

Nymphalidae family

Meadow Argus

Junonia villida calybe

Abundance in Adelaide area: Common

Flight: Throughout the year

Wingspan: m 40 mm; f 43 mm

Mature larva length: 32 mm

The Meadow Argus is a common butterfly that occurs throughout the Adelaide region. Unfortunately, some of its caterpillar food plants are weeds and not desirable in the home garden. Keen gardeners could try some of the native caterpillar food plants listed here. Because its weedy food plants are so widespread and the butterfly is a strong flier that travels widely, even if you don't succeed in establishing a breeding colony of Argus butterflies, you should still have them as regular visitors to your nectar plants.

Caterpillar food plants: Native herbaceous plants and many invasive weeds. The caterpillars eat the soft parts of the plants.

Adelaide native species: Common Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), Fairy Fan-flower (*Scaevola aemula*).

Other South Australian species: Spreading Nut-heads (*Epaltes australis*), *Goodenia* spp., Fan-flowers (*Scaevola* spp.), Bluerod (*Stemodia florulenta*).

Foreign species: Snapdragons and weeds—Centaurry, Lippia*, Ribwort* (*Plantago lanceolata*), Scabious*, Common Verbena (*Verbena officinalis*) and many others.

The local representative of a worldwide group of species, this butterfly has exaggerated 'eyespot' patterns on its wings.



How these eyespots work is a topic of dispute. They either scare a predator into thinking the expanded wings of the butterflies are actually the head of a much larger animal, or attract the attention of an attacking bird or lizard, causing them to target the edges of the wings, thus leaving the body and vital organs of the body of the insect alone.

The butterfly is a brown colour above, with a pair of blue centered, black eyespots, surrounded in orange, near the outer margin of the wings.

Underneath, the forewing is quite similar to the upper surface, though much paler. The background colour is a very pale, slightly greyish, brown.

The mature caterpillar is black with branched spines running along the length of the body. Like most other butterfly caterpillars, these spines are totally harmless.

