

# Asian Hornet

Report sightings of this species:

- Asian Hornet Watch app
- online at: <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>
- iRecord app

Scan for more information



## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Vespa velutina*

**AKA:** Yellow-legged Hornet

**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.

Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. It has since been recorded a number of occasions in the UK. 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 Asian hornet is not present in Northern Ireland but the possibility that it could fly across the Irish Sea has not been ruled out.

The Asian hornet is highly aggressive predator of native insects and poses a significant threat to honey bees and other pollinators.

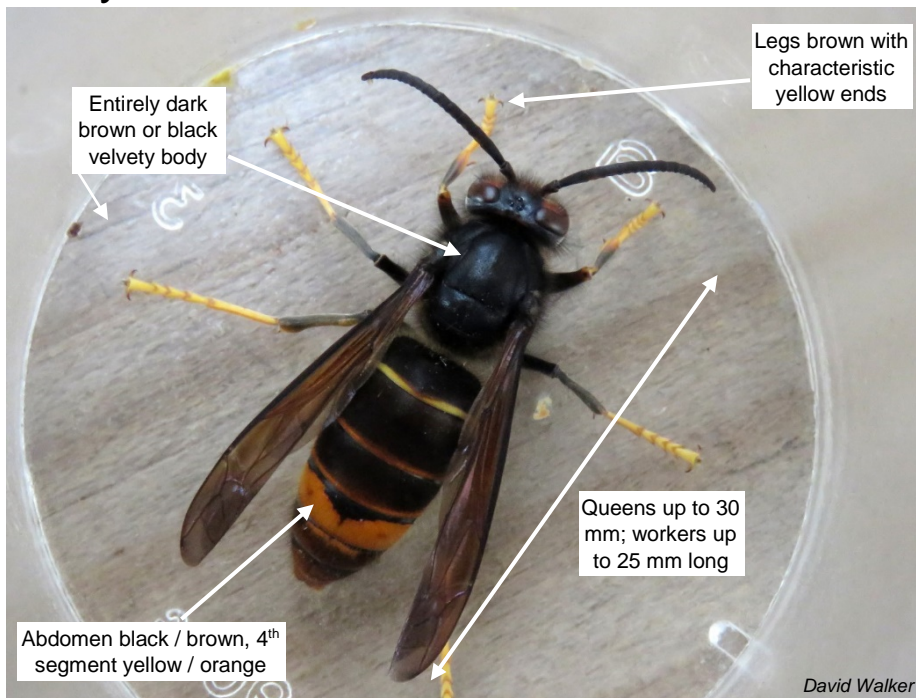
**Do not disturb an active nest. Members of the public who suspect they have found an Asian Hornet should report it.**

**Under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is offence to intentionally keep; breed; transport to, from or within Northern Ireland, use or exchange Asian hornet; or to release it into the environment.**



David Walker

## Key ID Features



David Walker

Asian Hornet



European Hornet



Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4<sup>th</sup> abdominal segment



J. Haxaire

Report any sightings via; The Asian Hornet Watch app - available from the [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores, CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>



### 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



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## 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



Roger Burgess



Mia Tonge, National Bee Unit

### Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)

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



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### Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)

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



Dider Descouens



Alvesgaspar

### Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

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



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## 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.



If you are a beekeeper living in Northern Ireland you can [register your apiary here](#) - it will assist us to circulate information quickly to beekeepers if you are already registered at the time of an invasion.

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*

Adapted for Northern Ireland  
Environment Agency 2020