

Harlequin Ladybird

Species Description

Scientific name: *Harmonia axyridis*

AKA: Halloween Ladybeetle, Asian Ladybeetle

Native to: Central and Eastern Asia

Habitat: Commonly found on deciduous trees and low-lying vegetation throughout many types of habitat.

The Harlequin Ladybird is a highly invasive non-native insect which was intentionally introduced into continental Europe as a predator to agricultural pests e.g. aphids. Its diet however is also known to include many other species and has therefore likely contributed to the decline of the native Two-spot Ladybird. Within GB, this species became established in 2004, likely as a result of accidental releases or from being blown over from Europe. These ladybirds are active between March and October, before overwintering in large groups. A female can lay 20-30 eggs per day and is capable of producing from 1,600 to 3,800 eggs in its lifetime.

This species is relatively large compared to most other ladybirds found in GB, growing to a size of 6-8mm. They are however highly polymorphic, meaning their appearance is extremely variable, although they most often appear orange with 15-21 black spots; other colour variants include black with yellow/orange spots and red/yellow with black spots. Key identifying features of these ladybirds include their red/brown legs and have a distinctive black "M-shaped" marking on their thorax.

Ecological and economic impacts of this species are often associated with the potential declines of native ladybirds via direct predation and competition for resources. This is of significant concern as native ladybirds are important predators of agricultural pests and a valuable food source for numerous predators.

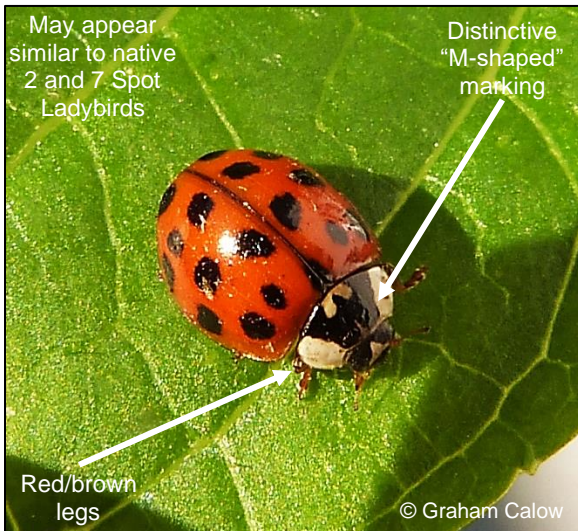


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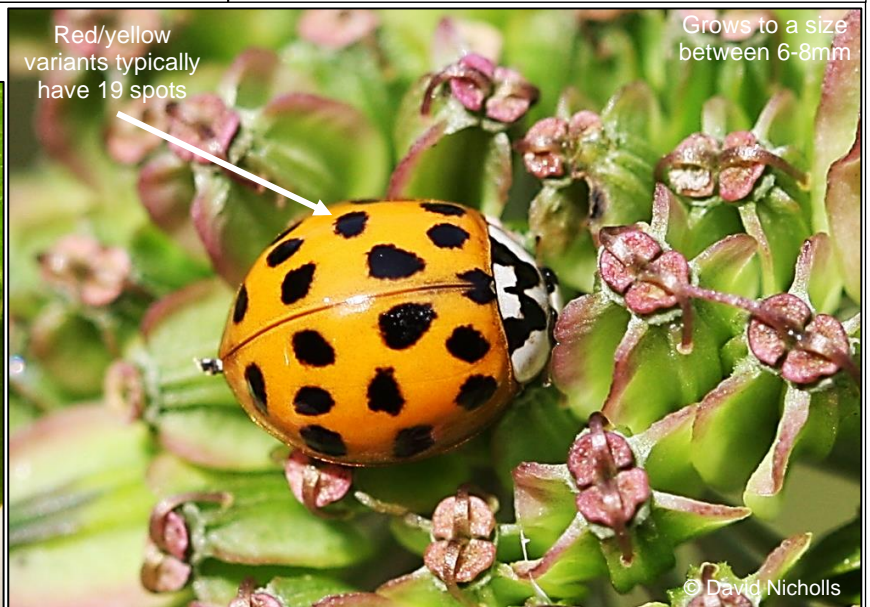


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Key ID Features



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Identification throughout the Year

The Harlequin Ladybird is active from April to October before hibernating in large groups (pictured right) which can comprise of thousands of individuals. Eggs of this species are yellow and are typically laid near an abundance of prey. Once hatched, the larvae will appear a uniformly dark grey colour with short black fleshy extensions (known as scoli). During pupation (pictured left), the animal is dark brown with darker patches on the abdomen, wing buds and thorax.



