



### Nymphalidae family

# Australian Painted Lady

*Vanessa kershawi*

**Also known as:** Blue-spotted Painted Lady

**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common

**Flight:** Throughout the year

**Wingspan:** m 43 mm; f 47 mm

**Mature larva length:** 32 mm

This widespread but lovely migratory species will be seen from time to time in suburban gardens, more so in spring and early summer. Growing Everlastings and other daisies (Asteraceae), especially *Helichrysum* spp., is one way of attracting this species. It is also attracted to nectar-producing flowers and is an almost guaranteed visitor from time to time.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Everlasting Daisies and some invasive pasture weeds. The caterpillars eat the soft green parts of these plants.

**Adelaide native species:** Wirewort (*Asteridea athrixioides* f. *athrixioides*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*), Button Everlasting (*Helichrysum scorpioides*), Strawflower (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*).

**Other South Australian species:** Billy-buttons (*Calocephalus* spp.), Everlastings (*Chrysocephalum* spp.), Tiny Cudweed (*Gnaphalium indutum*), Everlastings (*Helichrysum* spp.), Everlastings (*Leucochrysum* spp.), Sunrays (*Rhodanthe* spp.).

**Australian species:** Ammobium Daisy (*Ammobium alatum*).

**Foreign species:** Weeds—Cape-weed\*.

This is a butterfly that at one time or another will inhabit most household flowerbeds. It is another of our successful Australian butterflies that has shown an ability to use introduced garden plants and weed species to raise its caterpillar stages.



The Australian Painted Lady is a capable migrant, and this allows it to re-populate areas when its population may have become reduced due to parasites or disease.

The upper sides of both sexes of this species are very similar, being black to black-brown, with a complex pattern of thick, orange markings in the central portion of the forewing.

The underside of the forewing is coloured in a very similar manner to the upper side; however, the apex is greyish instead of black.

The adult butterfly measures between 43 to 47 mm across, although larger and smaller examples may be found.

The mature caterpillars are a shade of grey, brown or green, with a series of paler lines running the length of the body. They have a series of branched spines on the body. These spines are not dangerous to people. The pupae vary from red to grey-brown with darker cryptic markings and a pair of gold or silver spots. They are generally attached to the food plant.

