

## Lycaenidae family

## Saltbush Blue

*Theclinesthes serpentata serpentata***Also known as:** Chequered Blue**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Sept–May**Wingspan:** m 18 mm; f 18 mm**Mature larva length:** 8–9 mm

A widespread and adaptable Blue, the Saltbush Blue could be encouraged into the suburbs by growing its caterpillar food plants. This butterfly has been found on mowed Saltbush growing on the footpath in suburban Woodville.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Saltbushes. The caterpillars eat the flowers and soft green parts of these plants.

**Adelaide native species:** Slender-fruit

Saltbush (*Atriplex acutibractea*), Coast Saltbush (*A. cinerea*), Marsh Saltbush (*A. paludosa*), Berry Saltbush (*A. semibaccata*), Lagoon Saltbush (*A. suberecta*), Climbing Saltbush (*Einadia nutans* ssp. *nutans*), Sea-berry Saltbush (*Rhagodia candolleana* ssp. *candolleana*), Fleshy Saltbush (*R. crassifolia*), Fragrant or Mealy Saltbush (*R. parabolica*), Pop Saltbush (*A. holocarpa*).

This tiny butterfly can be very common seasonally wherever its caterpillar food plants occur.

At times it colonises the inner city and inner suburban areas.

Both sexes have a central purple-blue to blue coloured central area on the upper-side of the wings, with broad brown margins. There are a couple of faint white crescents near the base of the hind wing along the outer margin and a distinctive chequered fringe to the outer margin of both wings. There is also a very stubby, short tail at the angle between the outer and basal margins of the hind wing.



The underside is a mid to dark brown in colour with white transverse markings on the forewing and white patches and other markings on the hind wing.

The caterpillars of this species are pale green or green-grey, with a yellow edged, darker band down the back and have an almost granular appearance to the surface of their skin. They are nearly invisible on their food plants, where they feed on the flower heads and leaves.

The tiny pupa is pale green to grey-green with scattered brown markings and is usually attached to the stems or leaves of the food plants.

This butterfly is easily encouraged to come to urban gardens and will readily form colonies if Saltbushes, including the smaller, decorative ones, are grown in the garden.

