Butterflies of South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens

An illustrated checklist

Compiled by Christopher Willis & Steve Woodhall

SANBI Biodiversity Series 16
South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens

Free State NBG, Bloemfontein

Hantam NBG, Nieuwoudtville

Pretoria NBG, Pretoria

Karoo Desert NBG, Worcester

KwaZulu-Natal NBG, Pietermaritzburg

Kirstenbosch NBG, Cape Town

Harold Porter NBG, Betty’s Bay

Lowueld NBG, Nelspruit

Walter Sisulu NBG, Roodepoort/Mogale City

www.sanbi.org
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Pretoria
2010
SANBI Biodiversity Series

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) was established on 1 September 2004 through the signing into force of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) No. 10 of 2004 by President Thabo Mbeki. The Act expands the mandate of the former National Botanical Institute to include responsibilities relating to the full diversity of South Africa’s fauna and flora, and builds on the internationally respected programmes in conservation, research, education and visitor services developed by the National Botanical Institute and its predecessors over the past century.

The vision of SANBI: Biodiversity richness for all South Africans.

SANBI’s mission is to champion the exploration, conservation, sustainable use, appreciation and enjoyment of South Africa’s exceptionally rich biodiversity for all people. SANBI Biodiversity Series publishes occasional reports on projects, technologies, workshops, symposia and other activities initiated by or executed in partnership with SANBI.

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Back, top: African Leaf Commodore (Christopher Willis)
Back, centre: Dotted Blue (Steve Woodhall)
Back, bottom: Green-veined Charaxes (Christopher Willis)

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This consolidated checklist would not have been possible without access to the published and unpublished results of past surveys conducted in various Gardens by members of LepSoc, as well as university students and amateur naturalists over many years. Their contributions towards a greater understanding of the biodiversity within South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens are sincerely appreciated.

Lepidopterists’ Society of Africa

The Lepidopterists’ Society of Southern Africa (LepSoc) was established as the Lepidoptera Study Group of Southern Africa in 1983. It is an organisation not for gain, but to promote both professional and amateur lepidopterists’ interest, with the main objective of significantly contributing to the overall knowledge of the diversity, taxonomy, habitats, distribution and life cycles of this fascinating group of insects.


During the 1990s, the focus of LepSoc shifted from providing a communication medium for specialists and collectors to becoming a truly conservation-focused organisation. Members were instrumental in creating three reserves to protect endangered butterflies. As far back as 1985, the Ruimsig Entomological Reserve in Roodepoort, close to the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden, was set aside to conserve the Roodepoort Copper *Aloeides dentatis dentatis*. Then there was
the battle to preserve the last colony of the Brenton Blue *Orachryops niobe*. The Brenton Blue Butterfly Reserve is now a Special Nature Reserve, under the management of CapeNature. In 1998, members were pivotal in identifying a strong population of the Heidelberg Copper *Chrysoritis aureus* at the Alice Glockner Nature Reserve near Heidelberg, Gauteng. This helped to remove a threat hanging over this reserve, proclaimed in 1973, of being de-proclaimed for low-cost housing.

One of the most significant developments that have taken the Society to where it is today has been the database collating system Lepidops, and the database itself, Lepibase. Conceived in 1998, it now has tens of thousands of data and is the prime vehicle for members to record their observations and collections.

The main project in which the Society is currently involved, is the Southern African Butterfly Conservation Assessment (SABCA), in collaboration with SANBI and the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town. The project, started in May 2007, is aimed at determining the distribution and conservation priorities of all butterfly species in southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland), especially those threatened with extinction. Realising that the scope of the project was so large that the small band of lepidopterists in the Society could not possibly hope to provide all the data required, SABCA provided for public participation in the form of a Virtual Museum.

One of the main priorities of LepSoc is to make it easier for people to become a member and learn more about butterflies. The LepSoc website (www.lepsoc.org.za) has been upgraded to allow electronic subscriptions. The Newsletter will become an electronic newspaper informing members as to what has been happening in the world of African Lepidoptera—and what events are planned in the near future. *Metamorphosis* will continue to be the Society’s journal in which articles of both scientific and general interest are published, but LepSoc will introduce another form of membership, totally electronic, based on the periodical electronic newsletter. The focus on education and data collection will continue and more events will take place.
Biodiversity richness benefiting all South Africans

Figure 1. Map showing the geographical spread of South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens (see also www.sanbi.org). Map drawn by Linette Ferreira.
Introduction

Butterflies have formed one of the more visible, but not always noticed components of the biodiversity of South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens (NBGs) since Kirstenbosch was established in 1913. With the transition of the National Botanical Institute (NBI) to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in September 2004, the mandate of the organisation expanded from its main focus on plants to include all aspects of biological diversity.

So far 205 butterfly taxa have been recorded in the nine National Botanical Gardens combined, with more butterflies recorded in the Gardens in the northern (Gauteng) and eastern (Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal) parts of South Africa than those in the Free State, Northern Cape and Western Cape (Table 1). This represents 26% of South Africa’s 801 known butterfly taxa (Henning et al. 2009). This is a remarkable statistic considering that the surface area of South Africa’s nine National Botanical Gardens combined (7 738 ha or 77.38 km²) comprises only 0.006% of the country’s total surface area (1 214 099 km²). While 122 (29%) of the 420 butterfly taxa of KwaZulu-Natal have so far been recorded within the KwaZulu-Natal National Botanical Garden’s (Pietermaritzburg) 47 ha (0.47 km²) surface area, this comprises a disproportionate 0.0005% of the 92 100 km² total surface area of the province.

Butterflies are probably the most popular order of insects among the general public and serve as important flagships for the public’s perception of invertebrate conservation. Additionally, many butterflies are threatened owing largely to habitat loss and modification. Botanical gardens have an important local conservation value for butterflies and other insects. Indeed, they often have more insects than surrounding indigenous vegetation because of their plant diversity. The wide variety of indigenous plants in South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens (classified as ‘conservation gardens’ because they all contain areas of natural vegetation in addition to their cultivated collections) provides both food and shelter for insects, including butterflies. Availability of adult nectar sources is an important factor in determining butterfly numbers, with habitat selection often based on nectar sources in preference to larval food plants. Design features most valuable in attracting butterflies are abundant nectar sources, preferably in sheltered, sunny situations.

Although our knowledge of the Gardens’ faunal diversity is still at an embryonic stage, South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens have,
**Table 1.** Comparison between butterflies recorded in South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens and provincial/national butterfly statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Free State</th>
<th>Gauteng</th>
<th>KwaZulu-Natal</th>
<th>Mpumalanga</th>
<th>Northern Cape</th>
<th>Western Cape</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of butterfly taxa*</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>801</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exclusive endemic taxa*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red List or threatened taxa*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* after Henning *et al.* (2009)
for many years, been describing the interactions and dependencies between plants, people and animals through interpretive signage displayed in the Gardens. This has been extended to general visitors through guided tours and to learners through formal educational programmes held in the Gardens. Several Gardens offer weekend talks and specialised natural history courses, and visitors are encouraged to make use of the opportunities that are provided to learn more about biological diversity present in and outside our NBGs. Together with biodiversity partners and volunteers from universities, museums, natural history societies and other research institutions, SANBI has been inventorying biodiversity in its Gardens for the past several years, and currently has faunal species lists for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies, molluscs, spiders and scorpions. The KwaZulu-Natal NBG in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, is the National Botanical Garden with the most comprehensive lists of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies, thanks largely to previous studies and inventories conducted in the Garden by staff and students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as well as amateur naturalists. It is likely that the current diversity of 19 butterfly taxa so far known for the 6 229 ha Hantam National Botanical Garden in the Northern Cape will significantly improve as future monitoring and survey work is conducted in the Garden at different times through the year.

