | Alex Haswell |
| Epsom Lead Deputy | Nick Fry |
| Farnham Lead Deputy | Julie Trice tbd |
| Guildford Lead Deputy | Becca Moore tbd |
| Kingston Lead Deputy | Avis Marshall tbd |
| Reigate Lead Deputy | Andy Robinson Keith Mackie |
| Weybridge Lead Deputy | Michael Main David Ramsay Andrew Halstead |
| Wimbledon Lead Deputy | Gareth Morgan tbd |
| Trustee | Tim Lovett |

Our focus continues to be on 3 key activities

1. Ensuring beekeepers are well informed about Yellow Legged Hornet
2. Informing the public of the risks to the wider ecosystem presented by Yellow Legged Hornet
3. Monitoring for and attending potential sightings to confirm (or not) the presence of Yellow Legged hornet.

A review of 2024 Activity:

Spring – In light of high nest numbers found at end of 2023 there was concern about higher risks for Surrey from over wintered queens, we started the year purchasing some Queen catching jam jar lids from colleagues in Kent and began monitoring in the South East of Surrey – principally borders of West Sussex. We were all relieved when no queens were lured to our monitoring stations

Summer – Monitoring continued in areas where we feel we have more vulnerability. The summer fair event schedule gave us a number of great opportunities to engage the public in conversations about knowing insects better to aid more successful identification and reporting. Over the course of the year with the help of many volunteers from across Surrey and neighbouring associations we attended some “county scale” events, including 2 at the Ardingly Show ground, RHS Wisley as well as many more local events.

Autumn – We secured 20 free “nest sweepers” to trial across the county. These were shared by the divisions (each has a minimum of 2) and proved useful in spraying bait into the air to get monitoring started. We've given our feedback to the manufacturers so are confident newer versions made available for sale in future will be even more efficient at attracting insects to a monitoring point.

We also became more active in using ER2 (the BBKA Membership system) to record the locations of monitors and the stations they put out. This has given us a credible position in feeding back to the BDI team our experiences of using the system and gives us the opportunity to influence further developments to make it easier to use in future.

Increasing liaison with BBKA secured support for more awareness raising activity in Surrey. Initially via a BBC South East radio interview during “Asian Hornet Week” and later inclusion in the “look up” nest finding campaign in action now.

We engaged the leadership of SBKA in a conversation about creating a “funding pot” to ensure bait and monitoring tools would be readily available if called upon should a YLH or nest be found. SBKA leaders agreed to a portion of this year's capitation fee to be set aside to create a starter fund and also agreed each division would consider a one off donation of £250; the YLH team are grateful to Croydon, Epsom, Guildford, Reigate, Weybridge and Wimbledon for prompt agreement to this proposal. Additional governance for our work was agreed via the appointment of Tim Lovett to assist as an SBKA trustee representative. The establishment of this fund is important in ensuring activity can be promptly funded and enables us to take advantage of purchasing at scale. We have made our first purchase from it and secured 5 “triple” blocks of insects set in resin. These support a visual comparison of YLH to European Hornets and a wasp – the more common reference point for the public in accurate identification. These will be distributed to divisions and the remaining 3 will follow once a supply of undamaged YLH can be secured.

Winter - Planning ahead for 2025

We await the NBU report on nest analysis from the 23 nests destroyed up to end of October. Early indications are encouraging that there is no DNA relatedness to 2023 nests and hence no native breeding population of YLH. This will inform our approach to monitoring / trapping for spring queens in early 2025.

The Map of 1 km squares across Surrey shows there are very many more squares requiring a monitor than with an active monitor in situ and ready to go when called upon. We must not under estimate the scale of the task ahead of us – Surrey covers approximately 1700 KM², with an SBKA membership of roughly 1,000 members we can cover about half of the required area at the target density of 1 trap/ monitoring station per km². A top priority for us all in 2025 will be to “fill the gaps”. Please talk to your divisional YLH co-ordinator and claim a square that is convenient for you to monitor. Once we have a clear picture of what Beekeepers can cover we can call on the public and organisations to help us fill the gaps.

In 2025 we are developing plans for more bigger and better “Asian Hornet Roadshows” to further inform and educate the wider public about the nuisance and ecological impact this predator will have if it becomes established.

We continue to encourage all divisions to share the monthly AHAT newsletter, so we are all kept regularly informed and we encourage all members to read the newsletter and stay aware of the very fluid situation keeping this invasive insect out of Surrey for as long as we possibly can.