



The London Beekeepers' Association

LBKA News

August, 2024

This newsletter is earlier (and a bit more rushed) than usual because I'm going away for two weeks. Unfortunately, this means I'll miss our upcoming Spectacular Summer Social on 14th August at Bell House. Please get your £5 per head in advance for members and their guests – link in the email. We are also getting rid of equipment that is surplus to requirements (p7).

We also have Howard telling us what to do in the apiary (p4) and Mark telling us what's in flower (p5).

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Thank you to this month's contributors: Howard Nichols, Mark Patterson and Lucie Chaumeton. Would you like to join these esteemed contributors? If so, contact me. Please help make the newsletter better by providing content – photos, articles, advice, recipes...

Aidan Slingsby, Editor, services@lbka.org.uk

Announcements

This is our official place for announcements. If you only read one section of the newsletter, it should be this one!

August's Monthly Meeting and Pub Social

August's Monthly Meeting on 11th August from 11:00 will be our Spectacular Summer Social at Bell House (Dulwich). Food will be provided by the ever-excellent Delica Sisters and there will be talk by Stephanie Slater, Founder and Chief Executive of School Food Matters. The event is open to all LBKA members and their guests. **Please get a £5 ticket for each person using the link sent to you by email.**

The **Pub Social** will be on **Tuesday 27th August**



"Anyone know what's fighting one of my ladies on the lavender?". Photo and caption: Lucie Chaumeton.

from 18:30 will be at **Market House**, 443 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, SW9 8LN.

September Monthly Meeting will be on Sunday 8th September at the Royal Lancaster hotel (Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY), courtesy of our members. We will have special guest, honey judge Peter Bashford who will talk about showing honey at shows. We will also have honey tasting and ask members to bring some of their honey to share. The diversity in taste and colours of honey from across London is wonderful! We will supply wooden tasting sticks.

Apiary open day

Member Alessio Imperato is having an **apiary open day** on Sunday 4th August at 11:00-14:00 at the "Small Quarter" community garden, Croydon Rd, Mitcham CR4 4JA. Do visit if you can!

We're getting rid of equipment!

We have some equipment that's surplus to requirements. Please help take it off our hands for a donation - see page 7.

Looking for someone to help organise a honey extraction session

We're looking for someone to help us organise a honey extraction session. Please email admin@lbka.org.uk if you're interested.

Find bee buddies!

Members who "opted-in" to sharing their details with other "opted-in" members can see which members are local to them and their level of expertise. Feel free to use this to help establish local beekeeping buddies! See [the page in the Members Area of the website](#). This facility has been available for the past six years or so.

Extractors

We rent out manual extractors to members – email Will at resources@lbka.org.uk to reserve.

Members welcome to visit LBKA's Apiaries

LBKA currently has four (operational) apiaries: Battersea Children's Zoo, Brockwell Park, Hyde Park and Mudchute Farm. They are overseen by Tristram but each is managed separately. Beekeeping activity happens weekly during the opening hours below. All members welcome but we recommend you check with the Apiary manager before travelling in the [members' area](#) of the website [on this page](#).

- **Battersea Children's Zoo:** Saturdays, 14:00
- **Brockwell Park:** Sundays, 12:00.
- **Hyde Park:** Thursdays, 15:30.
- **Mudchute Farm:** Mondays, 14:00

See "members' area" for members' goodies

LBKA members can log in via the members' area on the website and see videos of past talks and meetings.

Old announcements from July

See past issues of the newsletter [on our website](#).

Gold award for Battersea Park Children's Zoo (with LBKA): Battersea Park Children's Zoo won a prize for their project: "Educational apiary in collaboration with the London Beekeepers Association". Special thanks to Annie for doing such wonderful outreach work through the zoo.

Old announcements from June

Congratulations! Congratulations to those who passed their BBKA Basic Assessment: **Elaine Ellis, Zoe Groves, Casper Rodgers, Geoff Everson and Georgie Herety**. We strongly encourage those who've been keeping bees for at least a year to do their BBKA Basic Assessment. Please sign up for Howard's revision classes which happen over winter.

