

BIODIVERSITY on your Farm

Species Profile # 17

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.

Are you up for the challenge?

Species: 7-spot Ladybird

Scientific Name: *Coccinella septempunctata*

Irish name: *Bóin Dé sheachtbhallach*

Group

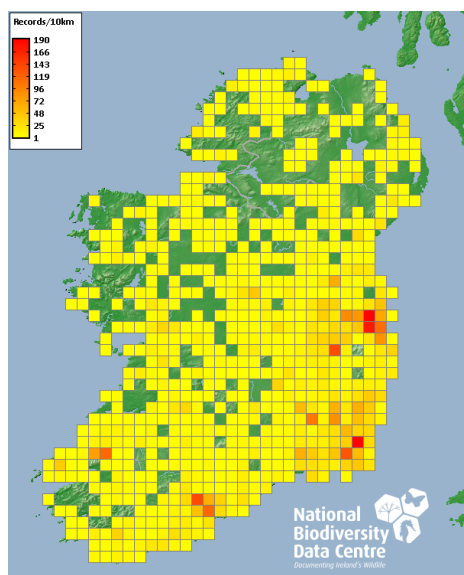
Ladybirds belong to the insect Family of Coccinellidae, 27 species occur in Ireland. Some of these are small and unspotted and would not be considered 'typical' ladybirds; generally Ladybirds refer to 19 species that have been recorded in Ireland.

How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The 7-spot Ladybird was recorded on most of the 40 farms.

Distribution

Widespread and common.



Source: The 7-spot Ladybird records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023.



7-spot Ladybird. Note: Red with seven black spots.

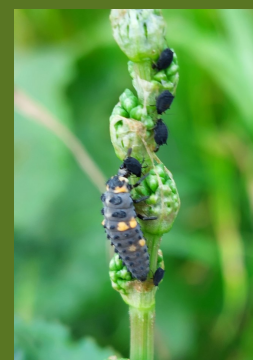
Identification Tips

- 5.5 to 8mm in length.
- Adult has seven black spots in a symmetrical pattern on their bright red wing cases.
- They have a black thorax (body), black head and white markings and spots on either side of the eyes.
- Their larvae are brownish-grey in colour, with four pairs of bright orange splotches across their bodies.

Biodiversity Tip No. 17

Encourage beneficial insects, like the 7-spot Ladybird.

They are voracious predators of aphids.



Conservation Status

The 7-spot Ladybird is one of our most common species and is thought to not be a species of conservation concern.

A Ladybird Atlas 2025 project, to better understand the status and distribution of ladybirds in Ireland, has been initiated, as a partnership project with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the Centre for Environmental Recording and Data (CEDaR).

The project aims to increase the amount of ladybird observations, produce more comprehensive distribution maps and to improve the knowledge of habitat preferences for all 19 species of ladybird.

Management Tips

Food for the 7-spot Ladybird:

On the farm:

- Encourage native plants in hedgerows, field margins and non-farmed areas, e.g. Hogweed, Cow parsley, Yarrow, Plantains, Bramble, Scot's pine, Oak and Willow.

Overwintering sites:

- Provide native hedgerows, evergreen plants, such as Gorse, Ivy, Holly and Scots Pine, dead leaves, and grass tussocks.

Reduce pesticide/insecticide use:

- To allow natural predators to thrive, such as Ladybirds, Hoverflies and Parasitic wasps.

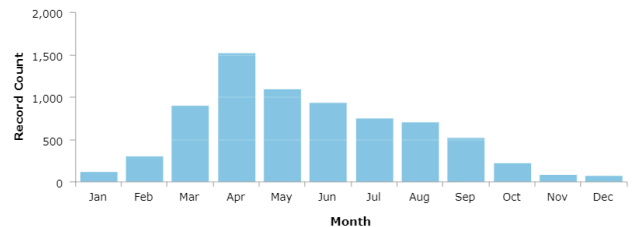


7- spot Ladybirds.

When?

They emerge from hibernation from March, but adults can be found throughout the year.

Records per month across all datasets



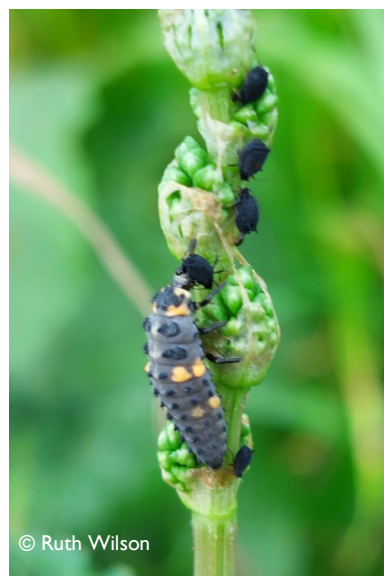
National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, 7-spot Ladybird, image, accessed July 2023, [7-spot Ladybird \(Coccinella septempunctata\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](#)

Where on the farm?

Found in hedgerows, field margins, woodland clearings, low growing vegetation in scrub and gardens.

Value

- Ladybirds are part of the farm ecosystem.
- The larvae are voracious predators of aphids and can assist in the control of aphids, helping to reduce the use of pesticide/insecticide.
- A ladybird can munch through 5,000 aphids during its year-long life.



The larvae of a 7-spot ladybird munching on aphids.

© Ruth Wilson

Further Info

Both adults and larvae feed mostly on aphids. A ladybird can munch through 5,000 aphids during its year-long life.

The 7-spot ladybird hibernates during the winter months, resting in vegetation, hollow plant stems and outdoor sheds. You can spot them when they emerge in spring, usually from March to April, in search of food.

Ladybirds usually mate from May, and between June to July females lay their fertilised eggs in bundles on leaves. When the larvae hatch, they feed on aphids until they are ready to pupate. They emerge from pupation as fully grown ladybirds.

The Harlequin ladybird is an invasive species present in Ireland since 2007. A voracious predator which feeds on aphids, soft fruit, pollen, small insects and other ladybird larvae. They may cause a decline in Ireland's native ladybird species.

Similar species

The only Ladybird with 7 black spots, the easiest way to identify them is to count the spots!

Affected by a change in climate?

Ladybirds that feed on aphids face challenges arising directly from climatic change and indirect challenges due to the effect of climate on their aphid prey and other organisms with which they interact.

They show some resilience to climate change, but future climate effects on their overall biodiversity are not fully clear.

Useful Links

A handy Ladybird identification swatch can be purchased here, €5

[Ladybird Swatch – National Biodiversity Data Centre \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie)

Information on the invasive Harlequin Ladybird

[Species Alert - Harlequin ladybird - National Biodiversity Data Centre \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie)

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your identification, you can submit your record.

- On our website at the National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016>

or

- You could also download our free smart phone App for recording in the field

Smart phone App:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

Apple App:

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:

pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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Food and the Marine



An Roinn Tithíochta,
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
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An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta
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