



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA Inc.

NEWSLETTER

No. 2 October 1999

Welcome from the Chairman Beth Keane

Dear Members,

Welcome to our second newsletter! I'm thrilled to report several achievements which move us into tangible actions.

The launch of the exhibition at Carrick Hill commences our broad awareness campaign for promoting the butterfly conservation message to the general public. It was a buzz to witness people's reactions and curiosity, and fulfilling to see the displays we've worked on for so long appear in reality. Congratulations to all those involved, and a special thank you to Jan Forrest for her work as project leader which made it possible.

Lois Hasenohr has been very enthusiastic in developing badges and fundraising items for us. Thanks Lois, your energy is appreciated. Soon there will be many enticements to support

BCSA financially.

We are receiving many inquiries and requests for assistance from individuals and groups. This is helping to shape our information strategies, and keeping us in touch with other's conservation work. We continue to put butterflies on the agenda wherever we can.

There has been very positive feedback on our first newsletter. We hope you enjoy this one as much. Don't forget to send us your suggestions for future newsletters, we do want them to be useful.

We look forward to seeing you on the 6 December at our first members social and information evening.

Beth Keane

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INVITATION

Members and friends are invited to a general meeting to be held
at the

Highgate Guide Hall, Culross Avenue, Myrtle Bank
on Monday 6th December at 7.30pm

Hear club member Lindsey Hunt talk about butterflies of the Adelaide Hills
and see some of his beautiful life history images.

Admission by donation to assist hall hire fees

Please bring a plate of supper

MEET THE LEPIDOPTERA Part 2.

THE ORDER OF THINGS
CLASS INSECTA (Insects)
ORDER LEPIDOPTERA (Butterflies & Moths)
FAMILIES (of Butterflies)
HESPERIIDAE Skippers
PAPILIONIDAE Swallowtails
PIERIDAE Whites & Yellows
NYMPHALIDAE Browns, Nymphs & Danaids
LYCAENIDAE Blues & Coppers

There are 18 **browns, nymphs and danaids** (family Nymphalidae), with the group common name of brushfoots, as the two front legs of all the butterflies in this group are much reduced in size and often brush like. This group of butterflies are the most commonly seen around Adelaide, especially the Monarch or Wanderer (*Danaus plexippus*). In North America the Monarch is also called the Storm Butterfly, probably because of the clustering of the butterflies during late "fall" in California which gives warning of the impending winter storms, or similarly because the large southerly migration of the butterflies east of the Rockies to overwinter in Mexico also occurs during the "fall", with the butterflies staying just ahead of the gathering winter storms. It overwinters by the millions in Mexico. These overwinter gatherings also occur in our Adelaide Hills. The Monarch is a very durable butterfly and can live for more than a year, and is capable of flying across oceans. It could only settle in Australia once the milkweed or cotton bush (*Asclepias* spp) plants were introduced by the first settlers, as these plants are their main larval food source. The Lesser Wanderer (*Danaus chrysippus petilia*) will also feed on milkweeds.

The Common Crow or Oleander Butterfly (*Euploea core corinna*) is an eastern states visitor which feeds on milk-sap plants including the native figs (Moraceae), oleanders (Apocynaceae) and milkweeds (Asclepiadaceae). Butterfly larvae that feed on these plant families gain protection from predators, as these plants contain toxic properties which are transferred to the larvae and adult butterflies. This is an effective survival technique, as the toxins can be fatal to animals or birds, or at least make them very ill.

The Common Brown (*Hereronympha merope*) can be seen in woodland areas around the Adelaide Hills where it survives on the local kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) and other grasses. The females of the Common Browns are larger than, and look very different to the males. Both males and females emerge from their chrysalis in early summer, but the females go into hiding until autumn when they emerge again to start egg laying on the new grass produced by autumn rains.

