



Multiple larvae have their individual shelters bound within a communal shelter when young.



Pupa of *Pryoptila matutinella*, within its silken chamber inside the individual shelter of its later instar larva.



Inside the individual shelter showing the silken chamber, the pupal case and the last skin of the larva before it pupated. This pupal case was empty, the adult moth having already emerged.



Adult *Pryoptila matutinella*, next to its individual shelter (measurements are mm).

Photos Roger Standen

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## Life history notes on the Northern Silver Ochre, *Trapezites maheta* (Hewitson, 1877) Lepidoptera: Hesperiiidae - Wesley Jenkinson



This endemic skipper is encountered sporadically in coastal and subcoastal areas from north-eastern Queensland to north-eastern New South Wales, including parts of the Great Dividing Range, Blackdown Tableland and Carnarvon Range (Braby, 2000).

The main preference is wet or dry eucalypt open forest but can also be found in dry vine forest and along margins of rainforest in northern Queensland.



In appearance this species can be very easily confused with the Southern Silver Ochre (*T. praxedes*) and the rarely encountered Ornate Ochre (*T. genevieveae*). The upperside and underside markings are very similar in these three species. The sexes are rather similar on the upperside, but females lack the large silver spots on the underside and the wing termens are more rounded in comparison to males. The underside markings are the best method to distinguish differences between these species.



In comparison with *T. praxedes*, *T. maheta* are generally marginally smaller in size and the females in particular have a pale grey-brown ground colour compared to the rich purplish-brown ground colour of *praxedes* females. On the hindwing underside of males of both species are a pair of medianly placed silver spots (and one or two postmedian) which are consistently larger and more rounded in *maheta*. On the forewing underside the yellow spot above the dorsal anal vein in both sexes of *maheta* is further suffused yellow, but this is less suffused and more clearly defined in *praxedes*. Within Queensland, individual specimens can show slight variation in the size of the orange and yellow markings on the upperside. Sands *et al.* (1984), gives a more detailed description of the differences between these two species.

In comparison *T. genevieveae* males and females have a more extensive yellowish suffused streak across the dorsum of the underside of the forewing and sometimes more extensive silver spotting in the hindwing of the males. In the female hindwing underside ringed spots sometimes have silvery-white centres, only occasionally present in the other two species.



Images left to right

Male underside, *T. maheta* *T. praxedes* *T. genevieveae*. Female underside, *T. maheta* *T. praxedes* *T. genevieveae*

These three species are usually located in different habitat types with *T. maheta* and *T. praxedes* sometimes being present at the same sites in south-eastern Queensland



and northern NSW. *T. genevieveae* is known to be restricted to rainforest environment.



Adult flight is very rapid. While basking they typically settle in a 'skipper' pose with their wings open, facing towards the sun, revealing the upperside markings. Males can be observed strongly defending open glades, chasing off other males and typically returning to the same perching spot. The females also frequent the same areas looking for suitable ovipositing sites. The males generally perch within three meters of the ground on live vegetation, dead sticks, rocks or bare ground. Both sexes are readily attracted to a wide range of small native and exotic flowers. During cloudy conditions they settle on vegetation with the wings closed.

Wingspans for the pictured adult specimens are: males 29mm and females 30mm respectively.



### *Trapezites maheta* (Northern Silver Ochre)

Images left to right: male, female, male underside, female underside

Near Beaudesert in South-east Queensland during March 2018, a female was collected and laid several eggs. These eggs were collected and resultant larvae successfully raised in captivity through to adults on known host plant *Lomandra hystrix*. Larvae from eggs placed on *L. longifolia* started to die so remaining larvae were transferred back to *L. hystrix*. Eggs are usually laid under leaves of the host plant or occasionally on debris near the host plant. The females have a preference to oviposit in a cooler, protected, dappled sunlit area, below trees where soft tall grasses are growing. Andrew Atkins found *maheta* larvae on *L. hystrix* at Byfield, near Rockhampton, Central Queensland (Atkins, 1997). Other known host plants throughout its range are *L. confertifolia*, *L. filiformis*, and *L. multiflora* (Andrew Atkins, pers comm, as in Moss 2019/2020).



The collected eggs were approx. 1mm wide x 1mm high, dome shaped with 19 fine longitudinal ribs. They are a cream colour when laid, with pinkish red mottled markings appearing after 2 days.



First instar larvae emerged and had consumed the eggshells by 7.00am. Shelters were formed at the base of the host plant between fresh soft leaves. Larvae were observed feeding after dusk. While resting in the shelter the head was in an upright position. Several shelters were formed during the larval stage and final instars pupated below a dead leaf resting at the base of the plant. The larvae completed five instars and attained a length of 22mm.



1<sup>st</sup> instar larva



2<sup>nd</sup> instar larva



3<sup>rd</sup> instar larva



4<sup>th</sup> instar larva



5<sup>th</sup> instar larva



5<sup>th</sup> instar head capsule



Pupa

Three adults were successfully raised under similar conditions from the same batch of eggs with the following cycle times observed.

Specimen A (Male) Egg duration 12 days, larval duration 53 days, pupal duration 10 days.

Specimen B (Male) Egg duration 12 days, larval duration 58 days, pupal duration 15 days.

Specimen C (Female) Egg duration 12 days, larval duration 67 days, pupal duration 20 days.

Adults hatched in captivity during mid-winter without any form of heating, however under natural conditions no doubt these would emerge as the spring brood.

Within the new boundary of the Scenic Rim Regional Shire south of Brisbane, I have records of adults from September and October and February, March and April. In this district emergence periods indicate there are two main generations per year.





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## Insect Common Names – True or False – *Bernie Franzmann*

I saw a report recently where the American Ornithological Society, formally changed the common name of a bird.

The bird was the McCown’s Longspur, (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) named 169 years ago after the Confederate major general who discovered it. The name was changed so that it is no longer tarnished by the racist associations of McCown. The new name is Thick-billed Longspur.

This is the common name. To change the scientific name, strict rules apply, which are governed by The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

This got me thinking about common names, of butterflies and other invertebrates, which are “wrong”.

Some butterflies have names which suggest that they are crows, awls or even aeroplanes. However, we don’t really think this, do we, as we mentally apply the term “butterfly” after the name.

