

## Ladybirds (2)

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Ladybirds are insects from the beetle family. There are 46 species of ladybird resident in the UK.

They live in fields, forests and gardens where there are plenty of aphids (greenfly) to eat.

The ladybird's body measures from 2 to 10 mm long and they are round or oval in shape. They are generally scarlet, orange or yellow with black spots and usually a black head and antennae. They have short legs that they tuck under their body and the wings are kept in the shell. The most common ladybird in Britain is the 7 spotted.



Their bright colours are a warning to predators that they do not taste nice. A yellow toxic substance (that smells and tastes horrible) oozes from their leg joints when they are attacked. Their predators are swifts and swallows, some species of spiders and some larger beetles.

The life cycle of a ladybird consists of four stages: egg-larva-pupa-adult ladybird.

They lay their yellow or orange eggs in batches of about 40 that hatch in about one week.

The larva that hatches spends between 3 and 6 weeks eating. Next it changes into a pupa and takes about one more week to develop into an adult ladybird.

The average life span of a ladybird is from one to two years.

Ladybirds mainly eat aphids (greenfly) but also eat scale insects and whitefly. When food is scarce they will eat newly emerged adult ladybirds that are still soft bodied.

During the winter when the weather is cold ladybirds hibernate. They gather in large groups, sometimes in excess of a thousand all huddled together in tree bark or under leaf litter.



Interesting facts about ladybirds:

They are the friends of farmers and gardeners as they help with pest control by eating aphids.

By the end of its life a ladybird will have eaten approximately 5000 aphids.

Not all ladybirds have spots.

Ladybirds use their feet and antennae to smell for food.

The Harlequin ladybird which first arrived in the South East of England in 2004 is spreading rapidly across Britain. It eats many

native species of ladybird in particular the 2 spotted type.

Name: .....

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## Questions

1. In which family of insects do ladybirds belong? .....
2. Why do ladybirds have brightly coloured shells? .....
3. What does it do when it is being attacked? .....
4. Name three predators of the ladybird. ....
5. What are the four stages in the life cycle of the ladybird? .....
6. What is the average life span of a ladybird? .....
7. What is the main food of the ladybird? .....
8. Approximately how many aphids will a ladybird eat in its life? .....
9. What do they do during the cold winter months? .....
10. Use a dictionary to help find the meanings of the following words as used in the passage:  
predator: .....  
toxic: .....  
scarce: .....

Name: .....

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## Answers

1. Ladybirds belong to the beetle family of insects.
2. Ladybirds have brightly coloured shells to warn predators that they do not taste nice.
3. When a ladybird is being attacked it oozes a toxic yellow substance that smells and tastes horrible.
4. Three predators of the ladybird are: (three of the following named: swifts, swallows, some spiders, some larger beetles, harlequin ladybirds).
5. The four stages in the life cycle of a ladybird are egg, lava, pupa and adult ladybird.
6. The average life span of a ladybird is from one to two years.
7. The main food of the ladybird is aphids.
8. A ladybird will eat approximately 5000 aphids in its life.
9. Ladybirds hibernate in large groups huddled together in tree bark or under leaf litter during the cold winter months.
10. predator: an animal that hunts other animals for food  
toxic: poisonous  
scarce: in short supply

Name: .....