

## **Ladybug Story**

**By Randi Beckmann**

Where did you come from?  
Where did you go?  
How can we help the ladybug's woe?

There once were lots of nine-spotted beetles flying around,  
They once were quite common,  
In the US and Canada they could be found.  
But now there's a problem, we're not quite sure why,  
But the nine-spotted ladybug is getting harder to spy.

So let's learn about these beetles today,  
How they live and how they play.  
How we can help them, you will see and  
What you can do to lend a hand in your community.

The nine-spotted ladybug is a friend to us all.  
They are pretty and gentle though they are very small.  
They eat lots of aphids, up to 75 in one day.  
It is very helpful to farmers to get these aphid pests away!

*Coccinella novemnotata* is its fancy name,  
but it's a beetle just the same.  
It has four wings two for flying and two for protection.  
The outer shell has eight spots and one across its mid section.

But! There are lots of kinds of ladybugs, not just the nine-spotted one

Some are red, and some are orange, just like the sun.  
They come in different sizes and come in different shapes,  
Some are oblong, some are round and some are shaped like grapes  
Some have no spots some have four, some have 12 spots and some even more!

Each ladybugs different – what they eat, how they live  
But each kind of ladybug has something to give  
You see the ladybugs aren't just a mob  
Each kind of ladybug has its own special job  
Some eat aphids in spring, some eat worms in the fall  
One kinds not enough - we need them all!  
So when one kind of ladybug gets harder to spy  
We need to work together and figure out why

The ladybug chews up aphids with razor sharp jaws  
Since they hunt for their food we call them predators  
To protect itself a ladybug can play dead.  
It will lie on its back and not even move its head.  
With its bright red wings and spots all of black  
ladybugs tell birds  
I Taste Terrible - Stay Back!!

The lifecycle of a ladybug has four stages.  
It starts as an egg and then as it ages,  
It comes to look like a tiny alligator with fierce looking jaws  
It's so scary it gives its enemies pause.  
After three weeks in this glorious state, it molts several times and  
as a pupa it waits.  
It waits wrapped up attached to a leaf  
It waits, and it waits and it waits for one week.

Then one day after it sits  
The shell of the pupa opens and splits.  
And with a wiggle, a wriggle, and a shrug...  
Out pops a brand new ladybug!  
This process happens again and again, my dear  
In fact there can be six generations of ladybugs hatched in one  
year.

Ladybugs live in fields, beaches, homes, trees or shrubs  
Anywhere where they can find aphids and other small bugs  
In winter you may be able to see  
100s of ladybugs gathering at the base of a tree.

But an important tale today we want to tell  
About the nine-spotted beetle and where it might dwell  
For years you were many you were seen far and wide  
In so many places your 9 spots were spied

But even though you are the wildlife symbol for so many states  
Your species is now in terribly dire straights  
Scientists thought you were going extinct until a  
Sister and brother made those scientists blink.  
When in the backyard they did find  
The nine-spotted beetle. They thought they'd lost their mind!

So this is what those kids did and you can do it too  
Go look for ladybugs, we'll tell you what to do,  
Look in a tree; look in a bush look in a meadow that hasn't been  
mowed...  
Then sweep a net in this potential ladybug abode!  
Find any nine-spots in your load?  
If so, the scientists at Cornell want to find out  
Where your ladybug is and that it's a nine-spot without a doubt.

No nine-spots – don't worry!  
Any ladybug found will help us in a hurry  
Just shoot a picture of *all* those you got  
We need to know who's there and who's not

So follow directions at the website below  
Grab a camera and take a photo  
Send it to the entomologists so they can be sure  
Of where the ladybugs are and arrive at a ladybug cure  
Because they want to know,

Where did they come from and where did they go and this is how  
you can help the ladybug's woe!