

# Asian Hornet

**Alert!**

Report sightings of this species to:  
[alert\\_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk)

## 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.

Not easily confused with any other species. The only hornet or wasp with an entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band. Slightly smaller than the native European Hornet.

Not currently present in GB, but recently introduced to France and rapidly extending its range. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, 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 an Asian Hornet should send a photo to [alert\\_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk).**



## Key ID Features

### Asian Hornet Queen

Entirely dark brown or black velvety body, bordered with a fine yellow band

Only one band on the abdomen: 4<sup>th</sup> abdominal segment almost entirely yellow/orange

Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Queens up to 30 mm; workers up to 25 mm in length

Head is black with an orange-yellow face



Asian hornet "hawking" for honey bee prey

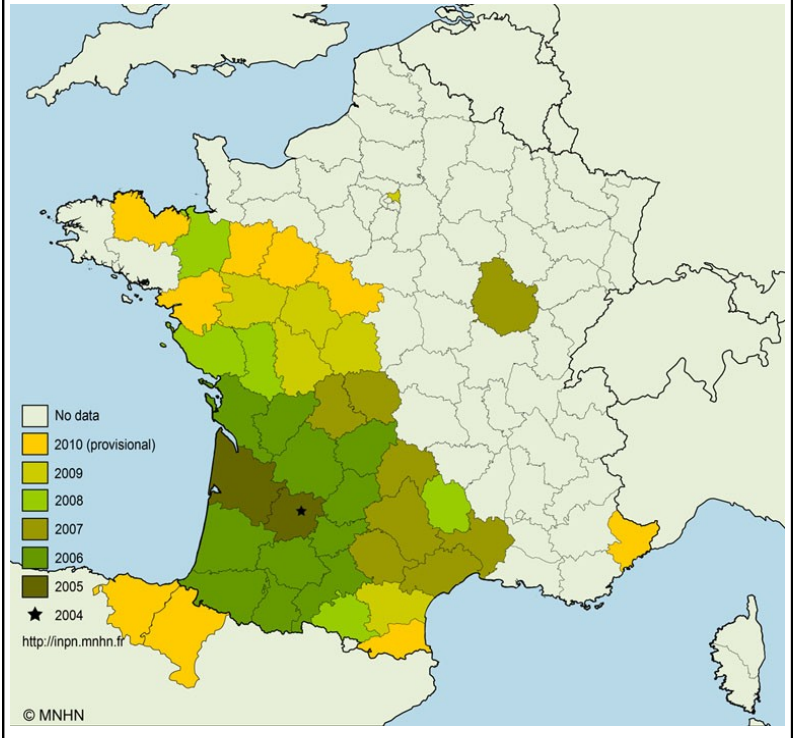
## Field Signs

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.



## Distribution in France and Spain



## Similar Species

Most likely to be confused with European Hornet. Less likely to be confused with queen Median Wasp. Main difference between European Hornet and Asian Hornet is the latter is slightly smaller, has characteristic yellow legs, a dark velvety thorax and a dark abdomen with a distinctive yellow band on the fourth segment. Asian Hornets are never active at night whereas European Hornets may be. Median Wasp queen is smaller, has some yellow on the thorax (unlike Asian Hornet) and lacks the characteristic feet and abdomen of Asian Hornet.



### Median Wasp

Non-native  
*(Dolichovespula media)*



### References and further reading:

- <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/index.cfm?pageid=208>
  - [http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info sheets 2010/08 Vespa crabro 1col infosheet.pdf](http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info%20sheets%202010/08%20Vespa%20crabro%201col%20infosheet.pdf)
  - [http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info sheets 2010/09 Dolichovespula media 1col infosheet.pdf](http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info%20sheets%202010/09%20Dolichovespula%20media%201col%20infosheet.pdf)
  - [http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info sheets 2010/12 Vespa velutina 1col infosheet.pdf](http://hymettus.org.uk/downloads/Info%20sheets%202010/12%20Vespa%20velutina%201col%20infosheet.pdf)
- See also the Asian hornet pages of the National Bee Unit website, BeeBase ([www.nationalbeeunit.co.uk](http://www.nationalbeeunit.co.uk))

**For more information visit:**

[www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)  
[www.nationalbeeunit.com](http://www.nationalbeeunit.com)