Old announcements from May

Tristram on ITN: Tristram was interviewed for ITN for International Bee Day at our Mudchute apiary. He appeared on the ITV news, talking about bees and the threats that pollinators face from the Asian Hornet.

Do you have any announcements?


If you've any announcements for the next issue of LBKA News, please send to Aidan at services@lbka.org.uk.

LBKA's relationship with School Food Matters (SFM)

Following concerns over potential conflicts of interest regarding School Food Matters (SFM) and the LBKA committee, we have drafted another summary of the relationship between the LBKA and SFM. This was sent to all members on 26th July.

LBKA Trustees

SFM is a charity which aims to "teach children about food and to improve children's access to healthy, sustainable food during their time at school". Its relationship with LBKA has been ongoing for 7 years, with




www.nonnativespecies.org

Produced by Lucy Cornwell, Olaf Booy (NNS), Gay Marie, Mike Brown (National Bee Unit) with assistance from Colette O'Flynn (National Biodiversity Data Centre Ireland) Stuart Roberts (BWFWS)

Asian Hornet

Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alernnonnative@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. Dark brown or black velvety body. Characteristically dark abdomen and yellow tipped legs. Smaller than the native European Hornet.

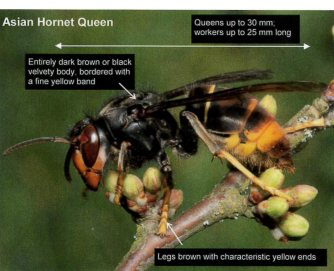
Introduced to France in 2004 where it has spread rapidly. In 2016 the first UK sighting was confirmed in Gloucestershire. High possibility of introduction through, for example, soil associated with imported plants, cut flowers, fruit, garden items (furniture, plant pots), freight containers, or in/on 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 alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Key ID Features

Asian Hornet Queen



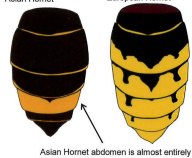
Queens up to 30 mm, workers up to 25 mm long

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


Legs brown with characteristic yellow ends

Photos from: J. Haxaire, Rachel Scopes and Nigel Jones; Richard Ball

Asian Hornet European Hornet



Asian Hornet abdomen is almost entirely dark except for 4th abdominal segment.




Asian hornet "hawking" for honey bee prey

Similar Species

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

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 National Bee Unit

Giant woodwasp (*Urocerus gigas*)

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

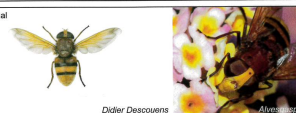


Q. Rome

Hornet mimic hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*)

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

Actual size




Didier Descouens Alamy.com

Median wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)

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


Actual size



Q. Rome

Field Signs

Active April-November (peak August/September). Mated queens over winter singly or in groups, in various natural and man-made harbours – 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.



Alert!

Report sightings of this species to:
alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk

£40,000 being given by SFM to LBKA for providing education to children. Initially, this education was delivered by volunteers only, but the workload became too high. So the beekeeper visits to schools were separated from visits by schools to LBKA apiaries, to avoid drawing too much resource away from our main remit, beekeeping.

LBKA set up a framework agreement in 2023 between LBKA and SFM to identify members willing and able to deliver beekeeper visits to schools on behalf of the LBKA. Due process was scrupulously followed and committee members wishing to take part declared their interest and removed themselves from any involvement in decision-making regarding this proposal.

