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FAST FACTS

NAME: Lady bug, Ladybird beetle

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Coccinellidae*

AVERAGE LENGTH: 1 mm to 10 mm (depending on species)

AVERAGE LIFESPAN: 2 to 3 years (in the wild)

DID YOU KNOW?

Ladybugs have been in space! In 1999, NASA sent a few ladybugs into space along with aphids to see how the aphids could escape their predators in zero gravity.

PHYSIOLOGY

Adult ladybugs are round, semi-circle shaped insects with stubby legs and antennae. They have tiny heads and usually range in colour from red to orange with black dots. However, the presence of dots and their amount can vary from species to species. In some species the colouring is reversed making them black with red splotches.

Ladybug larvae do not resemble the adult beetle at all. The larvae are usually blue with black or orange stripes. They have 3 sets of legs and have a much longer body than its adult form.

Most species of ladybug adults and larvae are valued by farmers since they eat a variety of plant-damaging insects, including aphids.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Ladybugs lay their eggs on aphid infested leaves. They lay clusters of eggs that include extra infertile eggs mixed in with the fertile. Both of these behaviours helps to ensure the ladybug larvae will have enough food to last until it becomes an adult.

Ladybugs have three main defenses against predators. Their brightly coloured bodies warn potential predators that it is poisonous, even though these beetles are not. Ladybugs also secrete a bad tasting fluid when attacked which makes them an unwanted prey. Thirdly, these beetles can play dead! When faced with a sticky situation, ladybugs pretend they are dead until the danger passes.

Broccoli, milkweed and other plants that attract aphids are where ladybugs tend to live. These beetles move on once they eat all the aphids on one plant.

Like bears, ladybugs hibernate in the winter. They usually come together in large groups and sleep the winter away on mountains and areas of high elevation.

RANGE

Ladybugs are found just about anywhere in the world as long as there is an available food source and the temperatures are not too frigid. Their range extends from North America, excluding the arctic region, down to the most southern tip of South America. They are also found east to Europe and Asia, also excluding the arctic regions, and south again to Africa and Australia.