SANBI's ultimate aim is to conserve and celebrate biodiversity and educate members of the public about its value and importance, both inside and outside the boundaries of our precious National Botanical Gardens, or, as they have also been described, national biodiversity facilities. The underlying assumption is that people with more exposure to nature are more interested in conserving it. It has been shown that direct experience with the natural world, especially during childhood, appears to be the most important source of environmental sensitivity. As human populations shift to cities, people will experience nature primarily through contact with urban nature. If it is true that conservation will increasingly depend on the ability of people in cities to maintain a connection with nature, then South Africa's National Botanical Gardens as urban havens of biodiversity and places that allow people to connect with natural habitats and ecosystems, will become increasingly more valuable for future generations.

While the public eye is usually focused on details of plants, insects, especially butterflies, bees, dragonflies and damselflies, are inevitably also noticed. Botanical gardens as such have an important role to introduce plant and insect conservation to the public. Butterfly-watching in the Gardens is excellent at any time of the year, although a greater
diversity of butterflies is usually seen in the summer months between September and April.

This consolidated checklist of butterflies is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive list of butterflies known for each of the nine National Botanical Gardens managed by SANBI. It provides a synthesis of Garden-based lists, accumulated by the individual Gardens over several years, and information supplied by university students and members of the Lepidopterists’ Society of Africa (LepSoc).

**Pioneers of butterfly exploration in South Africa**

Many individuals have contributed to our current understanding of butterflies in South Africa. A comprehensive list of these ‘trail blazers’ was published in Pennington’s butterflies of southern Africa (Pringle et al. 1994). Much of the information in the current work has been extracted from this more comprehensive historical synthesis. The following selection provides a summary of probably the most significant contributions made by past pioneers towards South African lepidoptery up to the end of the 20th century.

**Barber, Mary E. (née Bowker) (1818–1899)** Sister of James Henry Bowker. Mary began collecting, studying and painting butterflies, beetles and plants at a young age and became an enthusiastic writer, artist and naturalist. Mrs Barber was the most distinguished woman naturalist in South Africa at the time and she is commemorated in a number of butterfly and plant descriptions. South Africa’s smallest butterfly and the second smallest butterfly in the world (Dwarf Blue, Oraidiom barberae), is named after her.

**Bowker, James Henry (1822–1900)** Farmer, soldier, public servant and naturalist who collected butterflies, particularly from areas of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, many of which are held in the Iziko South African Museum. James Bowker helped Roland Trimen with his three-volume treatise on South African butterflies published in the late 1880s. He was well known as a collector of butterflies and recorded many new butterfly and plant species.

**Trimen, Roland (1840–1916)** Born in England. Having served for several years as Acting Curator of the South African Museum in Cape Town from the mid-1860s to the mid-1870s, finally became Curator of the South African Museum in August 1876, a post he held until his retirement in 1895. Trimen was the leading authority on South African butterflies during his lifetime, publishing a Catalogue of S.A. butterflies, 1862–1866, and three volumes on South African butterflies between 1887 and 1889. Ill health forced him to return to England in 1895. He became president of the Entomological Society in London in 1897. Trimen received numerous awards and wrote many articles
on other groups of insects, birds and fish as well as mammals. He was also a fine natural history draughtsman.

**Clark, Gowan Coningsby (1888–1964)** Best known for his paintings of the life histories of South African butterflies, completing more than 250 plates in his lifetime. Clark also painted many lepidopterous parasites. He was a modest and gifted man and his masterly illustrations have adorned many books on butterflies. He was the author of 16 scientific papers and books on butterflies.

**Platt, Ernest E. (1874–1966)** Platt contributed greatly to the knowledge of the life histories of southern African butterflies and moths. He made many notes and took many photographs of the early stages of butterflies. His list of the Lepidoptera food plants published in Volume III of the *South African Journal of Natural History* in 1921 was the most comprehensive information on the subject for many years.

**Van Son, Georges (1898–1967)** Born in Russia. Entomologist at the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, over a 42-year period from 1925 to 1967. Obtained his BSc, MSc and DSc degrees through the University of Pretoria. His main research was on butterflies. He wrote up the South African butterfly species in beautifully illustrated volumes, three of which appeared during his lifetime (1949, 1955 and 1963) and the fourth was ready for the press at the time of his death. The fourth part (1979) was revised and edited by Lajos Vári, another entomologist in the Transvaal Museum who specialised in the taxonomy of moths and leaf-mining insects. Georges van Son travelled extensively in southern Africa and adjoining territories and also collected plants, particularly succulents. Van Son was one of the kindest and most eminent lepidopterists of his day. His favourite collecting site in South Africa was Woodbush in the current Limpopo Province.

**Pennington, Kenneth (Ken) Misson (1897–1974)** Ken Pennington served in the Royal Flying Corps during World War I and was a school master at Michaelhouse for 35 years before his retirement in 1958. His collection, which he began in 1912 under guidance of his father, was the most complete collection of southern African butterflies at the time. It is now in the Transvaal Museum. Pennington’s *Butterflies of southern Africa* (Dickson & Kroon 1978; Pringle et al. 1994) was the definitive book on South African butterflies in the last quarter of the 20th century. Its status in South African natural history literature is compared with Roberts Birds of southern Africa and The Mammals of the southern African subregion by Smithers. Ken Pennington unfortunately passed away before his major work was published and it was edited by Charles Dickson and Douglas Kroon and published in 1978. This publication was revised and edited by Ernest Pringle, Graham Henning and Jonathan Ball in 1994, but is currently out of print. At least 30 new species and three subspecies were described by him, and 10 species and three subspecies bear his name. He published 16 papers on butterflies. Pennington was a founding member of the Entomological Society of Southern Africa and was elected president of the society in 1965.
Swanepoel, David Abraham (1912–1990) Swanepoel began collecting in 1925. Pennington’s Butterflies of southern Africa (Pringle et al. 1994) describes Swanepoel as follows: ‘Probably no other person has spent as much time and effort in the pursuit of butterflies in the field as this great collector, who had the tremendous gift of being able to excite others about butterflies. His immaculate collection is in the Transvaal Museum. He discovered many new species and subspecies and published many descriptions of new taxa.’ His list of publications includes the book Butterflies of South Africa: where, when and how they fly, published in 1953. At the time, it was one of the most valuable reference guides to South African butterflies, citing his many collection localities across the length and breadth of South Africa. He collaborated closely with both Georges van Son and Ken Pennington. Popular names for many of South Africa’s butterflies were proposed by him.

Dickson, Charles Gordon Campbell (1907–1991) Born and died in Cape Town. Collaborated with Gowan Clark. Dickson described 60 species and 34 subspecies of butterflies in his lifetime. Authored or co-authored 90 publications on Lepidoptera, including five books. Dickson was affectionately known by his ‘butterfly’ friends as their ‘Great Master’ and was regarded as the foremost authority on the butterflies of the Cape. He was also a meticulous entomological artist. Charles Dickson was awarded an MSc honoris causa by the University of Cape Town in 1974.

