

SHERWOOD SHEET 2

THE LADYBIRDS OF FOREST



Many people have an affection for Ladybirds that seems to last a lifetime. Such is their obvious charm, ladybirds have been used by publishers and companies for a century or more, to illustrate childrens books, toys and wallpapers etc.

Ladybirds are an ideal way to introduce children to our natural history from a young age, being colourful, easy to find and instantly appealing.

Ladybirds are relatively easy beetles to identify, with many species being named after the number of spots they have. Contrary to popular belief, you cannot tell how old

a ladybird is by how many spots it has, just what kind of ladybird it is. With around 42 species found in the UK, Sherwood Forest has a good selection of ladybirds that can be looked for on any visit.

Most ladybirds eat a diet of aphids, but the bright yellow coloured 22-spot Ladybird eats the white, powdery mildew that grows on plants. Despite being bright yellow, it is quite small and not always easy to see. Even its larvae are the same colour! Both the 16-spot and the Orange Ladybird also feed on mildew, but the 16-spot also has a liking for nectar. Examining yellow flowers in grassy areas, will sometimes reveal them.

The Orange Ladybird is more of a tree dwelling ladybird, often found on Sycamore or Beech trees. It seems to have declined over the past few years, possibly due to the arrival of the Harlequin Ladybird in 2004. However, ladybird numbers seem to follow a four or five year cycle of abundance, followed by a drop in numbers, before increasing again.

The Cream-spot Ladybird is another species found higher up than most, but they can be found on shrubs and the lower branches of trees, sometimes in company with the Orange Ladybird.

Ladybirds illustrated

- 1 Eyed Ladybird
- 2 Larch Ladybird
- 3 Adonis Ladybird
- 4 Orange Ladybird
- 5 16-spot Ladybird
- 6 Cream-spot Ladybird
- 7 Cream-streaked Ladybird
- 8 22-spot Ladybird
- 9 Kidney-spot Ladybird