All LBKA members were then openly invited to express interest in delivering this part of the program on behalf of the LBKA but under a direct commercial relationship with SFM. The invitation to all members went in the March issues of LBKA's [monthly Newsletter](#) (p2), sent by email on 10 March 2023, with reference to that newsletter item both in the email itself and in a message on BeeBanter the same day. Reference to the decision taken to offer this opportunity was made in the "March's Committee meeting" section of the same newsletter (p4). Providers of beekeeper visits to schools include committee and non-committee members, are required to have a specific level of experience, and their inclusion on the Framework Agreement is managed by a group of LBKA trustees who do not provide beekeeper visits to schools. The approved providers are paid directly by SFM (not LBKA) for delivering these visits. The fee for the visit to a school is £300 and if the beekeeper chooses to take an assistant then they pay them.

SFM also makes payments to the LBKA for visits by schools to LBKA apiaries. These apiary visits are run by LBKA volunteers who are not paid but may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.

SFM school and apiary visits meet the LBKA's agenda by educating London children and families on pollination and honey bees.

Please contact us if you have any questions or need any further clarification. It is very important to the LBKA Trustees and Committee that LBKA is open and transparent.

August's Committee meeting

Here, we keep you up to date with what the committee discusses at our monthly committee meetings (and what keeps us awake at night). Let us know if you can help or have any suggestions that might help.

Aidan Slingsby
services@lbka.org.uk

Since this newsletter is being sent early this month, we've not had this month's committee meeting yet.

August in the Apiary

Where we should be with our colonies at this time of year.

Howard Nichols
education@lbka.org.uk

Although the calendar year commences in January many beekeepers view the new beekeeping year as commencing in August. The honey has been taken off and the beekeeper is now starting to prepare the bees for winter. The objective for August (and September) should be to put the bees in the best possible position to go into winter. If the honey has not yet been removed and it is now "ripe" then this should be the first job of the month. The empty, extracted, supers are then put above the crownboard for cleaning by the bees, then removed and fumigated.

Preparing the colony for winter

A significant risk to the colony in winter having too many varroa mites in the hive. The most common form of treatment at this time of year is a Thymol based product such as Apiguard. This needs to be in the colony for a minimum of 4 weeks and is most effective when the outside temperature is greater than 15°C. Early August is the optimum time to commence treatment as the honey has been removed and temperatures are still above 15°C. Other miticides are available. Apiguard has a high efficacy rate for killing mites but it does need to be administered properly to be effective. It is also a veterinary product and so it's essential to follow the application procedure strictly.

Other winter preparations that may be dealt with in August

Sound and stable hive. Hives can be checked that they are on a stable and level surface. There should be no leaks or gaps as the hive must be waterproof and draught-proof to withstand the extremely testing conditions of winter. August is also a time of robbing by other bees as the nectar supply is scarce. Wasps may also be a nuisance and so there should not be any gaps in the woodwork where they may gain entry. There should only be one way into and out of a beehive.

Strengthen colony with young bees. Worker bees produced from eggs laid in August and September need to live for up to 6 months rather than 6 weeks. A feed of weaker sugar syrup after the honey has been removed and a varroa treatment effectively completed will stimulate the queen into continuing her egg laying whereas, otherwise, she will be decreasing this activity.

Other action to be taken this month

Entrance blocks. Use entrance blocks to help bees defend the colony against attacks from wasps and from robbing by other bees.

Check food reserves. Check that bees still have sufficient food reserves after the honey has been removed.

Unite. Uniting colonies where appropriate. A large colony has a better chance of coming through the winter months than 2 small ones. Beekeepers are often tempted to overwinter 2 smaller colonies with the view to having 2 honey producing colonies next year. This is sometimes a mistake. If you successfully artificially swarmed a colony then the artificial swarm and colony of origin can be reunited should you so wish. Alternatively, if both are large enough to overwinter then you may choose to leave and so increase your stock.

