

## Lycaenidae family

## Bitter-bush Blue

*Theclinesthes albocincta***Also known as:** Grund's Blue**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Rare**Flight:** Throughout the year**Wingspan:** m 22 mm; f 21 mm**Mature larva length:** 11–13 mm

The caterpillar food plant of this beautiful butterfly has disappeared from the coastal strip near Adelaide. Coast-care groups are replanting Bitterbush along parts of the northern coast of this area in an effort to assist this butterfly. It would be great to see these efforts extended south to Victor Harbour and Goolwa. Bitterbush is a salt tolerant plant that grows well in seaside areas.

**Caterpillar food plant:** Bitterbush. The caterpillars eat the leaves, fruit and male flowers of the plant.

**Adelaide native species:** Coast Bitter-bush (*Adriana quadripartita*, *klotzschii* form).

A butterfly of the coastal strip in the Adelaide area, the Bitter-bush Blue is now very rare on the plains and around the Fleurieu Peninsula and south coast.

The caterpillars rely upon the Coast Bitter-bush (*Adriana quadripartita*, *klotzschii* form), a plant that grows in the sub-coastal zone, especially in intact dune systems. It is one butterfly that would benefit from some active cultivation of its caterpillar food plant in dune revegetation and Coastcare schemes.

The butterfly can vary in appearance from colony to colony, with butterflies from the Adelaide region being mainly powder blue with brown



borders in the males. Underneath, the wings of both sexes are a pale brown to brown-grey. Eyespots present on the upper side are also present on the underside. There is also a short, stubby tail at the bottom of the outer margin, between these eyespots.

The caterpillars feed on the foliage and flowering heads of the food plant. Bitter-bush has separate male and female plants and the caterpillars seem particularly attracted to the male flower heads. Caterpillars can be green, brown, pink or purple in colour, with lines of a second colour darker from the body colour, and edged in yellow, running along the body. They are well hidden on the part of the plant they are feeding on and can change colour through their life. They pupate either on a dead leaf of the food plant, or in leaf litter or other material, such as dead snail shells or under rocks close to the plant. The pupa is pink or brown with darker markings and is ovate in shape.

