

ENTOMOLOGY

Lady Beetles of the Northwest Territories

By Environment and Natural Resources. 2018. Government of the Northwest Territories. 75 pages, freely available (contact 867-767-9237 or NWTBUGS@GOV.NT.CA), PDF.

The best things in life are free—and sometimes they come from a government. In a world where we frequently speak of including and engaging people, we are pleased to see good examples of these actions. This book is an outstanding example. Although based on a deep analysis of scientific information, it can be used by both kids and scientists as a current and reliable source. And yes, it does include all 33 species of lady beetles (Family Coccinellidae) known to occur in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

Lady beetles are popular, not just because they are mostly attractive and friendly, but also because of their reputation for controlling garden pests. One of the major events in Inuvik every year (attended by the town's children and their parents) is the release of boxes of hundreds of lady beetles in spring to control pests (and avoid pest control using poisonous substances). This event occurs in the huge town greenhouse (a modified hockey rink) where all local communities in the MacKenzie Delta region of NWT have plots for growing a great variety of vegetables. Similar events occur in other larger northern communities.

Lady beetles are also part of the 'balance of nature'. Because they are frequently seen and easily identified, they can be helpful in monitoring the condition of the environment. Some kinds of lady beetles have become rare and have undergone rapid declines for reasons that are not entirely understood. Knowing more about lady beetles may be a step toward a better understanding of ecology in the north. Prior to this book there was nothing to help with the monitoring of this group of insects in NWT.

On the inside front cover of the book is written: "If you would like this information in another official language, call us". The nine official native languages used in NWT are listed. It is also available in French and the English version has a lot of French text. Flip to the inside back cover to find a list of helpful resources, including the complete Canadian context for this work and the major sources of information (the fit, the basis, and where to go further).

The first part of the book is full of valuable general information. It starts with a checklist of NWT lady beetles. This is followed by the characteristics and ecology of lady beetles. Morphological features are illustrated and can be conveniently found at the front of the book. These pages are used with the key and species descriptions and will be referred to often. This first part answers most of the questions people frequently ask. Did you know that the Transverse Lady Beetle (*Coccinella transversoguttata*), although not yet endangered, is con-

sidered to be a species of "Special Concern" by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada? This is because it has declined greatly in southern Canada, but in NWT large declines have not yet occurred. This is yet another indication of NWT having a less impacted environment than southern Canada (but note that effects of climate change may be more pronounced in NWT than in any other Canadian province or territory).

At the end of this general section is an unusual identification key to the species. This key is a series of alternative choices that lead to the identity of a species. What makes it unusual is that it is not technical and is based on features of easily evaluated colour patterns.

The species information, with a full page for each species, is half of the 75-page book. The layout of these pages is very well planned with an illustration of the insect colour and pattern in the upper left and a distribution map in the lower right. Information on various subjects is readily available under bold headings. Note that Yukon, northern British Columbia, and the northern prairie provinces border on NWT and this book will be useful in those regions and beyond.

Although it does not have an index, it is easy to make one. A checklist starting on page four is available for page numbers (on the left margin). I suggest that if you are going to be using the book a lot, just leaf through it and add the page numbers to this list. It is easily done because the species accounts are in the same order as the species in the checklist beginning with the Winter Lady Beetle (*Brumoides septentrionis*) on page 38. This is a pleasant way to develop some familiarity with the diversity of lady beetles.

What I like most about this Guide is that, like its companion guides listed below, it will inspire contact with nature and a better understanding of the Canadian north. These are a few of the things that we definitely need. It deserves an award!

See also:

Environment and Natural Resources. 2016. Butterflies of the Northwest Territories. Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada.

Environment and Natural Resources. 2017. A Field Guide to Bumble Bees of the Northwest Territories. Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada.

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