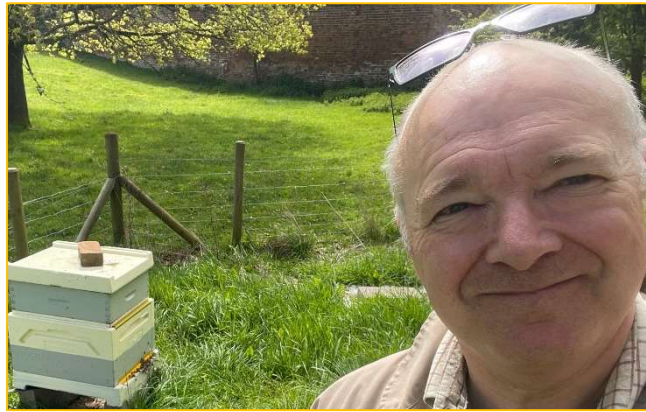


What are we doing to combat the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet Threat (YLAH)?



Happy New Year Wiltshire Beekeepers. I hope all your bees are doing well. My name is Tom Kenyon from West Wilts BKA and I am the County Asian Hornet Action Team (AHAT) Coordinator. You can get hold of me through ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk. The Association AHAT Coordinators are as follows. You can contact them through your Associations – from the top they are:

- Swindon BKA – Mike Carter
- Melksham BKA – Mark Powell
- Kennet BKA – Roger Allen
- West Wilts BKA – Me – Tom Kenyon
- Salisbury BKA – Patrick Curry - we are addressing this threat across the whole county and across our county borders

The facts

Before, I talk about fascinating YLAH factoids and where our plan is at – if you have a smart phone, please download the Asian Hornet Watch App – you probably already have!



Factoids: Across the UK in 2023, there were 72 nests destroyed (Primary & Secondary). 2024 – 24. 2025 – 161. We assume we will have an incursion in the county this year.

Pollinator destruction. In 2021, French Scientists in the Dordogne determined from a study of old nests; that a colony consumes ~90k insects across ~1,400 species, weighing 11.34kg of total insect biomass. YLAH is an amazing apex predator. This means of course, that they are not solely a beekeeper's problem. If we lose the fight, as is currently the case in France, we will have more than 1 nest/km² (Rural) and more than 10 nests/km² (Urban).

There will be "insectageddon": fly fishing will be hammered, soft fruit and grapes will be picked at night (currently the case in France), blackberry picking could be dangerous (currently the case in Jersey), within 2 years migratory songbird populations will crash – not to mention the well-publicised impact of a pollinator slump on the health of UK flora and fauna. YLAH are a major biosecurity threat to the UK.

What is the plan?

We are still in the process of patting one into shape. Wiltshire BKA will firm one up after the Somerset Asian Hornet Day (24th Jan) that most of our AHAT Coords are attending.

Meanwhile, as a County AHAT Group we meet in Devizes once a month. Currently we are taking our lead from the 2025 "front-line" experiences in Kent. This is summed up by Jackie Thomas's presentation to the National Honey Show: *Yellow Legged Hornet – So what happened in 2025?* (view it here: <https://youtu.be/iHdxGVU8bQk?si=wZsIA-9JLi1N-4D>).

Jackie's experience is reflected in Defra's decision to direct the NBU to not Spring Trap this year. [Yellow-legged Hornet - Spring Trapping » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase](#). This may seem counter intuitive (i.e. kill off the emerging foundress queens in spring and a proportion won't go on to create nests). However, Spring Trapping is remarkably unsuccessful and requires huge amounts of effort. 60 NBU and Defra Inspectors monitored 100's of traps across Kent and Sussex, only to capture 13 Queens by mid-May last year. Many of these traps were located around hot spots where there had been known releases of 100's of Gynes in Autumn 2024.

What are the main areas of our plan and what are we doing? Please note this is an outline of some of the avenues we aim to pursue and it is not exhaustive. The details will be refined and agreed by the County AHAT team in February.

High-level proposed plan:

1. **Awareness**
 - a. General / Public Awareness to educate hornet spotters
 - b. Targeted Awareness. Stakeholder Engagement – where we get organisations with land, assets, people and budgets to take responsibility for monitoring YLAH
2. **Audit of our equipment and attractant** (Bait Stations, Traps and Trappit stocks)
3. **Idiot's Guide to Monitoring Stations**, if like me, you have Gard'Apis traps but don't know which apertures to use and when. So we need to create a guide that explains how to use the traps and when to use Red and Orange nozzles to minimise by-catch, or we will do as much damage as the YLAH!
4. **Bulk manufacture of Trappit** – I have the original French gourmet designed recipe from Kent – it is very effective. We must have some home-brewing Mead-Makers who want to give it a go.
5. **"Actions-On" YLAH Incursion** – We need to produce a simple guide that explains what we do when we confirm we have a YLAH.
6. **Spring Monitoring**
 - a. Formal / targeted recorded monitoring – using one of the Mapping tools (AHA Catch or ER2 or an OS Map!)
 - b. Informal – everyone has a go at monitoring
7. **(All-season monitoring)** – For those who have the appetite / can locate a bait station near a hot-spot and have proven that it is not killing by-catch, this may be an option.
8. **Formal 4 week Late-Summer Monitoring Campaign**. This is from mid Aug to early Sep and is TBC. If there are nests in the County – this is when we pick them up.
9. **Test / Introduce the Tech**. By the end of this year, we should have tested workable tech for undertaking remote monitoring. We will need to find funds to purchase this in 2027. Hence, this year, we always ask organisations for money.

