

Nymphalidae family

Lesser Wanderer

*Danaus petilia***Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Throughout the year**Wingspan:** m 60 mm; f 60 mm**Mature larva length:** 38 mm

This attractive native species uses Milkweed (or Cotton-bushes as they are also known) as caterpillar food plants. The Lesser Wanderer is somewhat spasmodic in its appearance in suburban Adelaide, but is often present in the valleys of the foothills. Growing Milkweed plants may attract this species further into the suburbs in greater numbers. The native food plant, Desert Cynanchum (*Cynanchum floribundum*), may be an interesting plant to try in the home garden.

The caterpillars of this species remain exposed on the plant, relying on nature's warning colours of yellow, white and black to advertise their toxicity.

Caterpillar food plants: Milkweeds or Cotton-bushes. The caterpillars eat the flowers and soft green parts of these plants.

South Australian species: Desert Cynanchum (*Cynanchum floribundum*), Native Pear (*Marsdenia australis*), Bush Bean (*Rhyncharrhena linearis*).

Foreign species: Broad-leaf Cotton-bush* (*Gomphocarpus cancellatus*), Narrow-leaf Cotton-bush* (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*).

Unlike the Monarch, its near relative, the Lesser Wanderer is a South Australian native butterfly. It is one of a group of closely related butterflies that have a near worldwide distribution in warmer climate countries. This butterfly is more common in the north of the state, where its native Desert



Cynanchum food plant grows. Near Adelaide, where it tends to be a more sporadic breeder, it uses the same Milkweed food plants as the Monarch.

On the upper surface, this butterfly is coloured pale tan-orange. The outer margins of both wings and tip of the forewing are black. The underside colouration is generally paler and the sexes are similar.

The caterpillars appear superficially similar to those of the Monarch, though the mature caterpillars are quite a bit smaller. They have a background pattern of pale yellow and black stripes and linear lozenges and a large, yellow, oval spot surrounded by black on each body segment. The larva has three, not two, pairs of filament-like tentacles on the body. A pair is situated near the head and at the rear of the body, and it has a third pair about one-third of the length of the body from the rear.