Protect and store supers against wax moth. If you have the opportunity to put super frames in a deep freeze for 48 hours then this will kill all 4 stages of the Wax Moth lifecycle. Take care when removing the frames as they are very brittle until the wax reaches ambient room temperature again. Acetic acid may also be used but special care is required as it is corrosive. Burning of Sulphur strips is another method. These 3 methods may be summarised as follows:

- **Freezing:** effective against all 4 stages of Wax Moth
- **Acetic Acid:** effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against pupae)
- **Sulphur strips:** effective against 3 stages of Wax Moth (not always against eggs)

My own viewpoint is that used brood combs should be burnt and that retention is not compatible with running a hygienic apiary. Conversely, super combs are an

extremely valuable resource and the beekeeper should make every effort to look after these on behalf of the bees until next spring.

Focus on Forage

Mark tells us what's in flower at this time of year. This article is the one we used last year.

Mark Patterson
forage@lbka.org.uk

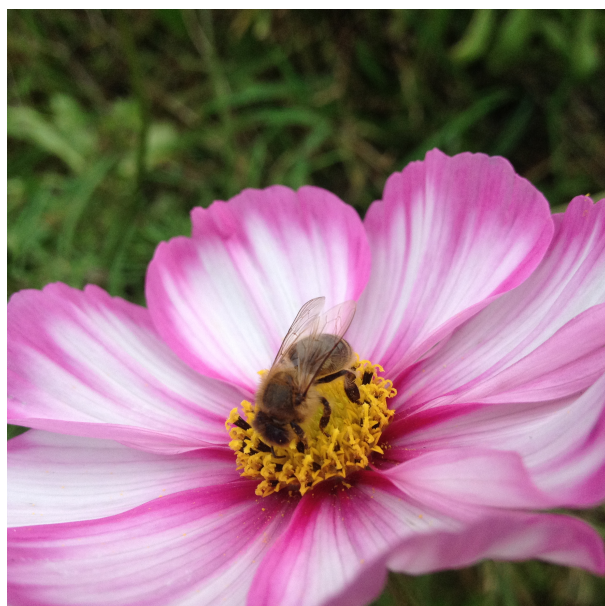
Late summer for the bees is one of the most desperate times of the year when they can struggle the most to find enough food to eat. Many people find this fact difficult to believe if the weather is often hot and sunny and presumably great for the bees but it is in fact often one of the leanest times for the busy insects. At this time of year colonies are large with many mouths to feed and as the beekeeper has removed the honey crop the flowers are also diminishing in abundance meaning the bees can struggle to replace honey which has been taken off. For this reason it's crucial not to be over-greedy and take all the honey leaving the bees with no stores for themselves.

Come late summer the majority of our nectar-rich native wild plants have ceased flowering and gone to seed, especially woodland and meadow flowers whose flowering period is in rhythm with the closing of the woodland canopy and cutting of meadows for hay. **Bramble** and all our native trees have also long since finished flowering and are now sporting fruits and seeds leaving little for the bees.

Away from **heather** moorland and **heath**, the only real bountiful sources of forage from native wild plants are **Greater willow herb**, **thistles**, **ragwort**, **bindweed** and **hogweed** – though many of these are early this year and already going over. Along water courses **purple loosestrife**, **marsh woundwort**, **water mint** and the invasive **Himalayan balsam** provide welcome relief but not all colonies are in range of such localised sources of forage.

Late summer is one of the largest gaps in forage during the beekeeping season and ends with the brief glut of nectar provided by **ivy** flowering in the autumn. Ivy is the last opportunity for our bees to stock up for winter and for wild pollinators a chance to fuel migrations south to warmer climates or for females to fatten up in readiness for hibernation.

Research conducted by our friends at the University of Sussex has demonstrated that honey bees fly furthest to find forage in late summer with record flights of 12km being undertaken in August. In the case of the Sussex research it was found that honey bees were flying 12km to visit gardens in town centres where domestic



Cosmos.



Helenium.



Sunflower.

