

Nymphalidae family

Marbled Xenica

*Geitoneura klugii***Also known as:**

Common Xenica, or Klug's Xenica

Abundance in Adelaide area: Common**Flight:** Mid Oct – Jan**Wingspan:** m 39 mm; f 42 mm**Mature larva length:** 28 mm

This butterfly breeds on many native and introduced grasses and is common along the Hills Face and throughout the Hills where grass and trees occur together. Natural gardens and open grassy areas will draw this species further into the suburbs.

As with some of the Skippers and the Common Brown, all you have to do to encourage the Marbled Xenica is leave a strip of un-mown grasses, a couple of metres wide, preferably under light to medium shade. This should be enough to keep a healthy population of all these species in your backyard.

Caterpillar food plants: Native and introduced grasses. The caterpillars eat the leaves.

Adelaide native species: Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia* spp.), Spear Grasses (*Austrostipa* spp.), Tussock Grasses (*Poa* spp.), Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and probably other native grasses.

Foreign species: Weed grasses— False Brome*, Veldt Grass* and probably others.

One of the two Brown butterflies that are seen in dry wooded grasslands, the Marbled Xenica is the smaller butterfly; the other, the Common Brown, being considerably larger. The Marbled Xenica can sometimes be seen in large numbers. In the Adelaide area it is likely to be seen in the foothills and hills, as well as south of the city. It may



also sometimes be seen in wilder areas of outer suburban parks and reserves.

The male and female butterflies are very similar. The females are a little paler and larger. The background colour of the upper sides of the butterflies is a yellow to orange-brown, with dark brown irregular markings overlaying this. There are a series of white centered, black 'eyespot' in the top outer angle of the forewing, the apex, and the lower outer angle of the hind wing (known as the tornal angle).

The underside of the forewing is very much like a paler version of the upper side. The underside of the hind wing is quite different. It has a very obscure eyespot and is mottled and patterned in grey-brown, which is an excellent camouflage when settled on bark and grassland strewn with leaf litter under Eucalypts.

The mature caterpillars are green, with darker green and yellow lines running along the body. They feed at night on their grass food plants.

