

Harlequin Ladybirds (*Harmonia axyridis*) in Bewdley

ROSEMARY WINNALL

The Harlequin Ladybird is originally from eastern Asia, but it was introduced into America and Europe in an attempt to control plant pests. In the UK the species has been spreading rapidly since it was first spotted in September 2004 in south-east England, and this voracious predator is now threatening our native ladybird which it can easily out-compete for its preferred food of aphids and scale insects. When this food is short it will prey on a range of other insects, our native ladybird larvae, butterfly eggs, caterpillars and lacewing larvae.

This species was first recorded in Worcestershire in November 2005 by Brett Westwood in his Stourbridge garden, but my first record from the Wyre area was a single Harlequin ladybird in November 2006. In recent years the species has continued to breed prolifically and spread north-westwardwards in the UK.

In October 2009 I noticed large aggregations of Harlequin Ladybirds along the roadside balustrade in Bewdley whilst walking on the pavement on the east side of the bridge over the River Severn. The wall is situated under overhanging trees, many of which are Sycamores (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). The autumn leaves

were falling off the trees and they were presumably bringing with them aphids and ladybird larvae.

On the 20th October 2009 most of the ladybirds were larvae, but when I returned on the 23rd October, more had pupated. I decided to try to count them along a 20 metre stretch of the wall and railings. I could only access the railings from one side, so I recognised that my count would be an underestimate of the total. The result was:

adults: 182 pupae: 305 larvae: 1317 total: 1804!

1804 of these invasive Harlequin Ladybirds in one place is a worrying total when their total food consumption is considered.

I searched for other insects amongst the Harlequins and recorded one Pine Ladybird (*Exochomus quadripustulatus*) and one Two Spot Ladybird (*Adalia bipunctata*) and at least two species of hoverfly larvae. The Harlequin Ladybirds outnumbered our natives 1804 to 2! This is not good news! Where have they all gone to hibernate I wonder, and how many will breed from these next year?



Harlequin Ladybird larva, pupae and one adult, Bewdley, 23rd October 2009 Rosemary Winnall



Cluster of Harlequin Ladybirds, Bewdley, 23rd October 2009 Rosemary Wnnall



Harlequin Ladybird larva eating an aphid, Bewdley, 23rd October 2009 Rosemary Winnall



Harlequin site in Bewdley, 23rd October 2009 Rosemary Winnall