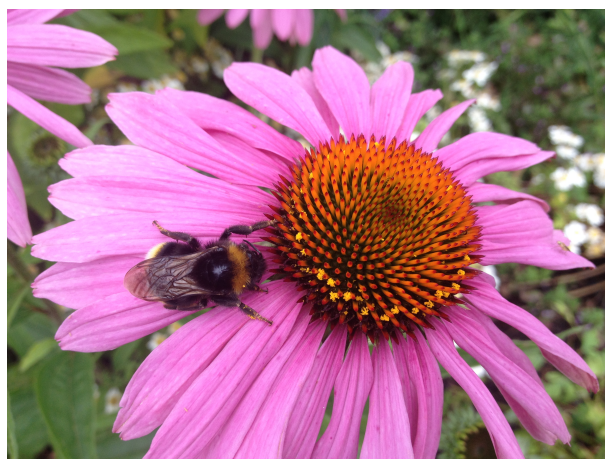
gardens and public parks planted with bee friendly summer flowers were providing much of their forage needs. This goes to show just how important our urban gardens are for bees at this time of the year.

Many garden plants that are great for bees in late summer originate from North America where they grow in prairie habitats and have evolved to flower late in the summer and autumn avoiding the extreme heat experienced earlier in the season. Some good examples include **rudbeckia**, **echinacea**, **solidago** (Golden Rod) of which there are hundreds of varieties, **gallardia**, **penstemons**, **helianthus** (perennial sunflowers), **verbena** – particularly the species *bonariensis* and *hastata*. Probably the most attractive of all the North American plants grown in gardens for bees are the **heleniums**. Known as sneezeworts these late summer flowering perennials come in a variety of colours ranging from yellows, orange and intense reds. They are a magnet for bees and very easy to grow even on relatively poor soils. If ‘Chelsea-chopped’ in June they can provide a succession of blooms from late July right through to the first frosts of autumn.

Other plants attractive to bees include the **South African Eucomis** or “Pineapple Lily”. These plants are bulbous sporting a rosette of fleshy green leaves in summer followed by spikes of pineapple looking flowers in late summer and autumn. They come in a variety of colours from lime-green to pink and purple, some with flecks of red on the petals and flower stalk. Bees relish the pollen and nectar they provide and they are very easy to grow, being surprisingly hardy for such an exotic looking flower. Other South African plants attractive to bees include **knifophia** – the red hot poker and Agapanthus. Knifophia have very long flower trumpets which have evolved to be pollinated by sunbirds. The flowers are hot shades of yellow, orange and red specifically to attract these birds which have very long bills and tongues equipped to pollinate the flowers. Whilst none of our native bees have the equipment needed to pollinate the blooms they can still extract the rich nectar from the flowers as it often drips and runs out of the flower trumpet and down the flower stem. **Agapanthus** are of limited usefulness to our native bees but the Common Carder Bumble Bee does seem to like them and I have often seen them foraging on Agapanthus in my own garden.

From South and Central America **cosmos**, **dahlias** and **zinnia** flowers are very attractive to bees providing nectar and pollen. The best varieties of course are the single open flowered types such as the Bishop series dahlias. My person favourite is “Bishop of Llandaff” with its bright red petals and dark centre covered in bright yellow pollen.

From New Zealand one of the best garden plants this month and widely planted in amenity spaces are the shrubby veronicas we know as **hebe** bushes. Right now hebe “Great Orme” is in flower on housing estates all across London and you can seldom walk past a specimen that’s not covered in pollinators. Later on nearer



Echinacea.



Golden rod.



Rudbeckia.

autumn the variety "Autumn Glory" come into its own with its darker purple blooms that persist well beyond the first light frosts of autumn.

From China the *Sedum spectabile* "Autumn Joy" is a staple of gardens across the country in September when its cheerful pink heads of flowers brighten up the garden attracting bees, butterflies and hoverflies in abundance.

