

BOURNEMOUTH & DORSET SOUTH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter

September 2026

Chairman's Report

This has been an interesting beekeeping season and the period of very hot dry summer weather has reduced the nectar produced by the flowers and shortened the season. The supers are off and the bees could be hungry, so do keep an eye on them and feed them. Also, it is time to treat your bees for the varroa mite, if you have not already done so.

Over the summer we enjoyed two BADS social events. First the tea hosted by Natalie and David in June where we were entertained by their playful hens who were particularly taken

by my coloured toenails, and we enjoyed some delicious cakes as well as Brian's famous scones.

At the end of July, the annual BBQ at David and Helga's. Many thanks to all those who organised it and those who brought goodies. There we said farewell to Honey and Graham who have been part of the association for many years and are moving to be closer to their family. Honey played a key role in expanding the honey show and opening it up to the public, and she ran the show singlehandedly for a number of years. It now takes a committee of three to run the show plus numerous volunteers.





Honey Show Saturday 14th November at St Catherine's Hill Community Hall

The Honey Show is always a highlight of the beekeeping year, and the honey show committee are busy planning this year's show. Anne has recently sent an email asking us to think about volunteering on the day with refreshments, children's activities, setting up and clearing away etc. As you are harvesting your honey and wax from this year's crop, please put aside a couple of jars to enter in the show to make it even more successful than last year. Although last year's show had a record number of entries there were still only 19 out of well over a hundred members who submitted entries. Do look carefully at the schedule for this year's show and think about what you might enter.

Yellow-legged Asian Hornet

Many thanks to Conor for his regular updates on sightings of YLAH. This year there have been 145 credible sightings with 41 nests found. The latest update recorded sightings in Littlebredy, Dorset (secondary nest) and Romsey, Hampshire (secondary nest) – rather too close for comfort. Please be vigilant. This compares with 544 sightings in 2025 with 163 nests found. This is good news and an encouragement to keep monitoring and reporting. In this month's BBKA magazine it was reported that in Galicia in Northern Spain, with no active eradication policy the nest numbers went up from 2 to 25,000 in seven years! It is well worth the effort of monitoring and eradication.

Module 3: Honey Bee Diseases, Pests & Poisoning

As part of our commitment to education and helping beekeepers to improve in their knowledge and understanding of beekeeping and encouraging good practice, we shall offer a study group starting in late November to prepare people to sit the Module 3 examination in March 2027. This is a very important module and raises awareness of possible threats to our colonies.

Congratulations to all those who took the Module 2 examination in March 2026 who will receive their certificates at the meeting in September.

Coming up ...

Our monthly evening meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 7.00pm will start up again in September and we have a brilliant line-up of speakers this term starting on 15th September.

The new venue will be **The Centre, Ferndown, Barns Road BH22 8XH**

... see the next section for details of the speakers...



I look forward to seeing you shortly

Anne Jablonski

Speakers programme

Mead Challenge – Tasting and Teaching session 15th September

Can you make this? The more potential brewers the better! Followed by

If you have never made Mead, now is your chance to learn. Mead is a creative process and whilst we will be giving you a basic recipe, there is much you can alter to produce your own version...

Charlie Rowell, John Chudley and Adrian Rozkovec

Followed by

- **Friday 16 Oct 2026 - Skittles** - BADS vs East Dorset BKA at Hamworthy Sports & Social Club, Magna Road, Canford Magna, BH21 3AP
- **20 Oct 26** "Purifying and maximising your wax crop"
 - **Andy Willis**
- **Saturday 14 Nov 26 - BADS BKA Honey Show**
St Catherine's Hill Community Hall,
Christchurch
- **17 Nov 26** "Whodunit! The case of the winter losses"
 - **Dylan Gussman**
- **08 Dec 26** - Christmas Plate Supper with a talk by **Peter Darley** on "Bumble bees"

speakers@bads-bka.org

Swarms this year

You have probably heard the old beekeeping saying: "A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July isn't worth a fly." The message is simple: the earlier a swarm is captured, the more time it has to build up and establish itself.

Weather conditions may not have been ideal for swarming, this year. Swarming often spikes immediately following a period of poor or rainy weather.

Ian Warmer, one of our most active swarm collectors, having fun with a difficult to access swarm (still photo and video link below)



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Bee Hotels

I have been fascinated by bees ever since a colony of honeybees made its home in our soffits and later swarmed into one of the trees in our garden more than 15 years ago.

Unfortunately, our garden is too small to keep honeybees, so I turned my attention to making bee hotels for solitary bees instead.

Most people are familiar with honeybees and bumblebees, but if you look closely in your garden, you'll notice much smaller, furry bees moving quietly from flower to flower. These are often solitary bees.

There are around 20,000 described species of bees worldwide. The vast majority are solitary bees, while there are only around 250 species of bumblebee, 9 species of honeybee, and a number of social stingless bees. Unlike honeybees and bumblebees, solitary bees do not live in colonies. Each female builds and provisions her own nest, making them remarkably independent—and incredibly efficient pollinators.

Most solitary bee species nest in the ground. The female excavates a small nesting chamber, stocks it with pollen mixed with nectar, lays a single egg, and then seals the chamber before repeating the process. Other species nest above ground, often using abandoned beetle holes or hollow plant stems. They seal their nesting chambers with materials such as mud, chewed leaves, resin, or leaf cuttings. These are the species most likely to make use of artificial bee hotels in our gardens.

