

Name:**Hornet robber-fly***Asilus crabroniformis***UK status:**[UK BAP Priority](#). Nationally scarce (Shirt, 1987); declining.**London status:**

Rare (2 sites)

Protected status:

Legal; none. 'Species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England' (CRoW Act, 2000)

Relevant London HAPs:

Floodplain grassland; Acid grassland; Meadows & Pastures; Wasteland

Citation:

Robber-flies superficially resemble the more familiar 'horse-flies', but are slenderer and have very strong legs that are often dangled in flight. Both adults and young are predatory, the former catching their insect prey on the wing and then alighting to consume them.

The larvae live on the ground in decaying vegetation where they feed on other larvae. The impressive hornet robber-fly is so-named for its colouration and superior size, which together afford a passing likeness to a hornet. In spite of its threatening appearance - it is indeed one of our largest flies - *Asilus* is however, quite harmless to man.

This insect has declined substantially in recent decades, due largely to habitat loss through changes in agricultural practices. It is particularly associated with grazed sites, where the larvae prey on those of dung beetles. An important refuge has emerged in vegetated post-industrial sites, especially in the East Thames Corridor. In Greater London the hornet robber-fly has been recorded in small numbers at The Chase & Eastbrookend Country Park (LB Barking & Dagenham) as well as a site close-by in the same river corridor which has since been lost, and recently at Crayford Marshes (LB Bexley). It is also rumoured to be present at Rainham Marshes (LB Havering). Managing agencies; London Wildlife Trust/Barking & Dagenham Borough Council, private (Crayford Marshes), RSPB



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Conservation priorities:

- Maintain and monitor known population [addresses UK SAP target T1]
- Undertake targeted surveys in London Boroughs of Newham, Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge, Havering, Greenwich and Bexley
- Protect and maintain any new populations emerging from surveys

References:

Shirt, D B (ed.). (1987). *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. JNCC