Pinhey, Elliot Charles Gordon (1910–1999) Having previously worked as a science teacher in England, Germany and the current Zimbabwe as well as an economic entomologist in the then Rhodesian Department of Agriculture, Elliot Pinhey moved to South Africa in 1948, where he took up a position at the Transvaal Museum. In the following year he accepted the post of Keeper of Entomology in the Coryndon Museum, Nairobi (now the National Museum of Kenya), where he worked for the next five years. In 1955 he returned to Zimbabwe as Keeper of Invertebrate Zoology based at the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo. Pinhey wrote many papers and books on southern African moths, butterflies and dragonflies. He was awarded a DSc by London University in 1962 for published entomological works. His many expeditions to remote parts of Africa were rewarded with discoveries of many species new to science.

How to use the Checklist

For ease of cross-reference, this list follows the order of families (e.g. Nymphalidae) and groups (e.g. Browns, Bitter Acraeas) that appear in Woodhall’s (2005) comprehensive publication Field guide to butterflies of South Africa. Within each group, butterflies are listed in alphabetical order according to their common names. Where applicable, alternative English as well as Afrikaans common names have been listed. Butterflies recorded in each National Botanical Garden are indicated in dedicated fields at the bottom of the pages by open circles which can be filled in by visitors when butterflies are seen in a particular Garden.
Conservation status

No threatened butterfly taxa have so far been recorded in South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens, as described in the latest Red Data Book for butterflies by Henning et al. (2009). All butterflies observed in our NBGs thus far have been classified in the same category of Least Concern (LC), which, according to the IUCN categories, are widespread and abundant taxa and do not qualify for the threatened categories of Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened.

New records

This Checklist is in its first edition and will be updated from time to time. Should you observe a butterfly in one of South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens that is not included in this Checklist, please send us a note of this record (with a photograph, details of the observer’s name, contact details, date, Garden name and habitat description) to the following address so that it can be confirmed and documented:

Chief Director
Conservation Gardens & Tourism Division
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)
Private Bag X101
PRETORIA 0001
South Africa
E-mail: info@sanbi.org.za

National Botanical Gardens

FS – Free State National Botanical Garden, Bloemfontein, Free State
H – Hantam National Botanical Garden, Nieuwoudtville, Northern Cape
HP – Harold Porter National Botanical Garden, Betty’s Bay, Western Cape
KD – Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden, Worcester, Western Cape
K – Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, Cape Town, Western Cape
KZN – KwaZulu-Natal National Botanical Garden, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal
L – Lowveld National Botanical Garden, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga
P – Pretoria National Botanical Garden, Pretoria, Gauteng
WS – Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden, Roodepoort/ Mogale City, Gauteng
Most widespread butterflies recorded in South Africa’s National Botanical Gardens (recorded in five or more Gardens)

African Clouded Yellow
African Grass Blue
African Migrant
African Monarch
Brown-veined White
Bush Bronze
Citrus Swallowtail
Common Diadem
Common Dotted Border
Common Hottentot
Common Zebra Blue
Garden Acraea
Geranium Bronze
Meadow White
Painted Lady
Pea Blue
Yellow Pansy

♂ = Male  ♀ = Female
## Alphabetical quick index to common names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>KD</th>
<th>K</th>
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<th>L</th>
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Checklist of butterflies

Family Nymphalidae

Monarch

_Danaus chrysippus orientis_

African Monarch

Alternate common name: Plain Tiger
Afrikaans common name: Melkbosskoolapper
Wingspan: ♂ 50–70 mm ♀ 50–75 mm
Notes: Common throughout South Africa. Distasteful to predators in general—and serves as the model for a number of mimics, e.g. female Common Diadem. Food plants include species of _Gomphocarpus_, _Ceropegia_, _Stapelia_ and _Huernia_.
Flight period: All year, with peak in late summer/autumn.

National Botanical Garden

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</table>
**Chief, Layman, Novice**
*Amauris echeria echeria*

**Chief**
*Alternate common name:* Chief Friar  
*Afrikaans common names:* Toordokter, Hoofmonnik  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 55–65 mm ♀ 63–70 mm  
*Notes:* Differs from Layman in that forewing spots are always cream-coloured to ochre. More frequent in forest than the Layman. Mimics include the female Mocker Swallowtail and some forms of the False Chief.  
*Flight period:* Year-round (peak summer/autumn).
Family Nymphalidae

*Amauris albimaculata albimaculata*

**Layman**

Alternate common name: Layman Friar  
Afrikaans common name: Ouheks  
Wingspan: ♂ 50–60 mm ♀ 62–68 mm  
**Notes:** Slow, floating flight. Upperside black with white forewing spots. More common and widespread than the Friar or Novice. The male is South Africa’s smallest danaid (members of the subfamily Danainae). Mimics include the female Mocker Swallowtail, both sexes of the Variable Diadem and the False Chief.  
**Flight period:** All year, with peak in summer/autumn.

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**Amauris ochlea ochlea**

**Novice**

Alternate common name: Novice Friar  
Afrikaans common name: Outannie  
Wingspan: ♂ 55–60 mm ♀ 60–65 mm  
Notes: Smaller than similar Friar and less active, flying higher. The scarce Deceptive Diadem uses this species as a model for the sake of protection.  
Flight period: Year-round (peak summer/autumn).

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**Evening Brown**  
*Melanitis leda helena*

**Twilight Brown**  
Alternate common names: Evening Brown, Common Evening Brown  
Afrikaans common name: Skemer-bruintjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 58–65 mm ♀ 63–72 mm  
Notes: Skulking habit, reluctant to fly. Undersides variably coloured and marked. During the hours of sunlight it sits well concealed among dead leaves in heavy shade. Active mainly at dusk or on dull, cloudy days. Food plants include various grass species, including sugar cane.  
Flight period: Two main overlapping broods: winter (Mar–Aug), spring and summer (Sept–Mar).
Bush Browns

*Bicyclus safitza safitza*

**Common Bush Brown**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Swart-bosbruintjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 43–48 mm

**Notes:** Distinctive hopping and bobbing flight along pathways; never flies far when flushed. Found in lowland and riverine forest and bush in the eastern zone of South Africa. Food plants include the Shade Ehrharta *Ehrharta erecta.*

**Flight period:** Year-round. DSF Jan–May (peak Apr), WSF Oct–Dec (peak Nov).

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Family Nymphalidae

Heteropsis perspicua perspicua

Eyed Bush Brown
Alternate common name: Marsh Patroller
Afrikaans common name: Moeraswagter
Wingspan: ♂ 38–43 mm ♀ 42–48 mm
Notes: Common in grassland, often near low-lying or riverine forest. Has a ‘hopping’ flight.
Flight period: Year-round. WSF in spring and summer, DSF in autumn and winter.

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Bicyclus anynana anynana

Squinting Bush Brown

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Skeeloog-bosbruintjie

Wingspan: ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 39–45 mm

Notes: Often with Common Bush Brown in warmer, lowland areas; similar habits but warier, more difficult to approach. Well camouflaged on dead leaves. DSF is unique with its asymmetric ocellus on the underside of the forewing. The larvae feed on grass.

