

## Lycaenidae family

## Icilius Blue

*Jalmenus icilius***Also known as:**

Icilius Hairstreak, or Amethyst Hairstreak

**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Rare**Flight:** Nov–Mar**Wingspan:** m 26 mm; f 29 mm**Mature larva length:** 20 mm

This species is now rare and vulnerable in the Adelaide area and known colonies should be protected and assisted by fresh plantings of its Golden Wattle caterpillar food plants. Gardeners near the Hills Face or other reserves should be encouraged to grow the caterpillar food plants that, in the presence of common *Iridomyrmex* ant species, may attract the attention of this species and induce breeding. When selecting individual plants to attract or host this species, it's worth remembering that the plants that are favoured by the butterfly for its caterpillars are often dwarfed ones. Selection of dwarfed tube-stock with multiple branches, or manually pruning the top of the seedling to promote a low bushy aspect may gain the favour of this species.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Wattles and Sennas. The caterpillars eat the young leaves of the food plants.

**Adelaide native species:** Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Wirilda (*Acacia retinodes*).

**Other South Australian species:**

Port Lincoln Wattle (*Acacia anceps*), Mulga (*Acacia aneura complex*), Wallowa (*Acacia calamifolia*), Elegant Wattle (*Acacia victoriae* ssp. *victoriae*), Punty Bush (or *Desert Cassia*) (*Senna artemisioides* ssp. *x coriacea*), Fine-leaf Desert Senna (*Senna artemisioides* ssp. *filifolia*), Desert Cassia (*Senna artemisioides* ssp. *petiolaris*).

Along the Adelaide foothills escarpment, small colonies of this metallic-blue butterfly still exist.



It is very local in its distribution, and is often restricted to a single example or small stand of its caterpillar food plant, Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). An established colony may exist for many years if not disturbed.

This butterfly needs an ant associate to interact with its caterpillars to be able to form these colonies; in this case, mainly small black *Iridomyrmex* ants.

There is a slight difference in colouration between the male and female butterflies, with the males having a blue-green metallic central area on the upper side of the wings, while the female is pale powder blue in the same area. The outer areas of the upper side of the butterflies are brown.

The underside of the wings are a pale fawn-brown colour, with mid-brown markings outlined in white with a small black 'eye-spot'. They have an orange surround and a tiny tail at the bottom of the outer margin of the hind-wing.

