



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

*Oxycanus beltista* : Figs 1-5 showing variation in forewing patterns, Fig. 6 specimen from 1977 showing how they fade with age

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### Butterfly observations in Bundanoon NSW (continued from Issue 69) –

Alan Hyman

One of the popular walks through the eucalypt forest commencing at Morton National Park’s Bundanoon entrance is a 3.5km loop. Along this road in summer one can find – in addition to the ubiquitous Common Brown (*Heteronympha merope*) – the Eastern Ringed Xenica (*Geitoneura acantha*) and the Marbled Xenica (*G. klugii*) commonly flying together. The local subspecies of the Varied Sword-grass Brown (*Tisiphona abeona abeona*) can also be observed wherever its food plant (*Gahnia*) occurs – generally along roadsides where ditches are constantly wet. Early in the year when a limited hazard reduction burn was being proposed in the section of the Park where we volunteer, I requested the field staff to consider excluding these *Gahnia* corridors from the operation. This was agreed to and the plants were conspicuously marked



with pink tape so that they would be left untouched during the burn, the theory being that any *T. abeona* eggs, larvae or pupae on the plants would be spared. Since the operation, the wider surrounding understorey is now regenerating satisfactorily – and we were subsequently rewarded with fresh specimens of this superb black and orange butterfly fluttering around the area – a satisfying example of co-operation in butterfly conservation. Just occasionally a few individuals of the Silver Xenica (*Oreixenica lanthoniella*) are encountered, although a small colony persisted for some years in a part of our local Currabunda Wetland project and may yet survive. Other species occurring in the Park include the Brown Ringlet (*Hypocysta metirius*), the Rock Ringlet (*H. euphemia*) and a spring species, the Forest Brown (*Argynnia cyrila*).



Eastern Ringed Xenica  
(*Geitoneura acantha*)



Marbled Xenica (*G. klugii*)

Subfamily Danaidae is represented by three species, but none are common. I have on rare occasions observed the Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), the Lesser Wanderer (*Danaus chrysippus*) several times and a single Common Australian Crow (*Euploea core*) once visited our garden. However, Australia's sole Heliconiinae representative, the Glasswing (*Acraea andromacha*), makes an appearance in favourable seasons.

With translucent wings and gliding flight, it could perhaps be mistaken for a dragonfly at a distance. Three common butterflies with rather similar sizes, shapes and flight characteristics in the subfamily Nymphalinae are present – the Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida*), the Yellow Admiral (*Vanessa itea*) – and the Australian Painted Lady (*Vanessa kershawi*) which often alights on roads or trees to take in the late afternoon sun. The Tailed Emperor (*Polyura sempronius*) – subfamily



Varied Sword-grass Brown  
(*Tisiphone abeona abeona*)



Charaxinae – very rarely makes a solitary appearance, dipping and arcing upwards before speeding off again to its unknown destination.



Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida*)



Australian Painted Lady (*Vanessa kershawi*)

Although there may be a dozen or more Blue (Lycaenidae) species, most do not seem to be particularly common. Exceptions include the Common Grass-blue (*Zizina labradus*) which often appears as a scattering of blue-grey flakes across our lawns. Another is the Imperial Hairstreak (*Jalmenus evagoras*) whose gregarious larvae, pupae, freshly emerged adults and attendant ants are sometimes found together on the leaves and stems of *Acacia*. Encountered along some sections of the Park roadside is an exquisite small butterfly whose scientific name is larger than the insect itself. This is the Yellow-spotted Blue (*Candalides xanthospilos*) – its intense purple-black upper sides with pale orange forewing spots contrasting with silky grey undersides such that in flight it ‘flashes’ in a similar manner to the Black Jezebel (*Delias nigrina*). I have observed on several occasions individuals (which I presume to be this species) with black rather than purple-black upper wing colouration and forewing spots which are ivory-white instead of pale orange. Undersides are as for the ‘standard’ butterfly. The colours might have faded (although the butterflies themselves seemed to be in good condition) but possibly they were variations on the normal form. I would be interested to know whether other persons have made similar sightings. Most other species occur as individuals and are seen only on an occasional basis. For completeness, these are listed below with minimal comment. A Pencilled Blue sp. (*C. absimilis?*) rare; Varied Dusky Blue (*C. hyacinthina*) uncommon; Long-tailed Pea-blue (*Lampides boeticus*) occasional; Plumbago Blue (*Leptotes plinius*) single specimen only; Silky Hairstreak (*Pseudalmenus chlorinda*) very rare; Fiery Copper (*Paralucia pyrodiscus*) and Chequered Copper (*Lucia limbaria*) – both species rare and only encountered north of the town in a degraded weed-covered paddock divided by an eroded creek – an area which we were attempting to regenerate; Short-tailed Line-blue (*Prosotas felderi*) single specimen only; Double-spotted Line-blue



(*Nacaduba biocellata*) uncommon. There are almost certainly other species in the area but their presence and status require further observations and confirmation.