Flight period: Two extended broods: DSF in autumn and winter, WSF in spring and summer.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Mountain Pride**
*Aeropetes tulbaghia*

**Table Mountain Beauty**
Alternate common name: Mountain Pride
Afrikaans common name: Bergnooientjie
Wingspan: ♂ 70–78 mm ♀ 75–90 mm

Notes: Only known pollinator of the Red Disa *Disa uniflora*. Fond of red or orange flowers on mountains, especially those of *Watsonia, Crassula, Nerine, Kniphofia* and *Brunsvigia*. In the heat of the day it is often disturbed from the shady side of rocks or upright banks. Food plants are grasses, including *Ehrharta erecta* and the Common Thatching Grass *Hyparrhenia hirta*.


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Family Nymphalidae

**Bush Beauty**
*Paralethe dendrophilus*

**Forest Beauty**
Alternate common name: Bush Beauty
Afrikaans common name: Bosprag
Wingspan: ♂ 45–60 mm ♀ 48–70 mm
Notes: Afrotropical and coastal forest fringes. Flight slow and flapping. Variable species. Often sits on tree boles to hide or feed at sap. Food plants include the grasses *Ehrharta erecta*, the Broad-leaved Panicum *Panicum deustum* and other soft grasses.

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Photo: Christopher Willis
Widows

*Dira clytus*

**Cape Autumn Widow**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Kaapse-herfsweduwe  
Wingspan: 45–55 mm  
Notes: Common in autumn, especially in thick patches of kikuyu. Floating, sailing flight, just above the grass. The female differs from the male in her stouter abdomen and rounder wings. Larval stage feeds on various grasses.  
**Tarsocera cassus**

**Spring Widow**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Kaapse-lenteweduwee

Wingspan: ♂ 42–52 mm ♀ 50–57 mm

Notes: Frequently visits flowers such as those of *Selago* species, in its wandering flight. One of the first butterflies from the southern African region to be named by Linnaeus. It is common on the slopes and summits of hills and mountains.


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Family Nymphalidae

Browns

*Melampias huebneri*

**Boland Brown**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Boland-bruintjie

Wingspan: ♂ 35–38 mm ♀ 33–35 mm

Notes: One of the commonest spring butterflies in the Cape. Flight is low and rather prolonged.

Flight period: Single-brooded, from Jun or Aug to Oct/Nov.

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Cassionympha detecta

Cape Brown
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Kaapse-bosbruintjie
Wingspan: ♂ 33–37 mm ♀ 34–38 mm
Notes: Smaller and darker than the Rainforest Brown, flight faster.
Family Nymphalidae

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<th>Cassionympha cassius</th>
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<td><strong>Rainforest Brown</strong></td>
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<td>Alternate common name: Forest Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afrikaans common name: Reënwoud-bosbruintjie</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wingspan:</strong> ♂ 34–38 mm ♀ 36–42 mm</td>
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<td><strong>Notes:</strong> Common in cool, moist forests, coastal or riverine bush and kloofs. The number of ocelli on both wings is very variable.</td>
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<td><strong>Flight period:</strong> Year-round, mostly Sept–May.</td>
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Family Nymphalidae

*Paternympha narycia*

**Spotted-eye Brown**

Alternate common name: Small Hillside Brown

Afrikaans common name: Koloog-bruintjie

**Wingspan:**

♂ 40–44 mm  ♀ 42–47 mm

**Notes:** A widespread species with its forewing patch orange instead of the usual orange-red of all its congeners. Flight slow and low, over hillsides, rough grassland or along rocky ridges; settles often.

**Flight period:** Double-brooded, Oct–Dec and Jan–Apr.
**Stygionympha vigilans**

**Western Hillside Brown**

Alternate common name: Hillside Brown  
Afrikaans common name: Westelike-rantbruintjie  
Wingspan: 45–48 mm  
**Notes:** Settles on the ground, jerkily opening and closing its wings. Found on rocky ledges and ridges. Generally only one minute ocellate spot on the underside of the hindwing.  
**Flight period:** Probably multibrooded, Aug–Apr, peak Oct/Nov and Feb.
Stygionympha wichgrafi

**Wichgraf’s Hillside Brown**

Alternate common name: Wichgraf’s Brown  
Afrikaans common name: Wichgraf-se-rantbruintjie  
Wingspan: 40–50 mm  

Notes: Wings more angular than the larger Western or Eastern Hillside Browns. Slow, jinking flight. Larval food includes various grasses.  
Family Nymphalidae

Ringlets

_Ypthima asterope_

**African Ringlet**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Afrikaanse-ringetjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 30–34 mm ♀ 32–38 mm  
*Notes:* Two subspecies. Most widespread _Ypthima_, found all over drier areas of Africa and into Asia.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, peak early summer and autumn.

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Ypthima impura

Bushveld Ringlet

Alternate common name: Impure Ringlet
Afrikaans common name: Vuil-ringetjie
Wingspan: ♂ 32–36 mm ♀ 34–38 mm
Notes: Sexes similar, female with abdomen stouter, habits more sedentary. There are usually three clear ocelli on the hindwing underside.
Flight period: Year-round, peak in early summer and autumn.
Wanderer
*Acraea aganice*

**Common Wanderer**
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Swartbont-rooitjie
Wingspan: ♂ 60–65 mm ♀ 70–75 mm

**Notes:** Male strongly territorial, chasing off settling intruders. Fond of flowers. The Common Wanderer has several mimics, e.g. False Wanderer.

**Flight period:** Year-round, more common Oct/Nov–Mar.
Bitter Acraeas
*Acraea acara*

**Acara Acraea**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Acara-rooitjie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 55–66 mm ♀ 60–72 mm

**Notes:** May be very common in lowland forest and wooded savanna. It has a slow and weak or lazy flight. Both sexes fly from 0.9–1.5 m above the ground. Females are usually darker than the males.

**Flight period:** Multibrooded year-round in warmer areas, peak Nov–Mar.

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Family Nymphalidae

*Acraea caldarena*

**Black-tipped Acraea**

**Alternate common name:** Black-tip Acraea  
**Afrikaans common name:** Swartpunt-rooitjie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
**Notes:** Common bushveld species. Prominent black forewing tips. Flight slow and not far above the ground. Attracted to flowers.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, most active from Aug–Apr, with strong peak in late summer/autumn.

---

[Image of a butterfly]
Acraea petraea

**Blood-red Acraea**

Alternate common names: Blotched Acraea, Crimson Acraea  
Afrikaans common name: Bloed-rooitjie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 45–48 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
**Notes:** Strikingly red Acraea. Flight slow and fluttering. Popular coastal garden subject. Larval food plant includes the African Dog-rose *Xylothea kraussiana.*  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peak Nov–Feb.
Family Nymphalidae

*Acraea aglaonice*

**Clear-spotted Acraea**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Venster-rooitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 43–49 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
Notes: Bushveld species. Distinctive hyaline area in the forewing. Fond of *Vernonia* flowers. During midday it hovers about low shrubs and grass on the tops of hills.  
Flight period: Multibrooded year-round, peaks early summer and autumn.

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Photo: Christopher Willis
Telchinia serena

Dancing Acraea

Alternate common name: Small Orange Acraea
Afrikaans common name: Kleinoranje-rooitjie
Wingspan: ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 36–44 mm
Notes: Roosts communally on long grass stems. Slow, low, fluttering flight.
Flight period: Year-round, more common in the warmer months.

