

Lycaenidae family

Rayed Blue

*Candalides heathi heathi***Abundance in Adelaide area:** Rare**Flight:** Sep – early Mar**Wingspan:** m 28mm; f 29mm**Mature larva length:** 15–20mm

A lovely Blue butterfly that breeds close to Adelaide along the Hills Face, the Rayed Blue is rare. It probably does not penetrate into the suburbs to any degree. Its main caterpillar food plants are Plantain weeds, which are not desirable for the home garden. However, some native *Plantago* species may provide viable alternatives. They prefer Ribwort in the Adelaide Hills, and although they have not been recorded as breeding on indigenous plants in the Adelaide area you could try planting Weeping Emubush or Stiff *Westringia*.

Caterpillar food plants: A variety of shrubs and herbs. The caterpillars eat the leaves.

Adelaide native species: Turkey-bush (*Eremophila deserti*), Weeping Emubush (or Berrigan) (*Eremophila longifolia*), Stiff *Westringia* (or Western Rosemary) (*Westringia rigida*).

Other South Australian species: Bluerod (*Stemodia florulenta*) and native plantains.

Foreign species: Weed: Ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*).

As the main caterpillar food plant for this butterfly in the Adelaide region is a common weed, it is somewhat surprising that the butterfly is not a lot more widespread and common. However, the butterfly is considered quite rare in the Mt. Lofty Ranges and Adelaide Hills area, with only a couple of stable colony sites known more widely in the Hills area.

The name 'Rayed Blue' refers to the yellowish-brown colouration that highlights the veins on



some male specimens, which tend to be coppery coloured with a faint purple bloom. Other males are a richer purple colour and their veins are not highlighted in yellow-brown as described above. The females are bluish to purplish in colour, with broad, grey-brown margins.



On the underside, the background colour is a silvery white, tending slightly grey or pale brown in some butterflies. There is generally a series of small black dots along the outer margins of the under-wings. Sometimes these dots are reduced in size or even absent, except for a single spot at the base of the hind wing.



The mature caterpillars are green with a yellow line down the back. Their presence on a food plant is usually indicated by a few small black ants and by the transparent 'tracks' on the leaves as the caterpillars eat the tissue on the under surface, leaving the veins and upper cuticle intact. A plant supporting a number of caterpillars soon loses its leaves but recovers quickly when they leave to pupate. This usually occurs some distance from the food plants, beneath the bark of a tree or on a fence post.