Among the best known are the mason bees (*Osmia* species). One of the most common is the Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*), which flies from March to July and is widespread in towns and gardens across the UK. Females use mud to divide and seal the chambers within their nests. Because they are exceptionally effective pollinators of fruit trees, bee hotels are sometimes introduced into orchards to improve pollination.

Despite their name, mason bees are gentle insects. Males cannot sting at all, and females will only sting if handled very roughly. Even then, the sting is tiny compared with that of a wasp or honeybee. This makes them perfectly safe to observe closely, making bee hotels a wonderful way for children and adults alike to discover the fascinating lives of these remarkable insects.

Building a Bee Hotel

There is no need to buy expensive decorative bee hotels filled with pine cones, bark, or oversized holes. While they may look attractive, many of these features provide little benefit to solitary bees and can even



encourage spiders, which build webs that catch the bees.

A simple design works best:

- Use untreated hardwood (avoid pine, as solitary bees generally prefer harder woods) or bundles of bamboo canes.
- Drill smooth, clean holes 80–100 mm (8–10 cm) deep. Do not drill all the way through the wood.
- Provide a variety of hole diameters to suit different bee species:
 - 4 mm
 - 6 mm
 - 8 mm
 - 10 mm
- Smooth any rough edges around the hole entrances with sandpaper to prevent damage to the bees' wings.
- Secure the bee hotel firmly against a wall, fence, or other flat surface so it doesn't move in the wind.
- Position it in a sheltered location, protected from strong winds and heavy rain.
- Face the entrance **south or south-west** so it receives plenty of sunshine, helping to keep the bees warm and active.
- Leave the bee hotel undisturbed throughout the nesting season and over winter, allowing the next generation of bees to emerge naturally in spring.

That's all there is to it!

For anyone who can't keep hives like me on their properties, providing hotels for solitary bees is one of the best ways to support them.

Why not give it a try?

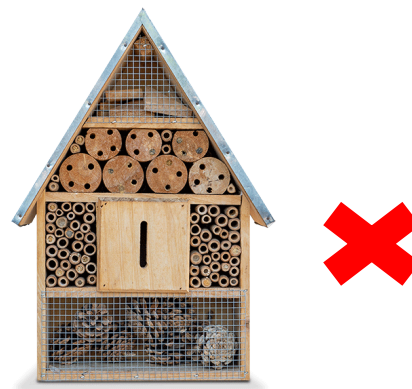
Once you start watching them at work, you'll discover just how fascinating these tiny pollinators really are.

They are as important as our beloved honeybees.

Jean René Grailhe

Further Information

- Bumblebee Conservation Trust – www.bumblebeeconservation.org
- Soil Association (Bees) – www.soilassociation.org/what-we-do/nature-climate/bees



Spot the Ball!

There's a prize for the first person to spot the ball-shaped **Yellow-legged Asian Hornet (YLAH)** nest in the photograph (page 7).

This is a **secondary nest**, built after the colony outgrew its original **primary nest**, which was hidden inside a small bird box hanging from a lower branch of the very same tree.

Need a clue? At the base of the tree you'll find a researcher from the University of Southampton and her supervising professor, recording the sound of the nest.

It's a **very** tall order!

It was probably only a matter of time before a YLAH nest was found almost on our doorstep. I can reveal that this one was discovered on the edge of a Southampton car park, close to a popular public venue. The manager of the venue understandably asked for the exact location not to be publicised, to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

I can't blame him. I still remember getting up 'close and personal' with Asian Hornet nests in Jersey, wearing a protective suit twice as thick as a normal bee suit, another padded waistcoat underneath, three

pairs of gloves plus safety glasses, while around 2,000 very angry hornets bounced off me, clearly determined to make my day very painful!

No two human voices sound exactly alike, and millennia of evolution developed our ears and brains to pick out certain sounds – for example, picking out a familiar voice from a noisy crowd. We believe the same principle can help us locate Asian Hornet nests.

The initial research, funded in part by **BADS**, has now grown into a four-year research programme at the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research, part of the faculty of engineering at the University of Southampton. The research is approaching its first major milestone: a scientific paper that we hope will be published in a leading scientific journal. I'll admit it's not the sort of bedtime reading that keeps you on the edge of your seat, but it will be the first published scientific paper of its kind.

We now know what we're listening for. We've identified the fundamental frequencies and harmonics produced by a YLAH nest. Just as every human voice has its own distinctive characteristics, a combination of two fundamental frequencies and associated harmonics appears to be unique to a **Vespa velutina** (YLAH) colony.

It is an important milestone, but only the beginning of what is likely to be a long journey.

The technology we are using - the microphone and recording equipment – costs more than the combined value of the cars we arrived in, so it will be challenging to turn calibrated laboratory equipment into a practical device that is affordable for the National Bee Unit, a department of APHA or volunteer Asian Hornet Action Teams.

But as the saying goes, *Rome wasn't built in a day*.

Now... back to the challenge.

Can you spot the ball? Enlarged picture on the next page. Please bring your completed entry to the September meeting.

Your prize awaits!

Adrian Dwyer

Dear Members – Your Contributions please

The next Newsletter will be in December 2026. I don't mind what you would like to send in so long as there is a bee theme...good or bad experiences, some ideas on how to do things better, anecdotes, interesting photos, honey based recipes.

Also, I invite you to send me the story of one of your mistakes! I have made plenty over the years and in this newsletter. Please contribute and don't feel embarrassed. If you want your piece to be anonymous it will still be acceptable!

Thank you

Adrian Rozkovec newsletter@bads-bka.org