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Family Nymphalidae

Telchinia esebria

Dusky Acraea

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Boerbok-rooitjie
Wingspan: ♂ 45–55 mm ♀ 53–60 mm
Notes: Distinctive but very variable. Flight slow, easy to approach. Common along forest paths and edges of clearings.
Flight period: Year-round, more common in the warmer months.
**Acraea horta**

**Garden Acraea**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Tuin-rooitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 45–50 mm ♀ 49–53 mm  
Notes: Popular garden species; visits flowers often. Usually in large, concentrated colonies. Flight usually slow and sailing, unless disturbed. Larval food plants include the Wild Peach *Kiggelaria africana* and various species of *Passiflora*.  
Flight period: Year-round, more common Oct–Apr.

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Family Nymphalidae

*Telchinia rahira*

**Marsh Acraea**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Moeras-rooitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 40–50 mm  
Notes: Unmistakable pale buff butterfly. Locally common in marshes and vleis, and damp river margins. Flight slow and low; settles often on plants.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, most active Sept–Apr. In cooler areas, found only in the hot summer months.
**Acraea natalica**

**Natal Acraea**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Natalse-rooitjie

Wingspan: 55–65 mm

Notes: Common and widespread in open, lowland forest and savanna.

Flight period: Year-round, strong peak in late summer.

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**Family Nymphalidae**

*Telchinia anacreon*

**Orange Acraea**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Oranje-rooitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
**Notes:** Basks in the sun and feeds on flowers. Flight is slow, low and fluttering, unless disturbed. Shows considerable variation.  
**Flight period:** Several broods Oct–May, peak Feb
**Family Nymphalidae**

---

**Acraea neobule**

**Wandering Donkey Acraea**

Alternate common name: Neobule Acraea  
Afrikaans common name: Dwaalesel-rooitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 48–55 mm ♀ 50–56 mm  
Notes: Closely resembles Garden Acraea, but always paler red, more extensive hyaline wing areas, and smaller, more regular spotting.  
Flight period: Year-round, more common Sept–Apr.
**Family Nymphalidae**

*Telchinia encedon*

**White-barred Acraea**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Witstreep-rooitjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
*Notes:* Wooded savanna and open coastal forests. Flies slowly and settles on low vegetation. Often flies around hilltops at midday.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, more common in the warmer months.
**Family Nymphalidae**

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<td><strong>Window Acraea</strong></td>
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<td>Alternate common name: Rooibok Acraea</td>
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<td>Afrikaans common name: Rooibokie-rooitjie</td>
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<td>Wingspan: ♂ 40–48 mm ♀ 43–55 mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes: Common in wooded savanna and lowland forest.</td>
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<td>Flight period: Multibrooded year-round, peak Sept–May.</td>
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Family Nymphalidae

Telchinia cabira

Yellow-banded Acraea
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Geelstreep-rooitjie
Wingspan: ♂ 38–44 mm ♀ 40–45 mm
Notes: Unmistakable. Common in thick bush and forest. Fluttering flight low and slow, often visiting flowers.
Flight period: Year-round, more common in the warmer months.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Polka Dot**

*Pardopsis punctatissima*

**Polka Dot**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Polkastippel
Wingspan: ♂ 30–34 mm ♀ 33–36 mm
Notes: Unique, unmistakable. Much spotted, weak flier. Favours moist grassy areas; often found at forest edges.

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![Polka Dot butterfly](image_url)

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Family Nymphalidae

**Leopards**

*Phalanta phalantha aethiopica*

**African Leopard**

Alternate common names: Common Leopard, Poplar Leopard  
Afrikaans common name: Populierluiperd  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 43–48 mm  
Notes: Widespread woodland species, but penetrates grassland areas where its White Poplar *Populus alba* food plant is found. A restless insect, constantly moving its wings when perched on a flower or leaf.  
Flight period: In cooler areas, Oct–Apr; in warmer areas, year-round, peak late summer and autumn.
**Phalanta eurytis eurytis**

**Forest Leopard**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Woudluiperd  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 43–48 mm  
Notes: Extremely similar to the African Leopard. Restricted to heavy woodland; scarcer than the African Leopard.  

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Family Nymphalidae

**Emperors**  
*Charaxes cithaeron cithaeron*

**Blue-spotted Charaxes**  
Alternate common name: Blue-spotted Emperor  
Afrikaans common name: Bosprins-dubbelstert  
Wingspan: ♂ 70–80 mm ♀ 85–95 mm  
Notes: Commonly seen in coastal forests.  
Flight period: Year-round, but more common from Mar–May.
Charaxes achaemenes achaemenes

**Bushveld Charaxes**

**Alternate common name:** Bushveld Emperor  
**Afrikaans common name:** Bosveld-dubbelstert  
**Wingspan:**  
♂ 55–60 mm  ♀ 60–70 mm  
**Notes:** Common and widespread in bushveld and wooded savanna. Males frequent koppies and ridges at midday. Female is a good mimic of the more powerful Foxy Charaxes as regards the upperside. Food plants include the Round-leaved Bloodwood *Pterocarpus rotundifolius*, Kiaat *Pterocarpus angolensis*, Nyala-tree *Xanthocercis zambesiaca* and the Camel-foot *Piliostigma thonningii*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peak Feb–May.

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Family Nymphalidae

Charaxes jasius saturnus

Foxy Charaxes
Alternate common names: Foxy Emperor, Koppie Charaxes, Koppie Emperor
Afrikaans common name: Koppie-dubbelstert
Wingspan: ♂ 65–75 mm ♀ 75–90 mm
Notes: Common, widespread in savanna areas. Males are regular visitors to the tops of ridges and koppies at midday and make vigorous swoops on intruders into their ‘playground’, each time returning to their Aloe stalk or some suitable branch.
Flight period: Year-round. More common late summer to autumn.

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**Charaxes candiope**

**Green-veined Charaxes**

Alternate common name: Green-veined Emperor  
Afrikaans common name: Skelm-dubbelstert

Wingspan: ♂ 65–75 mm ♀ 78–95 mm

Notes: Forewing green veins on underside very conspicuous. Food plants include the Forest Croton *Croton sylvaticus* and Lavender Croton *Croton gratissimus*. The female differs from the male mainly in her larger size and rounder abdomen, and is scarcer.


