

Nymphalidae family

Australian Admiral

*Vanessa itea***Also known as:** Yellow Admiral**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Throughout the year, mainly early spring**Wingspan:** m 50mm; f 50mm**Mature larva length:** 32mm

This species has done well in built-up areas, as it can find a reliable supply of its caterpillar food plant, Stinging Nettle (*Urtica urens**). Home gardeners should consider that if they leave a patch of undisturbed nettles, it will very likely lead to caterpillars and butterflies of this species appearing in the garden. Alternatively, the native, non-stinging *Parietaria* species (which are delicate plants, suited to a shade house or other shady aspect), may be better suited to the home garden (ouch!).

Caterpillar food plants: Plants from the nettle family. The caterpillars eat the soft parts of the plants.

Adelaide native species: Western Pellitory (*Parietaria australis*), Mallee Smooth-nettle (*Parietaria cardiostegia*), Smooth-nettle (*Parietaria debilis*), Scrub or Native Stinging Nettle (*Urtica incisa*).

Foreign species: Small or Stinging Nettle* (*Urtica urens*), Wall Pellitory (*Parietaria judaica*), Baby's Tears (*Soleirolia soleirolii*).

A handsome butterfly mainly seen early in spring and to a lesser degree in autumn. It has adopted the introduced Stinging Nettle as a caterpillar food plant and is therefore a widespread butterfly over most of the southern areas of South Australia. It is occasionally seen during fine spells in the middle of winter.

The male and female butterflies are very similar. The female is a little darker and has a paler



cream-yellow coloured band across the middle of the forewing. The forewing is generally black with a russet coloured area near the body and the pale yellow to cream-white coloured band mid-wing. There is a couple of much smaller white dashes near the tip or apex of the wing. The hind wing is russet with a black border on the outer and upper margins. There is a series of black spots with blue centres positioned near the outer margin of this wing. Underneath, the apex of the forewing and the whole of the hind wing are mottled in grey, brown and black. There is a circular blue marking along the top margin of the forewing as well. Other markings are reasonably similar to the upper surface of the forewing.

The caterpillars live in a folded leaf on the nettle food plant. They are grey-green to black in colour and are olive-green underneath the body. They have a yellow band running along the sides and a pale line along the back. They have a couple of rows of pointed, branched spines running along the back as well. As with the caterpillar of the Australian Painted Lady, these spines are not dangerous to humans.

