

Hesperiidae family

Orange Palm-dart

Cephrenes augiades sperthias

Abundance in Adelaide area: Common

Flight: Sep–May

Wingspan: m 37 mm; f 41 mm

Mature larva length: 40–50 mm

Accidentally introduced from the Australian tropics by the nursery trade, this Skipper is well established throughout suburban Adelaide. It will breed on most palm species and if you can stand some damage to the leaves of your smaller palms, it is quite a welcome addition to our butterfly diversity. This Skipper needs warm sheltered conditions and only occurs in suburban Adelaide.

The Orange Palm-dart prefers to lay its eggs on palms with broad segments composing the leaves. The caterpillars make a shelter in the palm leaves and eat the leaves of the food plant.

Caterpillar food plants: Most palm species.

Australian native species: Bangalow Palms (*Archontophoenix* spp.), Cabbage-tree Palms (*Livistona* spp.) and others. There are no native South Australian palms.

Foreign species: Date Palms (*Phoenix* spp.) and others.

The popularity of potted palms in the modern décor is responsible for this Skipper making its way to South Australia. Originally found on the eastern seaboard from around the border of New South Wales and Victoria through to Queensland, the importation of the palm food plants from these areas has transported this Skipper to widely distributed places.



It was first found in Adelaide in 1990 and has colonised areas in the warmer parts of the city where palms are grown.

The butterfly occurs in two interchangeable colour forms, the 'pale form' and the 'dark form'. The pale form males have a bright orange background to the upper surface of the forewing, whereas in the dark form males this area is coloured a deep orange-brown. The pale form female is somewhat similar to the males patterning, though the orange areas are very reduced, whereas the dark form female is a uniform dark brown.

Underneath, males of the pale form have a mixture of orange and yellow-orange markings. The dark form male is similar, but it is red-brown where the pale form is orange. The underside of the pale form female is much darker than either the pale or dark form male, and may have a purplish sheen to it. The dark form female has only very obscure markings on the underside.