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**Charaxes karkloof**

**Karkloof Charaxes**

Alternate common name: Karkloof Emperor  
Afrikaans common name: Karkloof-dubbelstert  
Wingspan: ♂ 45–55 mm ♀ 50–60 mm  
Notes: First recorded in the main forests of the Karkloof in 1943 by the late Harold Millar. Afromontane forest edges and rocky ledges. Food plant is the Forest Plane *Ochna arborea*.  
Charaxes varanes varanes

**Pearl Charaxes**

**Alternate common name:** Pearl Emperor  
**Afrikaans common name:** Pêrel-dubbelstert  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 65–70 mm ♀ 70–90 mm  
**Notes:** Orange and pearly white wings conspicuous. Underside variable, cryptic, affording excellent camouflage. Flight slower than most other Charaxes. Food plants include the African False Currant *Allophylus africanus*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, a weak peak Sept–Nov, stronger peak Jan–Jun.
Charaxes ethalion ethalion

Satyr Charaxes
Alternate common names: Satyr Emperor, Coast Charaxes
Afrikaans common name: Satier-dubbelstert
Wingspan: ♂ 45–55 mm ♀ 50–63 mm
Notes: Male difficult to distinguish from other black Charaxes. Female with distinctive white median marks mirroring those on the upperside.
**Charaxes druceanus**

**Silver-barred Charaxes**

Alternate common name: Silver-barred Emperor
Afrikaans common name: Silwerstreep-dubbeldestert

**Wingspan:** ♂ 55–70 mm ♀ 65–85 mm

**Notes:** Superficially similar to Foxy Charaxes, but upperside much darker and unmistakable silvery underside. Food plants include the Waterberry *Syzygium cordatum* and Bushveld Waterberry *Syzygium guineense.*

**Flight period:** Sept–May, weak peak Oct, stronger peak Mar–Apr.
**Family Nymphalidae**

*Charaxes brutus natalensis*

**White-barred Charaxes**

Alternate common name: White-barred Emperor  
Afrikaans common name: Witstreep-dubbelstert  
Wingspan: ♂ 60–75 mm ♀ 75–90 mm  
**Notes:** Common woodland butterfly in most coastal and inland forests. Upperside unmistakable black and white. Underside similar to Foxy Charaxes. Pugnacious and aggressive, chasing flying intruders entering its domain. Visits red flowers such as those of *Tecomaria* and *Spathodea* species. Often seen at the fermenting sap of ‘sucking-holes’ in tree trunks.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, more common late summer to autumn.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Glider**

*Cymothoe alcimeda trimeni*

**Battling Glider**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Alsie-witkoppie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
Notes: Five subspecies. Found in coastal and afromontane forest. Both sexes are fond of sucking at damp mud. Larval food plant is the Wild Peach *Kiggelaria africana*.  
Flight period: Year-round, mainly summer from Oct; peak Nov and Feb–Apr.

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Photos: Christopher Willis

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Family Nymphalidae

**Guineafowl**

_Hamanumida daedalus_

**Guineafowl**

Alternate common names: Guinea-fowl Butterfly, Road Inspector

Afrikaans common name: Tarentaaltjie

Wingspan: ♂ 55–65 mm ♀ 60–78 mm

Notes: Unmistakable. Flight low and floating, frequently settling with its wings open. Common and widespread in savanna, arid savanna and lowland forest. Food plants include the Velvet Bushwillow _Combretum molle_ and Silver Cluster-leaf _Terminalia sericea_.

Flight period: Continuously brooded; peaks in midwinter and midsummer.

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False Acraea

*Pseudacraea eurytus imitator*

**False Wanderer**

Alternate common name: Wanderer False Acraea
Afrikaans common name: Skaduwee-valsrootjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 60–68 mm ♀ 65–75 mm

**Notes:** Similar to the Common Wanderer, but the antennae are longer, and it has black spots on both surfaces of the forewing, lacking on the Common Wanderer forewing underside.

**Flight period:** Year-round, mainly Dec–May, strong peak late summer.

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Sailers

*Neptis laeta*

**Common Sailer**

*Alternate common name:* Common Barred Sailer  
*Afrikaans common name:* Reënbos-swerwer  

**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–48 mm ♀ 45–52 mm  

**Notes:** Ubiquitous in warmer forests and bushveld, especially along rivers and streams. Food plants include the Climbing Flat-bean *Dalbergia obovata* and Thorny-rope *Dalbergia armata.*  

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, peak Dec–May.
**Neptis saclava marpessa**

**Spotted Sailer**

*Alternate common name:* Small Spotted Sailer  
*Afrikaans common name:* Spikkel-swerwer  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 45–48 mm  
*Notes:* Differs from other *Neptis* species in having a pale, mottled underside. Attracted to fermenting plant matter and wet earth. Flies or floats, apparently aimlessly, round trees and shrubs, frequently settling on leaves. Larval food plants include the Caster Oil Bush *Ricinus communis*, Forest False-nettle *Acalypha glabrata* and the Hiccup Nut *Combretum bracteosum*.  
*Flight period:* Year-round in warmer areas, peak Dec–May.
Family Nymphalidae

Tree Nymph

Sevenia boisduvali boisduvali

Boisduval’s Tree Nymph
Alternate common name: Brown Tree Nymph
Afrikaans common name: Boisduval-se-boombruintjie
Wingspan: ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 38–45 mm
Notes: Smallest and most abundant Tree Nymph. A dull-coloured, forest-loving Nymphalid that is rarely missed about the coastal forests of KwaZulu-Natal. Strongly attracted to fermenting fruit. Food plants include the Jumping-seed Tree Sapium ellipticum and the Duikerberry Sapium integerrimum.
Flight period: Year-round, peak Dec–May.
**Jokers**

*Byblia anvatara acheloia*

**Common Joker**

Alternate common name: Joker  
Afrikaans common name: Tolliegrasvegtter  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 43–48 mm  
Notes: Considerable seasonal variation. Abundant in warm savanna, grassland, coastal and lowland forest.  
Flight period: Year-round; two main overlapping broods, summer (Nov–Mar) more numerous than winter (May–Aug).
Family Nymphalidae

*Byblia ilithyia*

**Spotted Joker**

*Alternate common name: None*

*Afrikaans common name: Leliegrasvegter*

**Wingspan:** ♂ 38–43 mm ♀ 40–45 mm

**Notes:** Slightly smaller than the Common Joker. Widespread in coastal and inland savanna and grassland. The Common Joker and Spotted Joker have the same larval food plants, namely the Stinging Nettle Creeper *Tragia glabrata* and the Wild Hop *Dalechampia capensis.***

**Flight period:** Continuous broods, peak Nov–Mar, smaller peak May–Apr.
Family Nymphalidae

Pipers

_Eurytela dryope angulata_

**Golden Piper**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Oranjelint-bosvlieër  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 45–55 mm  
*Notes:* Similar to the Pied Piper, but wing bands orange, not white, on a brown ground colour. Flight slightly faster. The width of the hindwing band varies considerably. Not as common as the Pied Piper.  

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Family Nymphalidae

*Eurytela hiarbas angustata*

**Pied Piper**
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Witlint-bosvlieër
Wingspan: ♂ 45–50 mm ♀ 48–55 mm
Notes: The white bar on a brown-black background is conspicuous. Common in afromontane, lowland and riverine forest. Flies slowly along the edge of bushes, settling frequently, but is very wary.
Flight period: Continuously brooded; peak Nov–Mar.
Family Nymphalidae

Diadems

Hypolimnas misippus

Common Diadem

Alternate common name: Diadem
Afrikaans common names: Blouglans (male), Na-aper (female)
Wingspan: ♂ 60–65 mm ♀ 70–80 mm

Notes: Male is a strong flier and is territorial on hilltops and in forest clearings. Sexes dimorphic, distinctive. Polymorphic females are mimics of all forms of the unpalatable African Monarch. Prefers wooded country and often visits gardens and flowers.

Flight period: Year-round, peak late summer.
Family Nymphalidae

*Hypolimnas anthedon wahlbergi*

**Variable Diadem**

*Alternate common name:* Variable Mimic  
*Afrikaans common name:* Verneukertjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 75–80 mm ♀ 75–90 mm  
*Notes:* Often found along forest streams where there is a break in the canopy. Roosts in holes under tree roots.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, peak late summer.