The very large Tailed Emperor (*Polyura sempronius*), perhaps our most spectacu-

lar butterfly, introduced itself to SA for the first time in 1972 during protracted hot and humid weather. It has since established itself on introduced garden plants. Sometimes called the Four Tail it can be seen soaring high above the canopy in gardens during the summer. Its food plants range from kurrajongs (*Brachychiton* spp) and wattles such as *Acacia baileyana*, to "albizia" and the false acacia (*Robinia*). The Common Eggfly (*Hypolimnas bolina nerina*) is a vagrant nymph butterfly from the northern parts of Australia, feeding on lesser joy weed (*Alternanthera denticulata*) and sida (*Sida rhombifolia*). The males are very different to the females, having four large white eyes on the upper wings, ringed with iridescent purple.

One of SA's most common butterflies is the ubiquitous Australian Painted Lady (*Vanessa kershawi*) which can be seen throughout the year. It is very closely related to the common Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) found elsewhere in the world. Its larval diet is composed of plants from the daisy family (Compositae), e.g. capeweed (*Arctotheca*), everlastings (*Helichrysum* spp), and various prickly thistles. Like the Wanderer, this butterfly is capable of spanning oceans with migrating butterflies often reported flying around ships in the middle of oceans.

The Australian Admiral (*Vanessa itea*) is allied to the European Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), both feeding on stinging nettles (*Urtica* spp). Admirals are noted for their fast flight, flashing about and coming to rest infrequently on flowers of *Scabiosa* and *Buddleia*, or upside down on vertical walls.

The Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida calybe*), as seen on the recent Australian postage stamps, is also one of our common butterflies. It has beautiful markings with rings or 'eyes' on the upper sides of the wings, and is a fast flyer. The larval food plants around Adelaide include the weed plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), woolly toadflax (*Kickxia* spp), verbena and various plants of the daisy and Goodeniaceae families. It is related to the American Buckeye butterfly.

The Glasswing (*Acraea andromacha*) can be seen occasionally in the Adelaide area. Its larvae use native passion plants as a food source. The glasswing group of butterflies are very common in Africa.

To be continued next issue



Kath Alcock sketch

WHO IS EDUCATING WHOM ?

I recently attended a field-day and weed identification day which was part of "Weed Busters Week". The slogan was '**Identification for a weed free nation - get to know the enemy!**'

In the show bag kit I received a full colour weed identification chart which illustrated 84 weeds. This was part of a promotion for "The world's most popular weed killer".

Apart from the real weeds the chart included the following native species!:

Common Reed (*Phragmites*), **Rushes** (which could include all Juncaceae, Cyperaceae which include the **sedges** etc.), **Kangaroo Grass** (*Themeda*), **Cumbungi or Bulrush** (*Typha*), **Bracken** and other **native grasses**.

What sort of information is this to enlighten us? I thought we were supposed to look after our diversity, not destroy it. Did you know that a majority

of our South Australian butterflies use grasses and sedges as their larval food source! Not to mention the damage to waterways, as most native plants mentioned above are found near water and swamps. Who should be educating the companies that give out this kind of wrong information? How can we make them more accountable for misleading information, especially if the environment is damaged as a result. I wonder if we can believe what they tell us about the safety of the genetic engineering aspect of their business.

Perhaps it should be up to those who promote field days of this kind to read and understand the information before handing it out! What ever the cause, we should be more vigilant about how we protect our environment and who is doing the protecting for us. All of us need to be critical in our analysis of information presented, and not accept everything at face value.

August 1999
David Keane

<http://www.adelaide.net.au/~reid/>

This is the web address of Roger Grund's website entitled -

"SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BUTTERFLIES"

If you have not yet checked out the web and this site you are in for a treat. Roger's site includes the following:

INTRODUCTION AND HABITATS with links to 'Habitats and vegetation clearance in Aust', 'Vegetation cover in Australia' and 'Climatology'.

BUTTERFLY BIOLOGY

BUTTERFLY LIST AND CONSERVATION STATUS – checklist of the butterflies (both scientific and common names) to be found or likely to be found in South Australia and details of their Conservation Status

CATERPILLAR FOODHOST LIST

WHAT BUTTERFLY IS THAT? - how to identify South Australian butterflies.

