



Tawny Coster  
(*Acraea terpsicore*) female  
(top) and male on  
*Kybanthus enneaspermus*

# METAMORPHOSIS

## AUSTRALIA

Magazine of the Butterfly & Other Invertebrates Club

ISSUE NO: 70

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2013

Price \$6.00

ISSN: 1839-9819

<http://www.boic.org.au>

**A new immigrant butterfly for Australia: *Acraea terpsicore*  
(Linnaeus 1758) – Ross Kendall**

On the afternoon of April 27<sup>th</sup> 2013 I received a phone call from Club member Geordie Paton. Using his mobile phone he was calling from “the bush” near Kununurra in the East Kimberley of far northern Western Australia. Geordie said that he had just found a good number of orange coloured butterflies that looked like Glasswings (*Acraea andromacha*) but that the colour was wrong. He photographed a specimen using his phone and an emailed image arrived on my computer while we were still talking. It certainly was different!!!



Tawny Coster female  
Photo Geordie Paton

The next day Geordie informed me that, through the Internet, he had discovered that the butterflies were Tawny Costers (*Acraea terpsicore*) usually found in India and Sri Lanka but first reported in Australia from near Darwin NT in April 2012 (Sanderson *et al.* 2012; Braby 2013). He contacted Michael Braby (in Darwin) who confirmed the identification and referred Geordie to two articles about the discovery of the butterfly published in the August 2012 edition of *Myrmecia* and the February 2013 edition of *Nature Territory*.

The authors confirmed that the butterflies were at several sites on the Cox Peninsula west of Darwin and it had also been found 90 km southeast near Adelaide River. At these sites larvae were found feeding on native *Hybanthus enneaspermus* (L.) F.Muell (Violaceae) a known host of *A. andromacha*.

A year later, Geordie found the butterflies 450 km southwest of Darwin near Kununurra.

Descriptions of the larvae and pupae of the Tawny Coster show that they are similar to those of the Glasswing. The average wingspan of the adult specimens examined was 50mm.



Tawny Coster pupa  
Photo Geordie Paton

The upperside ground colour is bright reddish-orange in males and orange-brown in females, with a series of black spots. The pattern is similar on the underside, but with more pronounced cream subterminal spots on the hind wing.





Male upperside



Male underside



Female upperside



Female underside

Photos Ross Kendall

Braby *et al.* (2013) report on the range expansion of this butterfly over the last 28 years and its successful colonisation of South-east Asia and Australia. Initially from India and Sri Lanka, it was reported from Thailand in 1984 and then progressively moved to Hainan via Laos and Vietnam and to Timor via the Malay Peninsular and the Indonesian islands of Sumatra, Java, Lombok, Flores and Sumba, moving at a rate of approximately 200km per year. Furthermore, Trevor Lambkin (pers. comm.), who regularly visits Flores Indonesia, reports that he collected *A. terpsicore* on Flores the first time he visited the island in October 2010. In addition he observed females ovipositing on a *Passiflora* sp..

The success of its spread, according to Braby *et al.* (2013), may be due to the fact that large areas of tropical forest have been cleared through the region thus allowing suitable invasive host plants to thrive. Lambkin (pers. comm.) reports this to be the case in Flores where much of the virgin deciduous monsoon forest in the far west of the island has been cleared and has allowed large areas to be inundated by weed species, the predominant one being *Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) Fabaceae.

The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) arrived here in the early 1870's followed by the Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*) in the 1930's. It would seem that the Tawny Coster



(*A. terpsicore*) is permanently established in northern Australia. So, since European settlement, this species is the third successful immigrant butterfly to have established in Australia.

### Acknowledgements

Geordie Paton for his enthusiastic fieldwork  
Dr Michael Braby for information and advice

### References

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- Sanderson, C., Braby, M.F., Thistleton, B. and Neal, M. 2012. First record of the Tawny Coster butterfly *Acraea terpsicore* (Linnaeus, 1758) from Australia *Myrmecia* 48 (3): 39-41.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### Life history notes on the noctuid moth *Grammodes justa* (Walker, 1858). Lepidoptera: Noctuidae: Catocalinae - Graham McDonald

**Introduction:** Moths of the genus *Grammodes* are often characterised by two distinct cream or yellow parallel lines on the forewing, which usually has a dark brown background. In the *Grammodes* “Group A” complex of six species (Hendry, 2011), the lines traverse the wing from the costa to the dorsum. In the “Group B” complex of five species, the cream lines do not reach the costa and there are other minor differences. Some species in Group A, such as *G. oculata*, *G. oculicola* and *G. ocellata*, have an ocellus (eyespot) on the tornus of the forewing. *G. justa* does not have this.

**Distribution:** *Grammodes justa* is found on the east coast of Australia from Cape York to the Sydney - Blue Mountains area and inland to the New England Tableland. It also occurs in the Northern Territory.

There are eleven (11) named *Grammodes* species in Australia as well as one undescribed species. The genus also has a wider distribution in the Ethiopian and Oriental regions (Common, 1990). Further information on the genus *Grammodes* is presented in a monograph by Peter Hendry in issue 62 of *Metamorphosis Australia*.