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Mother-of-Pearl

*Protogoniomorpha parhassus*

**Mother-of-Pearl**

Alternate common name: Common Mother-of-Pearl

Afrikaans common names: Perlemoenskoenlapper, Perlemoenvlinder

**Wingspan:** ♂ 65–80 mm ♀ 75–90 mm

**Notes:** White to pale green, with a greenish to gold iridescent sheen and black-edged wings. Larger than Clouded Mother-of-Pearl, that also lacks the green gloss. Seasonal forms differ considerably; in winter, specimens are greener and less well marked on both sides of the wings. Often seen on flowers.

**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks late summer and autumn.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Pirate**

_Catacroptera cloanthe cloanthe_

**Pirate**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Seerower

Wingspan: ♂ 50–58 mm ♀ 55–62 mm

**Notes:** Unmistakable. Often close to streams and springs. One of the earliest highveld butterflies in spring. Characteristic upper hindwing row of blue spots. Often found along stream banks and in marshy valleys.

Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas; mainly Sept–Apr in cool zones.

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Photo: Christopher Willis
Family Nymphalidae

**Commodores**

*Junonia tugela tugela*

**African Leaf Commodore**

Alternate common names: Eared Commodore, Dry Leaf Commodore, African Leaf Butterfly

Afrikaans common name: Tugela-blaarvlerk

**Wingspan:** ♂ 55–60 mm ♀ 58–64 mm

**Notes:** Found in afromontane forest on South Africa’s eastern escarpment. One of the finest dead-leaf mimics. No two undersides are exactly alike. Specimens often settle on low vegetation on the edges of forests or along forest roads. They are very wary, and if disturbed, fly up into the forest canopy. Female usually larger than the male, with a broader yellow band on the upperside.

**Flight period:** All year, with distinct seasonal forms: DSF Apr–Aug, WSF Sept–Mar.

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Family Nymphalidae

Precis archesia archesia

Garden Commodore

Alternate common name: Garden Inspector
Afrikaans common name: Rotsblaarvlerk
Wingspan: ♂ 45–50 mm ♀ 50–60 mm
Notes: The most familiar Precis in South Africa. Seasonal difference in colour between the DSF (f. archesia) and WSF (f. pelasgis). DSF roosts in hollows under banks and rocks. WSF more often found on hilltops.
**Precis octavia sesamus**

**Gaudy Commodore**  
Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Rooi-en-blou-blaarvlerk  
Wingspan: ♂ 50–60 mm ♀ 55–63 mm  
**Notes:** Great seasonal difference in colour between the DSF (blue) and WSF (pink to orange-red). The winter form (DSF) prefers shady places, to settle under a bank or in some deep road cutting. The summer form (WSF) prefers hilltops, koppies and mountain peaks. Regular visitor to gardens.  
**Flight period:** All year, with distinct seasonal dimorphism: DSF Mar–Aug, WSF Aug–Mar.
Family Nymphalidae

Pansies

*Junonia oenone oenone*

**Blue Pansy**

Alternate common name: Black Pansy  
Afrikaans common name: Blou-gesiggie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–50 mm ♀ 48–52 mm  

Notes: Common, but not as widespread as the Yellow Pansy. Herbaceous borders always attract this butterfly.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peaks Oct and Nov, and Feb–May.

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Junonia natalica natalica

**Brown Commodore**

*Alternate common name:* Brown Pansy  
*Afrikaans common name:* Natal-gesiggie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 45–50 mm ♀ 48–55 mm

**Notes:** Common, wary and easily disturbed. The seasonal forms are slightly different, with the ocelli showing up well on the underside of both wings in the summer form.

**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Oct and Nov, and Feb–May.
Family Nymphalidae

*Junonia orithya madagascariensis*

**Eyed Pansy**

Alternate common name: Ox-eyed Pansy

Afrikaans common name: Padwagtertjie

Wingspan: ♂ 35–42 mm ♀ 40–48 mm

**Notes:** Widespread but uncommon. Mostly inland savanna and grassland. Not as common as the Blue Pansy and Yellow Pansy.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, peaks Aug–Nov, and Feb–May.

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**Junonia terea elgiva**

**Soldier Pansy**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Bos-gesiggie

Wingspan: ♂ 50–55 mm ♀ 52–60 mm

Notes: Similar to the African Leaf Commodore. Settles often on low foliage. Seasonal forms do not differ much.

Flight period: Two main broods, peak early summer (Oct and Nov), and autumn to winter (Apr–Jul).
Family Nymphalidae

*Junonia hierta cebrene*

**Yellow Pansy**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Geel-gesiggie

Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 40–50 mm

Notes: Common and widespread. Its grey underside provides good protection while at rest—if the wings are closed.

*Flight period:* Year-round in warmer areas, peaks Oct and Nov, and Feb–May.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Painted Lady**

*Vanessa cardui*

**Painted Lady**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Sondagsrokkie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 45–50 mm  
Notes: Often the only active butterfly in cold areas in winter. Strongly migratory. Well known in most parts of the world.  

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Family Nymphalidae

Admiral

*Antanartia schaeneia schaeneia*

**Long-tailed Admiral**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Langstert-bosnooiwinge

**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–48 mm ♀ 45–50 mm  
**Notes:** Tails longer than in other *Antanartia* species; flight stronger. Very shy and wary, difficult to approach.  
**Flight period:** Year-round; peak Jan–Jun.

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Family Nymphalidae

**Snout**

*Libythea labdaca laius*

**African Snout**

Alternate common name: African Snout Butterfly  
Afrikaans common names: Snuitskoenlapper, Snuitvlinder  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–46 mm ♀ 45–50 mm  
Notes: Common name refers to the insect’s long labial palps. Frequents forest canopy, flying lower to sit on tree branches and wet mud. Wary and difficult to approach. Food plants include various *Celtis* (White Stinkwood) species. The subfamily Libytheinae is considered to be an ancient group, a fossil representative having been found in Oligocene beds, some 30 million years old, at Florissant, Colorado, USA, in the 1880s.  
Flight period: Multiple broods in warmer months, Oct–Apr. Jun and Jul winter brood in warmer areas.

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Family Lycaenidae
Zulus, Rocksitters, Buffs, Purples, Woolly Legs, Skollies, Sapphires, Hairstreaks, Black-eyes, Proteas, Playboys, Fig-tree Blues, High-fliers, Bars, Gems, Scarlets, Arrowheads, Coppers, Opals, Greys, Sorrel Coppers, Hairtails, Black Heart, Bronzes, Hintza Blue, Pies, Blues, Dusky Blues, Ant Blues, Meadow Blues, Dwarf Blue, Jewel Blues

Zulu
*Alaena amazoula*

**Yellow Zulu**
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Geel-zoeloe

Wingspan: ♂ 22–28 mm ♀ 25–32 mm

Notes: Two subspecies. Male with dark scaling, heavier along veins than in the female. Low, weak flight. Larvae feed on the blue-green algal component of lichens.

**Buffs**

*Pentila tropicalis*

**Spotted Buff**

Alternate common names: Spotted Pentila, Southern Spotted Buff  
Afrikaans common name: Spikkel-geelvlerkie  
Wingspan: ♂ 29–38 mm ♀ 34–44 mm  
Notes: Occurs in shady forest understorey. Ground colour buff to orange with black speckles or spots. The larvae feed on blue-green algae growing on tree bark.  

