



THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CHARITY

Focus on harlequin ladybirds

Why are they a problem?

Harlequin ladybirds are an **invasive species**, originally from Asia. Their populations spread rapidly and have previously caused problems in North America and much of North-western Europe. They arrived in the UK in 2004 and have already spread throughout England and Wales and to southern Scotland. They are larger than native ladybirds so easily out-compete them for food; they also eat native ladybirds as well as other invertebrates such as butterflies and lacewings. The worry is that harlequins will 'invade', spreading rapidly at the expense of native species.

How to identify harlequins

Identification of harlequins is not always easy, as their markings are extremely variable. The photos below show the two most common varieties found in the UK, and point out their distinguishing features:

- orange with 15-21 black spots

Larger than native ladybirds at 6-8mm



Harlequin Ladybird (by G. Bradley)

www.uksafari.com

Orange-brown legs



Harlequin's orange abdomen and legs (by G. Bradley)

www.uksafari.com

Orange rim on underside

- black with 2 or 4 red patches



Black 'W'-shaped marking on pronotum (section behind the head)

White triangle on head

Don't worry if you're not sure if you have found a harlequin ladybird!

These websites have lots of photos to help...

<http://www.uksafari.com/ladybirdharlequin1.htm>

<http://www.ispotnature.org/communities/uk-and-ireland>

What can you do to help?

Monitor your area. If you think you've found a harlequin ladybird, upload your results to the iRecord UK Ladybird Survey (<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/index.php?q=enter-ladybird-records>) along with where you found it and the date. This will help scientists to track the spread of harlequins nationally and create a plan of action for how to tackle the 'invasion'.