DATA SHEETS AND LIFE HISTORIES – includes many photos

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION – Information on BCSA and the article "Meet the Lepidoptera"

HABITAT RESTORATION

BUTTERFLY GARDENING

REFERENCES AND LINKS

<p>BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA Inc. Membership is just \$5.00 pa Applications to: David Keane c/- P.O. INGLEWOOD, 5133 S.A.</p>

ROGER GRUND - COMMITTEE MEMBER OF BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA Inc. and author of "South Australian Butterflies" Website.

Roger Grund has been interested in butterflies for most of his life. His interest commenced early in his life due to the presence in his household of the large green birdwing butterfly and the large blue Ulysses butterfly brought back from New Guinea by an uncle present there during World War II, and also due to the presence of a bright blue *Amaryllis Azure* butterfly collected by his mother when his parents were opal mining at Andamooka. This interest was fostered by his late mother Jean Grund OAM, a noted naturalist and photographer. The interest was maintained into his early working years and culminated with a major taxonomic revision of the *Theclines* group of blue butterflies in collaboration with his Japanese friend Atuhiro Sibatani which resulted in the naming of several new species.

Roger's working profession as a petroleum geologist took him to many exotic places around the world and his interest in butterflies continued. However, in his later working life this interest waned. On recent retirement this interest has been intensely rekindled whereupon he has devoted a considerable portion of his retirement to survey and conservation work on South Australian butterflies that includes many published reports. He has increased the biological knowledge of South Australian butterflies considerably over the last five years, and in collaboration with his friend Lindsay Hunt has made many new recent recordings of butterflies for SA. He is currently imparting much of his accumulated knowledge into his newly developed website on South Australian butterflies with help from Lindsay Hunt and Robert Fisher.

PROPOSED RECOVERY

PROGRAM for *Hesperilla flavescens flavia* Yellowish sedge-skipper on Yorke Peninsula.

BCSA recently applied for funds from the Threatened Species Network to lay the ground work for a recovery plan for the Yorke Peninsula populations of this endangered butterfly species. See article last issue.

We are very pleased to announce that BCSA have been successful in obtaining funds for this work and at the December meeting the project will be discussed further, in particular, where members can offer their services.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BUTTERFLIES GONE? An action plan...

The recent South Australian Museum exhibition features 5 Introductory panels the last of which provides a guide to what you can do to ensure butterflies continue to be a part of our urban and rural environment.

Butterflies need host plants to survive. Their larval stages are almost entirely dependent on flowering plants as a food source. Sadly many species of butterflies have disappeared or are only found in conserved areas. Some of the reasons for their disappearance include:

- clearance of native vegetation,
- draining of swamps,
- overgrazing by feral or introduced animals,
- trampling of grasslands,
- introduction of pesticides,
- aerial spraying,
- fires and urbanisation.

Although urban butterflies are still present they have reduced in numbers in recent years. Garden layouts have changed. The mass use of nectar laden, old-fashioned, cottage flowering plants necessary for adult butterflies to feed has been replaced by lawns, non-nectar producing hybrid plants and specialist shrubs.

What can you do?

Butterflies can be grouped into three categories for conservation and restoration purposes.

- **Migrants and Vagrants** are generally common butterflies where they breed and usually no conservation measures are required.
- **Urban butterflies** are generally common if the food sources for larva and adult are present and can be established by the simple method of introducing their host plants to an appropriate area. Many butterflies are flight time specific, mostly either spring or early summer. To ensure a continuous flight of butterflies garden planting needs to be planned accordingly. Avoid the use of poisonous sprays.
- **Rare and threatened butterflies** are rarely found in urban gardens usually because of the specialist nature of their host plant or because they have certain biological requirements which cannot be found in the urban garden.

Rare and threatened butterflies

Skippers (Hesperiidae) and many satyrid butterflies favour grasses and sedges as host plants and are especially vulnerable to the effects of agriculture and urbanisation. These butterflies would be the easiest to re-establish and conserve due to their simple requirements and that they do not wander very far from their host plant.

