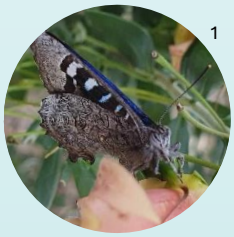
NATIVE BUTTERFLY FACT SHEET

Importance of Native Butterflies

Native butterflies are not only a beautiful sight in your garden, they are also important pollinators of WA native plants. If you want to attract native butterflies to your garden, you need to make sure you have a mix of host plants for the larva stage to feed on and nectar plants for the adult stage to feed on. Native butterflies are unfortunately in decline due to habitat loss, degradation (such as weeds) and climate change. There are around 40 species of butterflies in or near Perth. They vary in size from a wingspan of less than 2cm to a large wingspan of 9cm.

Types of Native Butterflies



Lycaenidae

These butterflies have smaller wing spans and are best identified by viewing the underside of the wings. Examples include the Satin Azure butterfly (*Ogyris amaryllis*), Pea blue (*Lampides boeticus*) and the Western Jewel (*Hypochrysops halyaetus*). Many of these butterflies have a symbiotic relationship with ants where the ants care for the caterpillars in exchange for sugary secretions.

Hesperiidae

Also known as the skippers or darts, they get their name from their rapid, darting flight. Examples include the Western Grass-Dart (*Bibla papyria ssp. Agraulia*), Varied Sedge-Skipper (*Hesperilla donnysa*) and Wedge Grass-Skipper (*Anisynta sphenosema*). They tend to be small and stout-bodied and brown in colour which makes them easily mistaken for moths. Host plants include native grasses and sedges.

Nymphalidae

This group has larger wing spans and are also known as the brush-footed butterflies as they appear to walk on just four legs, as their front pair is reduced and often hairy, resembling tiny brushes. Examples include the Lesser Wanderer (*Danaus petilia*), Painted Lady (*Vanessa kershawi*) and the Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida*).

Pieridae

These butterflies are white or yellow in colour and their wings are often spotted or edged with black markings. They are small to medium in size. Examples include the Red-spotted Jezebel (*Delias aganippe*), Lemon Migrant (*Catopsilia Pomona*) and Small Grass Yellow (*Eurema smilax*). Host plants include mistletoe and brassicas.

Photos by Michelle Davies [1], Mary and Peter Ball [2], Faye Arcaro[3] , all other photos by Mel Logozzo

WA Nature

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SUPPORTING NATIVE BUTTERFLIES

Ways you can support WA's native butterfly species, include:

- **Plant butterfly attracting plants** in a sunny, sheltered spot if possible. Butterflies like early morning sunshine to warm themselves, however they are delicate and do not like too much wind. Plant a mix of host and nectar plants for the caterpillars and adult butterflies
- **Mass planting of flowering plants**, especially yellow, orange, purple and red flowering plants are especially attractive to butterflies and make it easy for them to move through.
- **Adding a few flat rocks** to the garden will give butterflies a place to rest and warm themselves in the sunshine.
- **Add a shallow dish of muddy water** in a sunny spot to provide moisture. Some butterflies will suck water and nutrients from the muddy water.
- **Spread sand in an open area** of a flowerbed and add a mineral block (sometimes known as a cow lick) in the middle. Rain and dew will leach the minerals from the block into the surrounding soil for the butterflies to feed on.
- **Provide shelter** - butterflies like small nooks where they can hide from predators in summer and stay protected in winter. Their preference is natural habitats such as hollow logs, stones with cracks in them, loose bark or a stack of firewood.
- **Avoid using pesticides** and products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Native Butterfly Attracting Plants

SHRUBS
- Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*)
- *Blueberry Tree (Myopoum insulare*)
- Rice Flower (*Pimelea ferruginea*)
- Green Carpet (*Grevillea crithmifolia*)
- Geraldton Wax (*Chamelaucium uncinatum*)
- Native peas (*Pultenaeareticulata, Chrorizema, Bossiaea* species)
- Waldjumi (*Jacksonia sericea*)
- Prickle lily (*Acanthocarpus preissii*)
- Purple flag (*Patersonia occidentalis*)
- Berry Saltbush (*Rhagodia baccata*)
- *Waitzia* species
- Honey Myrtle *(Melaleuca huegelii)*
- Swan River Daisy (*Brachyscome iberidifolia)*
- Blue lace flower *(Trachymene coerulea)*
- *Hakea* species

TREES/LARGE SHRUBS
- Acacias (*Acacia cyclops, Acacia lasiocarpa*)
- Sheoaks (*Allocasuarina* species)
- Eucalyptus species
- Tea Trees (*Leptospermum*)
- *Banksia* species
- Bottlebrushes (*Callistemon*)

GRASSES AND SEDGES:
- *Lomandra* species
- *Poa poiformis*
- *Carex* species
- Spear-grass (*Austrostipa* species)
- Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*)
- Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)

GROUNDERCOVERS/ CLIMBERS
- Native wisteria *(Hardenbergia comptoniana)*
- Fan flowers *(Scaevola* species)
- Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*)
- Running postman (*Kennedia prostrata*)
- Australian Bluebell (*Billardiera fusiformis*)
- *Clematis* species

Photos courtesy of Native Spirit Nursery

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