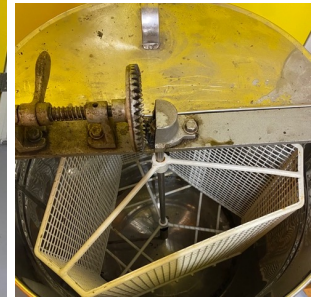
Another source of forage for bees in late summer comes in the form of overripe fruits. I have on several occasions witnessed honey bees sipping the sweet juices from bird damaged figs, **blackberries** and **plums** on my allotment alongside wasps and flies. This is probably not a widespread habit among honey bees nor a substantial source of forage for them but it's interesting to see how the bees do take advantage of the most unsuspecting resources during lean times.

This past week whilst walking down a south London street I came across a tall **hibiscus** bush in bloom that was covered in foraging honey bees. This was the first and only time I've ever seen a bee on a hibiscus bush. I have a beautiful purple flowered variety planted in my garden (on the burial site of my long deceased parrot who had purple wings) which fails every year to attract any bees at all and elsewhere I've never seen any bees on hibiscus. This bush I saw the bees foraging on was a white coloured variety with semi double blooms. The bees appeared to be collecting nectar but were getting a good dusting of pale pollen at the same time.

Members' marketplace

This section is for members offering beekeeping items or services to members or requesting items. Items could include nucs, wax and honey. Email services@lbka.org.uk to add something here.

LBKA: We have a offered the following for sale and there have been no takers. So we are now looking to give away to members for a fair donation. See the photos and contact Will Fry on resources@lbka.org.uk if you're interested in any of them.



Large 6 frame tangential manual extractor - EH Taylor (broken lid handle otherwise working well)



Small thorne tangential 4 frame manual extractor (requires small bolts to attach cage to bucket)



Large 12 frame radial electric extractor (presumed working order - drum out of alignment). (RRP: £900 new).



Electric stainless steel uncapping tray (presumed working order). RRP: £320).



Left: Burco water boiler - presumed working order. RRP: £100 new.



Small water boiler - presumed working order (needs a clean): RRP: £200.

Sunday 8th September: Monthly meeting: Honey shows and tasting

11:00-13:00 at Royal Lancaster hotel, Lancaster Terrace, London W2 2TY

We will have special guest, honey judge Peter Bashford who will talk about showing honey at shows. We will also have honey tasting and ask members to bring some of their honey to share. The diversity in taste and colours of honey from across London is wonderful! We will supply wooden tasting sticks.

Upcoming events

See our [website](#) for an up-to-date list.

Sunday 11th August: Monthly meeting: Spectacular Summer Social

11:00-13:00 at Bell House, 27 College Rd, Dulwich, SE21 7BG.

Our annual Spectacular Summer Social will feature food provided by the ever excellent Delica Sisters and will follow our special guest speaker. Stephanie Slater is Founder and Chief Executive of School Food Matters and will talk about the Programme that LBKA has been part of for many years. Members and their guests only and you'll need a ticket (see your email).

Tuesday 27th August: Pub social

18:30-22:30 at Market House, 443 Coldharbour Lane, London, SW9 8LN.

Our monthly trip to the pub will be at Market House, 443 Coldharbour Lane, London, SW9 8LN.

Trustees

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the committee if you have any questions, requests, suggestions. We are:

- **Chair:** Richard Glassborow, chair@lbka.org.uk
- **Treasurer:** David Hankins, treasurer@lbka.org.uk
- **Secretary:** Simon Saville, admin@lbka.org.uk
- **Education:** Howard Nichols education@lbka.org.uk
- **Membership:** Aidan Slingsby, services@lbka.org.uk
- **Events:** Annie McGeoch, events@lbka.org.uk
- **Apiaries:** Tristram Sutton, apiaries@lbka.org.uk
- **Mentoring:** Elliot Hodges, mentor@lbka.org.uk
- **Resources:** Will Fry, resources@lbka.org.uk
- **Asian Hornet:** Sharon Basse, asianhornet@lbka.org.uk
- Stuart Kennon, stuart.kennon@lbka.org.uk

Our website is <http://www.lbka.org.uk/> and the pictures are in the same order as the names above.

