

Some examples of the ladybirds found in Ireland:

Where to look for ladybirds

By Gill Weyman

Ladybirds are often difficult to find because they are so small. Some can be as little as 3 mm in size while the largest is 8 mm. There have been 21 species of ladybird recorded in Ireland and four of these are rare, with few recorded sightings.

Ladybirds can be found in many habitats. Some species are found across a wide range of habitats and these are called **generalist** ladybirds. Others can only live in specific habitats and are called **specialised** ladybirds.

Generalist ladybirds include the 7 spot (*Coccinella septempunctata*), 10 spot (*Adalia decempunctata*) and 14 spot (*Propylea quatuordecimpunctata*) ladybird. These eat aphids, pollen, moulds, mites and can be found in gardens, on wild flowers and branches of trees.

Specialist ladybirds include species such as the 22 spot ladybird (*Psyllora vigintiduopunctata*), Kidney Spot ladybird (*Chilocorus renipustulatus*) and Larch ladybird (*Aphidecta oblitterata*). The 22 spot ladybird feeds on mildews

and can be found on grasses and flowers where moulds are present. The Kidney Spot ladybird can often be found on Ash and deciduous trees, while the Larch ladybird is found on conifers and mixed woodlands.

It can take some time to find a ladybird but it's worth the wait. Places to look include grasses and wild plants. Take care around some plants where ladybirds like to hang out, such as on hogweeds and nettles, as they might irritate the skin or sting. Trees are also a good place to look, particularly on the bark and low branches that can be viewed from the ground.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Remember whenever you see a ladybird, take a photo and either submit it on the android app *Irish Ladybird Survey* or go to www.biology.ie and click on the 2020—All Ireland Ladybird Survey. Alternatively, you can email ladybird@fotawildlife.ie

10 spot ladybird



Saxifraga-Ab H Baas

10 spot ladybird (alternative colour)



Saxifraga - Frits Bink

14 spot ladybird



Saxifraga-H Baas

Larch ladybird



Saxifraga-Gilles San Martin

Kidney Spot ladybird



Saxifraga-Rugger Barendse

The Non-Native Harlequin Ladybird

In addition to the ladybirds listed above, there is a new one in town—the Harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*). This ladybird is not native and originates from China but can be found in over 22 European countries, North America, South America, Egypt and South Africa.

The Harlequin ladybird is a large ladybird and can be either red with black spots or black with red spots. The red version has a characteristic “w” on its front plates. The black version has white large patches on its front plates and two or four spots on the wing case. They are commonly found in urban areas.

One tip to help you distinguish the Harlequin ladybird from native ladybird species: if it is less than 5 mm in length it is definitely not a Harlequin ladybird.



Saxifraga-Ab H Baas



Saxifraga - Ab H Baas



Saxifraga-Frits Bink



Saxifraga-Ab H Baas

The Harlequin ladybird is so called because its wing cases can have many colours.