

Irish Girl Guides press release

17 July 2018

Irish Girl Guides help save native Irish ladybirds

- Ladybird girls calls on the public to join in hunt for ladybird beetles! -

Irish Girl Guides are on the hunt for ladybird beetles ... and they want members of the public to join in the All Ireland Ladybird Survey too!

Ladybirds, the name given to Irish Girl Guides (IGG) members aged five to seven, are thrilled to be spearheading the campaign to identify ladybirds throughout the country.

When they find ladybird beetles, they are identifying the particular species with the help of identification sheets downloaded from the website www.biology.ie.

The All Ireland Ladybird Survey is headed up by Gill Weyman, a PhD student from University College Cork who has teamed up with Fota Wildlife Park. She is calling on people throughout the country to take part in the survey. "We would ask everyone to keep their eyes peeled for ladybirds and, if they see one, to leave it where they find it, take a photo, make a note of the date, time, location and description of the ladybird (count the spots!) and go to www.biology.ie to submit their sighting," she said.

"We would simply ask you to be vigilant and let us know if you spot a ladybird. The study is vital to help understand the distribution of ladybirds in Ireland and to help put plans in place to conserve Irish ladybirds, which are under threat from the Harlequin ladybird - a non-native ladybird species. Any help from the public will be greatly appreciated."

IGG Chief Commissioner Helen Concannon said Ladybirds throughout Ireland are enjoying searching for ladybird beetles and finding out about the different species. "They have been amazed to discover from the id sheets that there are so many different kinds of ladybirds," she said. "They always enjoy going outdoors and IGG encourages care for the environment and all living things.

"Ladybirds can earn Environmental Awareness and Bird Watcher badges while older girls – Brownies (age 7-10) and Guides (age 10-14) - can earn Nature Observer, Green Fingers and Tree Lore badges. The Nature Observer badge for Brownies includes carrying out a mini-beast/bug hunt to see what insects they can find.

"When we saw the ladybird survey online, it was a no-brainer that our girls would want to get involved and be part of a mission to help save native ladybirds."

Find out more about Irish Girl Guides at www.irishgirlguides.ie and about the All Ireland Ladybird Survey at www.biology.ie.

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Irish Girl Guides has approximately 12,000 members. Guiding started in Ireland in 1911 and operates throughout the 26 counties with 1,800 volunteer leaders providing an informal educational programme of fun and challenging activities that foster confidence and leadership skills in girls and young women, enabling them to develop to their full potential and to become responsible citizens. Girls from age 5+ can choose to earn a wide range of badges, including Community Action, Cultural Diversity, Disability Awareness, Drug Awareness, Online Surfer, Science Investigator, Engineering and Global Traveller.