

Appeal for wasp records

HBRG has already produced atlases for bumblebees and ants. We are now thinking of a companion atlas for the social wasps.



Image from <https://alchetron.com/Dolichovespula-saxonica>

One major driver for this idea is the northward expansion of the Saxon Wasp *Dolichovespula saxonica*, above, which was first recorded in the Surrey in 1987. It has since spread steadily northwards, and was in Highland by 2013. In 2018, it became obvious that it was well established in the north, at least as far north as the Cromarty Firth in the east and Oban in the west. We in HBRG are in an ideal position to monitor its further spread,

As we have only eight species recorded in Highland, two of them very scarce at best, it is a manageable group. We know remarkably little about the distribution of even the common species. To succeed in discovering more, we do need the help of our members, especially those in the more remote corners of the area.

How can you help?

To assist with recording, please collect any dead wasps you encounter, and record the date, place and OS grid reference. They can be sent (address below) either as they are found, or in batches at the end of the season – but please keep samples from different dates and places separate!

Live wasps are very difficult to identify in the field, so a body, or in some instances a good picture, will be necessary.

***Obviously, great care must be taken if you are around an active wasp nest.
Please do not risk being stung!***

If you are comfortable with taking and killing specimens, they can be caught in a tube – for example placed over a wasp on a window – and killed in the freezer. Before posting, leave them to dry in air for a few days, and wrap them in a scrap of tissue paper.

Queens should never be killed, as doing so effectively destroys an entire colony. Taking a few workers in summer will have no effect, and any workers or males in autumn are soon going to die anyway. Any that are swatted for your own comfort can become valuable scientific material. Just swat gently!

To give an idea of the scale of the task, only 4 of our 351 hectads have all 6 truly Highland species recorded since 1995, and 249 have none at all! Every square with suitable habitat should have at least four species.

So please help this project in whatever way you can. If you want to become more proficient at identification (it is not that difficult – all you need is a lens) there are resources and links on our [website](#), and I am always happy to help and advise.

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