

Ladybug, Ladybird, Ladybeetle - Fly Away Home! | Swaner EcoCenter

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A shining red shell with black spots is a classic summer sight. However, these seemingly omnipresent insects are actually composed of many different species. In North America, there are an estimated 400 species of lady beetles, including both introduced and native species. In Utah, there are still dozens of lady beetle species, although some species are much more common to see than others.

Common **non-native and invasive** species to Utah:

- [Asian Lady Beetle](#)
- [Seven-Spotted Lady Beetle](#)

Common **native** species to Utah:

- [Convergent Lady Beetle](#)
- [Transverse Lady Beetle](#)
- [Nine-Spotted Lady Beetle](#)
- [Two-Spotted Lady Beetle](#)

While the main visual trait of lady beetles is almost always a red exterior with black spots, appearance can vary widely. The color, for example, can range from cream to shades of orange to a deep red. However, there are some specific traits you can use to differentiate the species:

- The **spot pattern** of the lady beetle's shell is most useful for identification. Spot patterns are composed by the shape and location of each spot on the shell, and when put together into a single pattern, this provides the easiest means of identification for a ladybug.
- The **white markings** on the black head. This is another easy visual for identification, which is important to be considered since there are some species that don't have a standard spot pattern on the shell. Mainly, this includes the Asian Lady Beetle, who can have many, many spots or not a single one! Thus, the black and white pattern on the Asian Lady Beetle's head is the best means for identification of this species, which happens to be a black "M" shape

that can be used as a mnemonic to remember that these bugs are an invasive species and a menace.

Many additional tools exist to help anyone identify species in nature. One common tool is iNaturalist, an app which can upload photos or sound recordings to ID species using both AI as well as other users input. Another resource that specifically for identifying ladybugs is a free website, [Discover Life](#), which uses preset multiple choice questions to filter down to what the most likely species of ladybug is.

Aside from encounters in the wild, many people may have experiences with ladybeetles in their own gardens. That is partially because ladybeetles are commonly sold as a biocontrol for garden pests like aphids. While native insects can do an excellent job, there are several reasons to NOT buy them:

1. Many are collected from the wild, specifically as the ladybeetles collect in groups and begin diapause (a dormant state) to overwinter.
2. When released, the ladybeetles assume they're located where they migrated to last fall and will fly off once released - before they do anything beneficial (eating pests or laying eggs).
3. Insects are almost always sold as adults, who will eat some pests, **but** it's really the ladybeetle larvae that have a voracious appetite and impact pest populations.
4. Adding new individuals to the existing population always has a chance of introducing disease or unwanted genetics.
5. There is always the chance you're being sold invasive species, not the natives!

So next time you see a ladybug, if you get a good look or a picture, check to see if you have seen one of our own native lady beetles!



Invasive: Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*). [Photo credit](#).



Invasive: Seven-Spotted Lady Beetle (*Coccinella septempunctata*). *Photo credit.*



Native: Convergent Lady Beetle (*Hippodamia convergens*). *Photo credit.*



Native: Two-Spotted Lady Beetle (*Adalia bipunctata*). *Photo credit.*

Sources

<https://redbuttegarden.org/gardening-information/beneficial-bugs/>

<https://birdwatchinghq.com/ladybugs-in-utah/>

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<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/what-are-invasive-species>

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/news/columns/dakota-gardener/dakota-gardener-do-not-buy-ladybugs>

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Location, Hours & Contact

Physical & Mailing Address

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EcoCenter Hours

Wednesday – Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm

The EcoCenter will be closed on Wednesday, October 7 and Thursday, October 8.

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Directions, Parking, & Transit View Staff Directory

- [Swaner EcoCenter Facebook page](#)
- [Swaner EcoCenter Instagram page](#)

Events

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swaner/calendar" }); </script> [View Full Swaner Preserve
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