

Alert!

Report sightings of this species:

- with the iPhone and Android recording app: Asian Hornet Watch
- online at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet
- by email: alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk



Yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet)

Species Description

Scientific name: *Vespa velutina*

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. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. A number of sightings have been recorded in the UK since 2016. 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 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 a yellow-legged hornet should report it with a photo using the details provided in the red box at the top of this ID sheet.

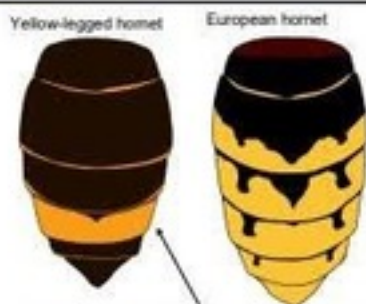


David Walker

Key ID Features



David Walker



Yellow-legged hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment.



J. Hazeare

Yellow-legged hornet, aka 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

Actual size



Q. Rome

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
- May be active at night

Actual size



Roger Burgess



Mike Tonge, National Bee Unit

Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)

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

Actual size



Q. Rome

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)

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

Actual size



Dizier Descouens



Alves Gaspar

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

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

Actual size (queen pictured)



Rasbak



Rasbak

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.



For more information visit:

www.nonnativespecies.org
www.nationalbeeunit.com

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Nests of similar species

Secondary yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet) nests may be confused with other wasp and hornet nests, or objects in trees. If you suspect you have seen a yellow-legged hornet nest, please use binoculars to check from a safe distance before reporting. See overleaf for details of where to report nests and find help with identification.

Yellow-legged hornet, *Vespa velutina*

Secondary nest:

- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- Pear-shaped.
- Entrance hole halfway up the nest.
- Up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.



Other objects in trees

- Crow and magpie nests.
- Mistletoe.
- Squirrel dreys.

Bird nest in a tree:



European hornet, *Vespa crabro*

Secondary nest:

- Usually in hollow trees, chimneys, rarely in the open air.
- Cylindrical.
- Wide opening at the bottom.
- Usually 30 x 60 cm.



Median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*



Secondary nest:

- Usually in bushes that are less than 2 m tall.
- Conical.
- Small opening at lower end, off centre.
- Usually 20 x 25 cm.
- Nest of a *Dolichovespula* species shown below



Primary nest:

Characteristic tube-shaped entrance (unlike primary Asian hornet nest).



Common wasp, *Vespula vulgaris*



Secondary nest:

- Usually on the ground, or in confined spaces in buildings.
- Round to conical.
- Small hidden opening at the lower end.
- Usually 30 x 35 cm.



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Yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet) nests

Many wasps and hornets, including yellow-legged hornet, produce two types of nest: **primary nests** and **secondary nests**. All wasp and hornet nests look similar. To identify a nest, watch for insects from a safe distance.

Yellow-legged hornet,
Vespa velutina



Yellow-legged hornet primary nests:

- Spherical with a small entrance hole at the base, usually 5 to 10 cm in diameter.
- Built in spring by a lone yellow-legged hornet queen, usually in a protected place such as brambles, a hedgerow, or in / on a building. **Only report primary nests if seen with yellow-legged hornets**

Yellow-legged hornet secondary nests:

- Pear-shaped, entrance hole halfway up the nest, up to 60 cm wide x 80 cm tall.
- Usually found in trees, may also be in buildings and hedges.
- **Use binoculars to identify secondary nests from a safe distance. Do not disturb suspected nests and retreat from any wasp / hornet nests if flying insects are observed.**

Secondary nests in a tree canopy in summer (left)



Primary nest. All primary wasp and hornet nests look similar. **Only report if seen with yellow-legged hornet.**



Secondary nest in a hedge



Secondary nest in a building



Reporting yellow-legged hornet (aka Asian hornet) nests and sightings

For assistance with identifying and reporting a suspected nest, or to help identify nests, please contact your local Asian Hornet Team (AHT).

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- with the iPhone and Android recording app: **Asian Hornet Watch**
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Find an
AHT:



Report a yellow-
legged hornet:

