

All in a Day's Work

Gill Weyman – All Ireland Ladybird Survey

Gill Weyman works in Fota Wildlife Park and is studying “The status, threats, protection and conservation of ladybirds in Ireland.”



Images courtesy of Gill Weyman

Gill Weyman



Where do you work?

I work in Fota Wildlife Park as a research scholar on a joint project with University College Cork. I am studying ladybirds and also run the All Ireland Ladybird Survey.

Why are ladybirds being studied?

We want to help improve our understanding of where ladybirds are located in Ireland, which will increase the knowledge on ladybirds. We do not currently know much about our ladybirds. The arrival of the non-native Harlequin ladybird in Ireland in recent years, and its threat to native ladybirds, makes this an important survey.

Have you always been interested in what you do?

Yes from the early age of

17, when I became interested in the local environment. I was brought up on a farm and was always fascinated by wildlife. Now, as an adult, I am lucky to be able to work with wildlife. I would be bored doing something else.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

I studied Environmental Science at college. I have also volunteered with a number of organisations such as the Conservation Volunteers and I helped on wildlife projects in New Zealand looking at the Little Spotted Kiwi and Hochstetters Frog. I have also worked on the Corncrake in Ireland and am chair of Cork Nature Network, a wildlife charity.

What is the best thing about your job?

Other than being able to study ladybirds all day, one of the best things is that my desk overlooks the cheetah enclosure so I can watch the cheetahs while I work!

What do you like least about your job?

Ladybirds are very small and are often hard to find—that can be frustrating. Wildlife just isn't there when you



The 7 spot ladybird.



Gill holds a net under the foliage, which she beats or shakes with a stick. Any ladybirds that fall into the net will be counted and identified.

want to see it. You have to be patient and look for it.

What equipment do you use to collect ladybirds?

I have a sweep net, a beating tray and a beating stick, which all help to find ladybirds on shrubs and trees. These are not as gruesome as they sound! The beating tray is a stretched cloth that is held under the tree or shrub. I then shake or beat the foliage with a stick so that the insects fall from the plant and land on the cloth.

This allows me to identify and count the ladybirds.

Do you work alone or as part of a team?

I usually work alone but you can help! If you see a ladybird, I would love if you could take a photograph and send it to me (see details on page 6).

What is the best piece of advice you have ever had?

If you have a problem, take your time and think it through.