



1 & 2 *Acraea terpsicore* eggs  
 5 & 6 *A. terpsicore* pupae  
 9 & 10 *A. terpsicore* male

3 & 4 *A. terpsicore* larvae  
 7 & 8 *A. terpsicore* female

Photos Bob Miller

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### The Scarlet Jezebel (*Delias argenthona*) – Hongming Kan

Commonly known as Jezebel butterflies, genus *Delias* is a group of beautiful butterflies with stunning combinations of colours of red, yellow, black and white. I remember clearly the first time when I spotted a Black Jezebel resting on a leaf in Karawatha forest I was so impressed by the intricate colour patterns on its wings that I couldn't help wondering if God had doodled on them.

In **Butterfly Lovers**, one of the most famous ancient Chinese folktales, after the tragic death of two young lovers their spirits turned into beautiful Red-Based Jezebel butterflies (*Delias pastithoe*) and rushed out of the grave to stay together forever. One day in October 2016, Ross told me he discovered eggs and larvae of the Scarlet Jezebel on mistletoe, knowing that I was very keen on photographing them. Except for the common Black Jezebel butterflies, I had never had a chance to see other live Jezebels before. A few days later, we returned to the park together where Ross had made the discovery. There were three low hanging mistletoes (*Amyema miquelii*) growing on gum trees and Ross had been checking on them for years but had not found anything until this year.

The eggs were laid together haphazardly in clusters on the mistletoe leaves. The egg of the Scarlet Jezebel is actually quite beautiful. Oval in shape, it has a corolla-like structure on one end and a flat bottom on the other. White ridge lines can be seen clearly running vertically along the surface of the egg, connecting the corolla and the



flat bottom. In some eggs, the little black heads of the larvae were clearly visible, meaning the larvae would soon hatch.

Unlike other butterfly larvae I had seen before, the early instars of Scarlet Jezebel were gregarious. They seemed to enjoy the company of one another.

Being a seasoned butterfly breeder, Ross told me Scarlet Jezebel larvae don't seem to do well on the cuttings of the leaves and the best way to raise them is to leave them on the host plant enclosed by a sleeve in order to keep them safe from parasites and that was exactly what we did for them.



20 days later, when we returned, most of the larvae had reached final instars and a lot of them had already pupated. Just like the early instars, the late instars were also gregarious, sharing food and resting together on the leaves. Judging by the big sizes of the larvae, we knew they were very healthy and would metamorphose into big butterflies.



Not only did they eat and rest together, but also pupated together in groups.

I took some pupae home to photograph the adults. One week later, the beautiful butterflies emerged.



Photos Hongming Kan