Building awareness

Awareness has several aspects where you may be able to help.

1. **Creating General Awareness amongst the public**. I know that the Associations have given numerous presentations to schools, gardening clubs, Village Halls etc. This must continue. I currently want to target YLAH Awareness at organisations that manage land and have people and budgets. We can train people in identification and monitoring, all at limited cost to their organisations.
2. **Targeted Awareness**. I am keen that we get others engaged in the fight against the YLAH, and that they become part of the solution (and not the problem): MoD, NHS, Rail, Schools, Facilities

Management Companies (FM), Haulage / Logistics companies, Garden Centres, Builders Merchants etc.

YLAH Awareness – what we are doing:

- a. Write to our MPs (I have written to and door-stepped John Glen – Salisbury) – I ran my letter past the BBKA Comms people – so have a good template. I could write to all the Wilts MPs – but we may have more traction with letters/emails coming from constituency members. Email me at ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk if you would like me to draft emails / letters on your behalf that you can adapt and send. Patrick Curry organised a meeting with Dorset and Hampshire AHAT Leads, before Christmas. This was very successful. Dorset explained that they would be delighted to present on the Ringstead incursion and talk through what actually happened on the ground – you are very welcome to take-up their offer Please email me, if you require more information: ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk . I am currently trying to meet with Cranbourne Chase National Landscape and have a good contact. We are also trying to hook-up with organisations that span county boundaries. I am trying to get hold of the Frome Branch of the Somerset BKAt to talk through how we police our western boundary along the A36.
 - b. MoD – we have some good leads into Salisbury Plain Training Area – these should come to fruition in the next couple of months.
 - c. Wessex Water – Again we have good contacts and these should start to come to fruition.
 - d. Wilshire Wildlife – they are on-board – we need to reinforce the message.
3. **YLAH Awareness** – other places where we need help include the following (this is not an exhaustive list). Are you in a position to make an introduction through your contacts?
- a. Contacts in Thames Water – YLAH have poor eyesight and need water to build their nests; water course are vectors for YLAH spread.
 - b. Other Water / Fishing clubs:
 - i. The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust [Home - Kennet & Avon Canal Trust](#)
 - ii. Canal & River Trust [Canal & River Trust | Making life better by water](#)
 - iii. Wild Trout Trust [Wild Trout projects, rivers, fishing, advice in UK and Ireland. WTT | Wild Trout Trust](#) – I fish on The Nadder – they have been helping us improve the river.
 - iv. Misc fishing clubs (fly and angling lakes) – I have presented to the Teffont Fishing Club
 - c. Railway lines (another YLAH vector) – GWR / SWR and Southern Railway. If any of you have any good contacts, please get in touch.
 - d. Haulage Companies in the county and informal “truck stops”. I have noticed that visiting lorry drivers park-up in laybys on the A350 between Westbury and Chippenham probably 2 hours after disembarking from the ferry at Poole. We need to see if we can monitor these locations. If any you know anyone who works for Docombe’s or any of the local haulage companies, please get in touch.
 - e. Service Stations and Lorry Parks on / near M4, A303, A36, A350, A419. We need to determine who owns them, who manages them and how receptive they might be to having monitoring stations. How will a positive hornet sighting interfere with their day-to-day business? Can we train a member of staff?... This is a project all in itself. Please, if know anyone who works in this industry, do get in touch. My target locations are:
 - i. Leigh Delamare Services Chippenham – M4
 - ii. Chippenham Pit Stop
 - iii. Tormarton – Junction 18 on M4
 - iv. A303

- f. Builders Merchants – If you know someone who works for / has shares in: Wickes, Sydenhams, Howdens etc – please get in touch.
- g. Facilities Management (FM) Companies. If you have any contacts in Mitie, CBRE Group, Sodexo, ISS, EMCOR, Amey, Serco etc – please get in touch. As part of their contracts, FM companies are usually responsible for Pest Control. They will sub-contract it, however, they, and their clients, have Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) responsibilities to their shareholders and their boards, and they should welcome a briefing.

The way forward

First, don't panic!!! We have time. YLAH Foundresses emerge from hibernation once the temperature is consistently above 13°C and have never been recorded below 10°C (according to Sarah Bunker). The first live hornet was found in Kent on 12th April and in Jersey on 5th April 2025.

The thin yellow line of Kent Beekeepers had their “finest hour” last year, and will have to do it all over again this year – to extend the analogy. Meanwhile, we are on the cusp of building an effective “Spitfire”. Thanks to the hours of PhD research by our European cousins, young scientists at Exeter and Southampton universities are developing some excellent tech. Currently the leader of the tech race is the classic beekeeper-in-a-shed-designed BuzzCopper bait station. [Home page - BuzzCopper](#). This is powered by AI and is being successfully tested. It is only about £25.00 a unit. A more expensive version may be able to be left in remote areas and will wake-up and send pictures to a phone. Hopefully, we are also on the cusp of developing a zero-bi-catch automatic trap.

This year, I see us fighting an analogue battle to keep a lid on things. Next Year cheap and effective tech should come on the market, so we can win the digital war and rid the county of YLAH.

Any questions? Want to get involved? Please get in touch ahat@wiltshirebeekeepers.co.uk.