An assortment of skippers (Hesperiidae) has been observed. The noteworthy species is the reasonably common Splendid Ochre (*Trapezites symmomus*) whose comparatively large size and bright colours (for a skipper) make it instantly distinguishable. Others include the Lilac Grass-skipper (*Toxidia doubledayi*); Dingy Grass-skipper (*T. peron*); Barred Skipper (*Dispar compacta*); Spotted Sedge-skipper (*Hesperilla ornata*); Bright Shield-skipper (*Signeta flammeata*); and a Grass-dart sp. (*Ocybadistes?*). A number of other species has been noted but again further observation is needed for positive identification.



Splendid Ochre (*Trapezites symmomus*)

It might be of interest to mention a selection of the local day-flying moths, which unlike many of their nocturnal counterparts are butterfly-like in their colours and habits. Many of our local diurnal moths have colour patterns of black with cream or white markings, including the Grapevine Moth (*Phalaenodes glycinae*); the Magpie Moth (*Nyctemera amica*); a Cruria species (*C. synopla?*) found along the Park roads; the rare and cryptically marked Mistletoe Moth (*Comocrus behri*) and the equally rare Joseph's Coat Moth (*Agarista agricola*) which sports the additional colours of red, pale blue and deep yellow. In contrast, there is the delicate Heliotrope Moth (*Utetheisa pulchelliodes*), its silky-white forewings subtly speckled with orange and black spots. A geometrid, the Triangular Moth (*Epidesmia chilonaria*) indeed forms a perfect brown triangle embellished with a wavy line when at rest but reveals bright orange upper surfaces on its hind wings in flight. As it flits amongst the understorey, it reminds me (in appearance if not flight pattern) of the Brown Ringlet (*H. metirius*) whose territory it cohabits. Obviously these colours are well suited for blending into the leaf-littered and light-dappled environment.

By the beginning of May, the butterfly season in Bundanoon is virtually over, with just the odd remnant Brown (mostly *Heteronympha* spp.), Yellow Admiral (*V. itea*), Meadow Argus (*J. villida*) or Cabbage White (*P. rapae*) soldiering on. Owing to the local climatic conditions, the next four to five months normally produce few lepidopteran sightings of significance. After a bumper 2010-2011 summer season the last couple of years have generally been disappointing butterfly-wise. Numbers of species and individuals (with a few exceptions) have been down, and it is to be hoped that this is not a trend for the future. Butterflies are endangered from many quarters – land clearing and development, pollution, pesticides and ‘natural’ disasters. Being highly visible, their relative presence or otherwise establishes an ideal barometer for



gauging the well-being of other insect species and by extension, the health of the wider ecosystem.

*I admit to having no formal entomological background – hence the informal approach to the text (my ‘expertise’ is graphic and typographic design). My interest in butterflies however goes back to school days, when a friend and I collected in our local inner Sydney suburbs – I think pictures in a book or on cereal cards initially inspired us. Our methods were primitive (homemade nets and cardboard boxes), presentation and preservation unsophisticated, documentation non-existent. In the ‘70s and ‘80s, armed with more knowledge and proper equipment, I assembled a small collection with specimens mainly obtained from Sydney’s northern bush areas, southern NSW and northern Queensland. With today’s conservation ethics in mind photography and observation have now almost supplanted field collection. My wife Wendy and I have lived in Bundanoon since the end of 2000 after escaping the environmental stresses of Sydney. We spend a great deal of time in a large garden and belong to volunteer groups working in the adjacent section of Morton National Park (track and other maintenance) and the local Currabunda Wetland (bush regeneration and planting). If the modest informal notes made during these activities stimulate an awareness of recording butterflies and moths in local or out of the way locations, then they will have achieved their purpose.*

Photos Alan Hyman

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## NEW HOST PLANT

### **A new host plant for the Satin Azure (*Ogyris amaryllis meridionalis*)** – Geordie Paton

Several months ago I noticed Satin Azure butterflies active around mistletoes growing on host trees in Broome, Western Australia and photographed an adult on that mistletoe. Ross Kendall and John Moss confirmed that the mistletoe is the Twin-leaved Mistletoe (*Amyema benthamii*).

It was suggested to me that I “band” a branch near the mistletoes to see if larvae would shelter and also pupate there. They promptly did so and I subsequently collected some pupae to observe and to verify the butterfly species.



Satin Azure (*Ogyris amaryllis meridionalis*) on  
*Amyema benthamii*

