

Wyre Forest Study Group

The Scarce 7-Spot Ladybird *Coccinella magnifica* (Redtenbacher, 1843) (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae) in Wyre Forest, 2008

KEVIN MCGEE

On 4th July 2008 I found a specimen of this nationally rare ladybird on a birch sapling alongside a track near Dowles Brook in the centre of Wyre Forest. A second individual was found moments later. This constitutes my 1st record. At first glance it appears rather like a fairly large exotic looking leaf-beetle of the family Chrysomelidae with the same heavily domed, 'humped' shape. The sides of the elytra are almost vertical, quite unlike the common 7-spot Ladybird.

This beetle is associated with the Wood Ant *Formica rufa*. It seems that unlike other ladybird species *C. magnifica* is not driven away by the ants, but they do react to its movement by tapping it with their antennae. The ants therefore tolerate the ladybird and so provide it with a micro-habitat free of other ladybird predators, the ladybird also has no competition for the aphids it predates upon both as an adult and a larva. So, although it is not reliant on Wood Ants as part of its reproductive cycle, it is never found away from an ant colony, probably because it is unable to compete successfully with other aphid predators.

Wyre Forest is well known as a site containing a healthy population of Wood Ants but they are rare elsewhere in this area. *C. magnifica* has been given a national status of Notable A and may well be in decline due to the loss of habitat associated with Wood Ants to agriculture and development, and lack of coppicing in suitable woodland. I would recommend careful attention being paid to any 7-spot Ladybird in the vicinity of a Wood



Coccinella magnifica

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Ants nest, once familiarised the Scarce 7-spot is easy to identify in the field.

REFERENCES

- Hyman, P.S. and Parsons, M.S. (1992). A review of the scarce and threatened Coleoptera of Great Britain. The UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.
- Majerus, M. and Kearns, P. (1989). Ladybirds. Naturalists' Handbook 10. Richmond Publishing Co.Ltd.



Coccinella magnifica with a Wood Ant *Formica rufa*

Kevin McGee