Many threatened species of the blues and coppers (Lycaenidae) are now mostly confined to large conservation parks due to their narrow range of host plants or larval dependence on certain ants, which also have particular requirements.

An Action Plan

Find out what plants currently occur in your garden, property, road reserve, park or conservation reserve. Survey the plants, make a list. Include grasses, herbaceous plants, as well as bushes and trees.

Find out what butterflies occur now and may have in the past.

What are their requirements to survive as a larva and as an adult?

Plan how to retain existing vegetation, fencing it off from animals if necessary.

Can you re-introduce the butterfly host plant?

Talk to neighbours about reducing pesticide use.

Join the group 'Butterfly Conservation South Australia Inc.'

Help wanted !! Can anyone grow *Gahnia filum* ?

Are there any members who can grow some of the larval food plants? Many of SA's butterflies feed on specific plants of the grass and sedge families and these will be required for habitat recovery programs. **We may need 1000's of plants!**

We wish to call on anyone who has successfully propagated *Gahnia filum*, commonly called Chaffy saw-sedge (page 2031 in Black's flora 1986). This plant is essential as a food plant for some of our rare butterflies. It is located in scattered colonies around the southern parts of Australia. Local provenance is preferred. There are good locations in the south of York Peninsula (Refer: Roger Grund's web site <http://www.adelaide.net.au/~reid>). Other gahnias will also be required, such as *Gahnia trifida*.

If anyone can grow these plants successfully in large numbers, or knows of others who have been successful, please contact David Keane on (08) 8389 2352, C/- PO Inglewood 5133. We wish to research propagation methods, and involve members who have expressed interest in growing plants for us.

CONGRATULATIONS
to Chairman Beth and
Treasurer David who re-
cently married.

We welcome the following new members:

FIONA CHAMBERS
CHARLES VAN DIJK
KAREN
BELLCHAMBERS
GEORGE DUFFY
LOIS HASENOHR
HELEN WOODWARD
CLAIRE GIFFORD
JOERG WIESE
ELKE WIESE
PAT SPILLER
ALLAN SPILLER
DAVID PFEIFFER
MARION PFEIFFER
J.GLENDEENING
J.JOYES
SHERYN PITMAN
BOB WALLACE
KIM SINCLAIR
PHYL NICHOLSON
ROSEMARY ESDALE
BEVERLEY
BRAITHWAITE
FAY LUSH
JILL SALVI
ELLEN HOHNSON
ALANA DARE
B.J.THOMPSON
L. PARSONS
PETER J. BICE
MARLENE
WOOLCOCK
B.W.L. WELLER

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SA Inc.

Chairman: Beth Keane, C/- PO INGLEWOOD 5133 ph 08) 83892352
Secretary and Newsletter Editor: Jan Forrest OAM C/- South Australian Museum, North Terrace, ADELAIDE, 5000 ph 08) 82077503, email <janf@senet.com.au >
Treasurer and Membership Secretary: David Keane, C/- P.O., INGLEWOOD 5133 ph 08) 83892352
email <dkeane@iweb.net.au >
Fundraising: Lois Hasenohr
Committee members: Marcus Pickett, Roger Grund, Lindsay Hunt, Mike Moore, and Bob Edge
Honorary Member: RH (Bob) Fisher OAM

DIARY DATES

EXHIBITION

The South Australian Museum in collaboration with members of Butterfly Conservation SA present the Exhibition: "Where have all the Butterflies Gone" at Carrick Hill open Wednesdays to Sundays 10.00am – 5.00pm.

MEETINGS

Meetings of the committee are held on regular intervals and all members are welcome to attend. If you would like further information or receive an agenda please contact the Secretary Jan Forrest C/- South Australian Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide telephone 82077503 (w) or 82978230 (h and message bank) or via email on <janf@senet.com.au >.

GENERAL MEETING

On Monday 6th December at Highgate Guide Hall Culross Avenue, Myrtle Bank at 7.30pm.

Admission by donation (to assist hall hire fees), please bring a plate of supper. Hear Lindsay Hunt talk on the Butterflies of the Adelaide Hills and view some of his beautiful life history images.

