

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BUTTERFLIES

Data Sheet

Theclinesthes miskini miskini (T.P. Lucas) (Wattle Blue)



Interesting aspects: The males are fast flying and are nearly always found congregating on dune and hill tops. The females are rare and are found near the hostplant. Butterflies flying in winter are much darker on the underside due to the increased melanin content acquired during the longer pupal period.

Life History

Larval food-host: In South Australia larvae are usually reported on *Acacia* species including *A. anceps* (Port Lincoln wattle), *A. pycnantha* (golden wattle), *A. salicina* (Broughton willow or coobah), ***A. saligna* (golden-wreath wattle), *A. tetragonophylla* (kurara or deadfinish wattle), *A. victoriae victoriae* (elegant or bramble wattle), and also ***Paraserianthes(Albizia) lophantha* (Cape Leeuwin wattle) (Mimosaceae). In the Far Northeast of the state the larvae will use *Sesbania cannabina* (sesbania pea) (Fabaceae). In the eastern states the larvae have been reported to use *Atalaya hemiglauca* (whitewood) (Sapindaceae), and there is also a report for *Hakea vittata* (striped hakea) (Proteaceae). In tropical Northern Territory this nominotypical form of the butterfly has recently been reported to utilise *Eucalyptus* spp (Myrtaceae), similar to the tropical subspecies *eucalypti* of the butterfly found in northern Queensland. The larvae eat the young leaves of the hostplants.

Larval attendant ant: In South Australia, larvae have been found attended by either a few small black ants *Iridomyrmex* sp, or in northern areas by large meat ants, either *Iridomyrmex purpureus* or *I. viridiaeneus*. Interstate, larvae are also attended

by *Camponotus terebrans*, *Dolichoderus scrobiculatus*, *Froggattella kirbii*, *Iridomyrmex* sp (*anceps* and *rufoniger* groups), *Paratrechina* sp.

Eggs:

Larvae: Mature larvae are 12-13mm long.

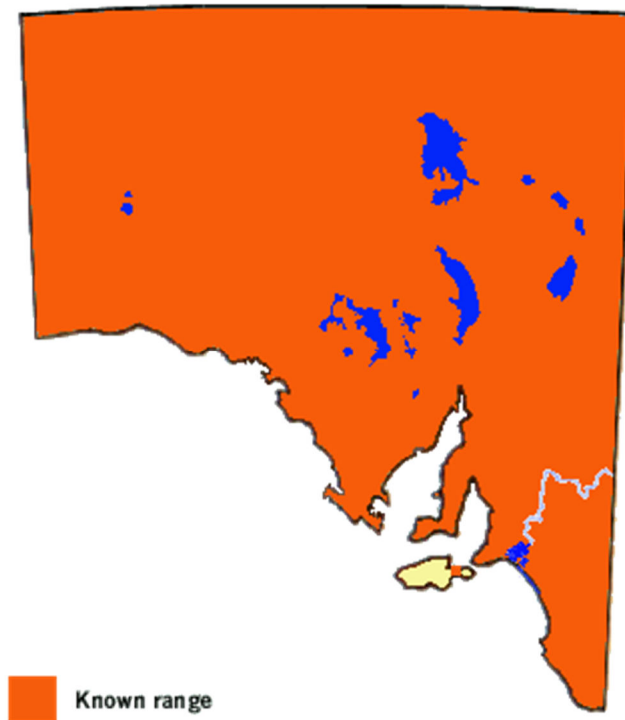
Pupae: 9-10mm long, the pupal period is 13-14 days.

Flight period in S.A.: It is possible to find flying butterflies throughout the year in the northern pastoral areas. In the southern areas it flies during the warmer months from September to May. Those butterflies flying during winter acquire a much darker underside.



Distribution: Occurs throughout mainland Australia. Very rare in the wet colder areas of South Australia. There are records for Kangaroo Island which need confirmation as other 'sightings' on the island have subsequently been determined as *Theclinesthes albocincta*. Separate subspecies are recognised in north Queensland and in Papua New Guinea, although these could actually be full species in their own right.

The butterfly may have some degree of dispersal ability (typical of the Polyommata group of lycaenids), as apart from northern Queensland the adult morphology is uniform.



Habitat: Usually found wherever wattle (*Acacia*) trees occur, and these are common and widespread, being present in most habitats.

Conservation Status in S.A.: A local butterfly, which tends to be more common in the hilly, open woodland areas of the dry pastoral north.

Threats: No major threats.

Conservation Strategy: None required.

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