

## Lycaenidae family

# Long-tailed Pea-blue

*Lampides boeticus*

**Also known as:** Pea Blue

**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common

**Flight:** Mid Aug – mid May

**Wingspan:** m 25 mm; f 27 mm

**Mature larva length:** 13–16 mm

This butterfly is present at times in the suburbs but is usually uncommon. It breeds on various native and introduced legumes as well as introduced peas, beans, lentils and lucerne. This provides a wide range of natives and non-natives to select from. Butterflies are seen around their caterpillar food plants or feeding on flowers. They may appear at any time of the year depending on the availability and condition of their food plants.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Pea-flowering bushes. The caterpillars eat buds, flowers, and seeds inside immature pods.

**Adelaide native species:** Tall Scurf-pea (*Cullen australasicum*), Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*), Austral Trefoil (*Lotus australis*), Red-flower Trefoil (*Lotus cruentus*), Narrow-leaf Bush-pea (*Pultenaea tenuifolia*), Cockies Tongue (*Templetonia retusa*).

**Other South Australian species:** Scurf-peas (*Cullen* spp.), Birdflowers or Rattlepods (*Crotalaria* spp.), Sturt Desert Pea (*Swainsona Formosa*) and other *Swainsona* species.

**Foreign species:** Dolichos Pea (*Dipogon lignosus*), Sweet-pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*), vegetable beans and peas.

A widely distributed butterfly occurring through much of Europe, Asia and Africa, the Long-tailed Pea-blue is well adapted to survive in an urban setting and in fact can be a minor pest of peas and beans in vegetable gardens.



The male butterfly is a purple-blue colour with a narrow brown border. The female has a background colour of mid-brown with a blue-purple suffusion, extensive on the forewings, but restricted to the area near the body on the hind wing.

Both male and female butterflies have a filament-like tail on the outer margin of the hind wing. Underneath, both sexes of butterflies are very similar, having a pale brown background with biscuit-brown and white linear markings.

There are a pair of small black spots in the outer margin of the hind wing, with a small band of metallic green scales within and to the outside of these black spots. These spots and the tail on the wing create a classic 'false head' to attract the attention of predators away from more vital parts of the butterfly. The butterfly rubbing its wings together, to further attract attention, enhances this illusion.

