

The Harlequin Ladybird

Ladybirds are one of the most well known and well loved invertebrates in the world. However, in recent years the ladybirds of Britain have been faced with a new and increasingly serious threat to their survival.

The Harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) the most invasive ladybird species in the world, was first identified in the UK in the summer of 2004. Since then it has increased its range and is now well established throughout the Southeast of England and the Midlands. This species is a generalist feeder and includes our native species of ladybird in its list of prey. Because of this it poses a real threat to the survival of our native species of ladybird.



The Harlequin ladybird (pictured right) is larger than most of native species being 7-8mm long and is a voracious predator. The colouration and patterns associated with this species are also highly variable with colour ranging from yellow to dark red with black spots and melanic. The most common form is shown opposite whilst the bottom picture shows the melanic form.



The Harlequin ladybird has not yet reached the North east but is predicted to within the year, (it seems to have reached York!). For a more detailed description of the Harlequin Ladybird, and how it differs from our native Lady bird see

http://www.harlequin-survey.org/recognition_and_distinction.htm

The UK ladybird survey has been running since 1984 and records sightings of ladybirds throughout the UK in order to assess population numbers and trends.

See:- <http://www.ladybird-survey.org/recording.aspx>

You can send data about our native ladybirds seen on Moorside directly to the website above.

In response to the invasion of the Harlequin ladybird a new national survey has been set up to track the progress of this specific species. If you think you see a Harlequin Lady bird contact the Harlequin Ladybird Survey

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<http://www.harlequin-survey.org/recording.htm>