



Kent residents urged to 'LOOK UP' for Yellow-Legged Asian hornet nests this autumn.

Volunteers in Kent working to prevent the establishment of the Yellow-Legged Asian hornet - also known as the Asian hornet - in the UK are urging the public to **'Look Up'** over the coming weeks, to see if they can spot any nests that may have been missed during the summer.

As we move further into autumn and the leaves start to fall from the trees, Asian hornet nests could be exposed that were previously concealed by foliage. It is vital these nests are reported, so they can be removed by the National Bee Unit (NBU), who have been leading the Government's programme to eradicate the insect before it takes hold, as seen in a number of European countries already.

2024 has been the second worst year on record for Asian hornet numbers since the invasive species was first discovered in the UK in 2016, with 19 nests found and destroyed so far. This is below 2023's total figure of 72 nests, but the British Beekeeper's Association's (BBKA) Asian Hornet Teams, who have been set up to support the NBU in their efforts to monitor and track the hornets, are making it clear that that doesn't mean the problem has gone away. Kent remains on the frontline, with the vast majority of sightings and nests having been reported in the county.

Sue Knights, Asian Hornet Coordinator for Kent Beekeepers' Association, said:

"Now is a crucial time for spotting Yellow-Legged Asian hornet nests, as the falling leaves from the trees could reveal nests that were otherwise hidden.

It is vital that we know where these nests are located, so that we can keep an eye on the area for any queen hornets emerging from hibernation in the spring. The summer is over, but that doesn't mean we're resting on our laurels and we really need everyone in the community to stay vigilant over the coming months.

Next time you're out, please just take a moment to 'look up' in the trees around you - if you see anything that looks like a nest, please report it."

Tony Warren, Asian Hornet Team Coordinator for the Gravesend branch and founder of Asian Hornet Alert, a Kent-based community action group set up in the wake of increasing numbers of hornets in the area, agrees:

"It is clearly good news that there has been a significant reduction in the number of the nests found and destroyed this year and that's a credit to the hard work of all those

involved - from the vigilance of the public reporting sightings, to the members of the NBU tasked with tracking and destruction of the nests.

But the threat remains.

There will be nests out there that have not been seen and these will have gone full circle releasing queens for next year. The challenge now is to find these nests, which will greatly aid the queen trapping and reduce the nests for next year. They can be anywhere but most commonly high up in a tree. So please take a moment to look up, they will now be far more visible as the leaves are dropping”.

Yellow-Legged Asian hornets are voracious predators of honey bees and other pollinators, meaning their establishment here could have a significant impact on our wider ecosystem. They can be identified by their distinct markings: they are smaller than the native European hornet, with a dark body, an orange/yellow band around their abdomen, and orange/yellow face and yellow-tipped legs.

Secondary Asian hornet nests at this time of year can be up to 60cm wide and 80cm tall, and will typically be seen in the tops of trees, but may be found in hedges or buildings. Asian hornets can react aggressively if they perceive a threat to their nest, so they should not be approached. Instead, anyone who thinks they have spotted a nest should take a photo from a safe distance, and report the sighting on the official Asian Hornet Watch app (available to download on Apple and Android devices), or via the online reporting form (https://risc.brc.ac.uk/alert.php?species=asian_hornet)

More information on how to identify Yellow-Legged Asian hornet nests can be found here:

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Vespa_velutina_Asian_Hornet_nest_1.0.pdf

For further information: Kirsteen Thorne, BBKA Outreach Officer,
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Members of Kent Beekeepers' Association and Asian Hornet Alert are available for interview: please contact Michelle Elliott, AHT Coordinator for Gravesend and AH Alert, on 07734 467410.

Find out more about the Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet:

<https://www.nationalbeeunit.com/diseases-and-pests/asian-hornet>

Find out more about the BBKA Asian Hornet Teams: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-teams>

Asian Hornet Alert website: <https://www.asianhornetalert.org.uk>