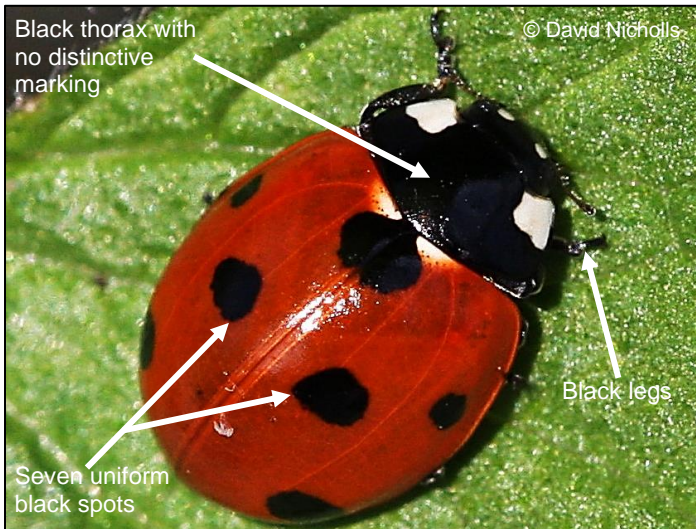
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Similar Species

7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*)
[Native]



Black thorax with no distinctive marking

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Black legs

Seven uniform black spots

Eyed Ladybird (*Anatis ocellate*)
[Native]

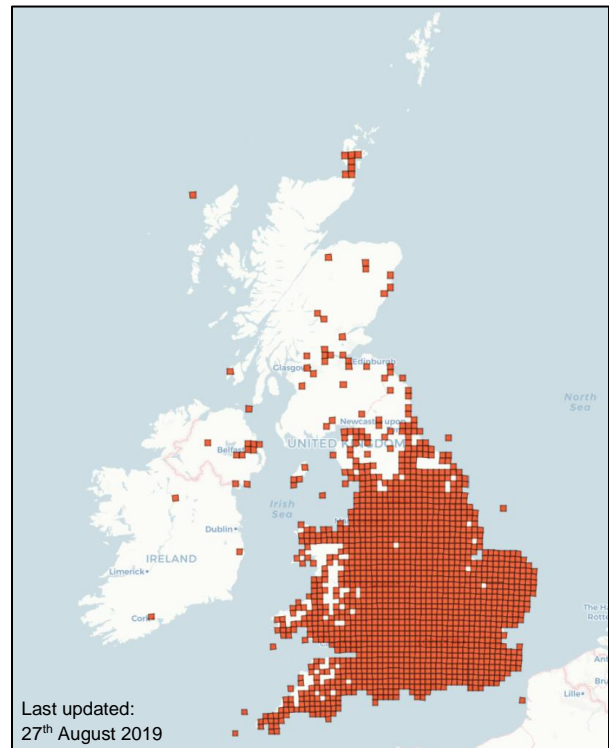


Each spot is encircled by a pale ring

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Distribution

The Harlequin Ladybird is widespread throughout England and Wales, although sporadic sightings from Scotland and Wales have also been reported.



Source: NBN Atlas. Check website for current distribution.

Last updated:
27th August 2019

References and Further Reading:

Buglife (2019) *Harlequin ladybird*. Available at: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/bugs-and-habitats/harlequin-ladybird> (Accessed: 05th June 2019).

Lane, M. (2011) *Ladybird spotting: British v foreign bugs*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14043356> (Accessed: 05th June 2019).

Martin, N., A. (2018) *Harlequin ladybird - Harmonia axyridis*. Available at: <https://nzacfactsheets.landcareresearch.co.nz/factsheet/InterestingInsects/Harlequin-ladybird---Harmonia-axyridis.html> (Accessed: 05th June 2019).

NatureSpot (n.d.) *Harlequin Ladybird - Harmonia axyridis*. Available at: <https://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/harlequin-ladybird> (Accessed: 05th June 2019).