

Spotted! Ladybirds landing here in droves



A bug's life: A ladybird's diet consists of aphids

THERE'S a little red army on the march across Ireland, and it's here to help the nation's gardeners.

An exceptionally mild winter and early spring have led to a huge increase of ladybirds, and they plan to gobble up any pests intent on undoing all your good

By **Nora Costigan**

green-fingered work. Dr Gordon Purvis of the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science said: 'The ladybirds we're seeing now are hibernating adults from last year that have reactivated again in the spring

to start breeding and start new populations. An extraordinarily mild winter has enabled more ladybirds than normal to survive hibernation.'

However, it's not all good news for the benevolent beetles as a malign species of ladybird - the Harlequin ladybird - could

threaten the native population. The Irish Wildlife Trust is embarking on the first national ladybird survey to see what effect they are having.

Gill Weyman of the IWT said 'They're like the grey squirrel of ladybirds.'

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Picture: FRAN VEALE

€300 to dress a child...

that's on average every year but some parents say it costs more

By **Éamon Donoghue**

HARD-PRESSED parents are paying more than €300 a year, on average, for their children's clothes, according to a new survey.

TK Maxx questioned 1,000 Irish shoppers last month and found that €312.99 was the average spend.

However, it is disputed by one parenting expert for being too low.

Alison Canavan, the Mail's parenting correspondent, said that she 'would have to disagree on the figure'.

She remarked: 'I don't spend a lot, but kids' clothes are not

A CHILD'S JACKET CAN COST 'UPWARDS OF €80'

BILLS rack up quickly when it comes to children's clothing and one leading retailer said mothers and fathers can expect to pay 'upwards of €80' for small jackets. 'Nothing is lower than €60 or €70', House of Fraser in Dundrum said.

And a new wardrobe of clothes for a child for just one week cost €408.50, the Irish Daily Mail found. The figure includes six T-shirts, a shirt, seven jumpers, seven trousers, a jacket, shoes and a multi-pack

of underwear. The stores visited included Dunnes Stores, Clarks shoes, Marks & Spencer and Debenhams. Marks & Spencer online shirts vary from €13.50 upwards for a 'young boy', while small multi-packs of socks cost at least €8.25. A small multi-pack of underwear starts at €9.50.

Debenhams charge €7 on their website for their lowest price tops while Dunnes Stores have jumpers priced at €12, on average, online.

cheap. They just grow so incredibly fast.

'I'd love to be able to get a new wardrobe for €300.' The Irish Daily

Mail's own search to buy a week's worth of clothes for a child found the bill came to €408.50.

Mother-of-one Ms Canavan

said: 'Children need a whole new wardrobe coming into summer and I can't imagine €300 getting you very far. But when you average everything

out for these surveys you get these figures.

'Realistically I would think it would be at least double that and I'm certainly not a shopaholic.'

Lynda O'Shea, of the National Parents Council, feels that if parents shop in the right places they can keep their costs to a minimum.

She remarked: 'I think it comes down to the parent and child themselves and what they'll spend.'

'The figure probably wouldn't be far off the mark as a lot of people have cut back with the economic climate, and they're now spending a lot more on food and heating and so on.'

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