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Family Lycaenidae

Woolly Legs
*Lachnocnema durbani*

D’Urban’s Woolly Legs
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: D'Urban-se-wolpootjie
Wingspan: ♂ 24–28 mm ♀ 24–30 mm
Notes: The group is defined by individuals having distinctive woolly legs. Always found in grassy areas. Settles to suck the secretions of scale insects (Homoptera). The larvae feed on the immature stages and adults of these scale insects.
Flight period: Year-round with peaks in spring and late summer.

Photo: Christopher Willis

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Family Lycaenidae

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*Thestor braunsi*

**Brauns’s Skolly**

*Alternate common name:* Brauns’s Thestor  
*Afrikaans common name:* Brauns-se-skollie  

**Wingspan:**  
♂ 26–28 mm  ♀ 27–30 mm

**Notes:** First recorded by Dr Georges van Son and David Swanepoel in the Karoo in March 1940. Found in dry riverbeds and on hillsides. A wary insect. Easily disturbed and flies away rapidly, but often comes back to the same patch of ground. All members of the *Thestor* genus lack a proboscis and cannot feed. They tend to have short, sedentary lives spent near the larval food source, which is not known in this species but in others is mouth-to-mouth feeding from *Anoplolepis* ants. This is the only member of the genus that is double-brooded.

**Flight period:** Double-brooded, Oct and Mar being the best months.

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Family Lycaenidae

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<th>Sapphires</th>
<th>Stugeta bowkeri bowkeri</th>
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**Bowker’s Sapphire**

Alternate common name: Bowker’s Marbled Sapphire  
Afrikaans common name: Bowker-se-marmersaffier  
Wingspan: ♂ 26–32 mm ♀ 29–41 mm  
Notes: One of three subspecies. Flight slower than other sapphires. Underside cryptic. Upperside and underside dark blotches distinctive of this species and the Dusky Sapphire. Both sexes attracted to flowers, sometimes in numbers. Larval food plant comprises the parasitic flowering plant *Viscum rotundifolium*.  
Family Lycaenidae

*iolaus sidus*

**Red-line Sapphire**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Rooistreep-saffier  
Wingspan: ♂ 28–31 mm ♀ 29–32 mm  
Notes: Easily identified bright red underside lines. Larval food plants include several species of Loranthaceae mistletoes such as *Moquiniella rubra* and *Tapinanthus oleifolius*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks in summer.

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**Family Lycaenidae**

*Iolaus silarus silarus*

**Straight-line Sapphire**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Reguitlyn-saffier  
Wingspan: ♂ 32–38 mm ♀ 35–40 mm  

**Notes:** Forewings more pointed than Southern Sapphire. Transverse red hindwing line on underside generally but not reliably straight, not curved. Larval food plant is the mistletoe *Erianthemum dregei*.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, Sept–Jan in cooler, western part of range.

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**Iolaus trimeni**

**Trimen’s Sapphire**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Trimen-se-saffier

Wingspan: ♂ 34–40 mm ♀ 36–42 mm

Notes: Male an exuberant hilltopper. Hindwing underside transverse stripe thin, often broken, black not red. Larval food plant includes various Tapinanthus species.

**Family Lycaenidae**

**Hairstreak**

*Hypolycaena philippus philippus*

**Purple-brown Hairstreak**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Persbruin-stertbloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 22–28 mm ♀ 23–31 mm  
Notes: Hindwing tails conspicuous. Female lacks purple sheen of the male. Larva has several food plants including Tinderwood *Clerodendrum glabrum* and the Dune Soap-berry *Deinbollia oblongifolia*.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peaks in Nov and Mar/Apr.
Family Lycaenidae

Black-eyes

*Leptomyrina lara*

**Cape Black-eye**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Kaapse-swartogie  
Wingspan: ♂ 20–29 mm ♀ 23–31 mm  
Notes: Distinctive bright bronze-brown upperside. Male chases intruders. Low, zigzagging flight.  
Flight period: Several broods in spring and summer, Aug–Apr.
**Leptomyrina gorgias gorgias**

**Common Black-eye**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Gewone-swartogie  
Wingspan: ♂ 18–29 mm ♀ 25–32 mm  

**Notes:** Closest to Henning’s Black-eye in appearance. Extensive mauve-grey basal scaling on male upperside. Larval food plants of all Black-eyes include species of *Kalanchoe*, *Crassula* and *Cotyledon*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Nov and Mar.
**Family Lycaenidae**

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<th><strong>Leptomyrina henningi</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Henning’s Black-eye</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Alternate common name:</strong> None</td>
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<td><strong>Afrikaans common name:</strong> Henning-se-swartogie</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wingspan:</strong> ♂ 18–29 mm ♀ 25–32 mm</td>
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<td><strong>Notes:</strong> Larger than the Cape Black-eye, with more angular wings.</td>
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<td><strong>Flight period:</strong> Year-round, peaks in Nov and Mar.</td>
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Photo: Christopher Willis
**Family Lycaenidae**

*Leptomyrina hirundo*

**Tailed Black-eye**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Langstert-swartogie  
Wingspan: ♂ 19–24 mm ♀ 19–26 mm  
**Notes:** Unmistakable; long white tails. Flutters slowly close to the ground, often settling on low leaves.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks in Nov and Mar.
Proteas

Capys alphaeus

Orange-banded Protea

Alternate common name: Protea Scarlet
Afrikaans common names: Oranjeband-suikerbossie, Suikerbossie

Wingspan: ♂ 31–40 mm ♀ 32–47 mm

Notes: Endemic to South Africa. Unmistakable broad red bands in both sexes. The most brightly coloured Capys. Usually only seen near larval food plants—the immature seeds of various Protea species. Male forms territories on hilltops, chasing intruders.

Family Lycaenidae

Capys disjunctus disjunctus

Russet Protea

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Sannie-se-suikerbossie
Wingspan: ♂ 31–37 mm ♀ 31–38 mm
Notes: The most widespread Protea butterfly in South Africa, and the only one known to show sexual dimorphism.

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Family Lycaenidae

Playboy

*Deudorix antalus*

**Brown Playboy**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Bruin-spelertjie

Wingspan: ♂ 22–34 mm ♀ 22–40 mm

Notes: Most common and widespread *Deudorix* species. Occurs throughout South Africa except on the highest mountains in Lesotho. Larva has many food plants, usually feeding on the seeds.


![Brown Playboy](Photo: Christopher Willis)

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Family Lycaenidae

**Fig-tree Blue**

*Myrina silenus*

**Common Fig-tree Blue**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Vyeboombloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 26–34 mm ♀ 33–41 mm  
*Notes:* Long, thick tails and iridescent blue upperside markings. Underside is a dead-leaf mimic. Flight appears mechanical and jerky. Larvae feed on the young shoots of fig trees.  
Bars
*Cigaritis ella*

**Ella’s Bar**
*Alternate common name:* Ella’s Red Blue
*Afrikaans common name:* Ella-se-streepvlerkie
*Wingspan:* ♂ 21–24 mm ♀ 25–30 mm
*Notes:* Small Cigaritis. Male an active hilltopper. Larvae feed on *Acacia* and *Ximenia*.
Cigaritis mozambica

Mozambique Bar

Alternate common name: Mozambique Red Blue
Afrikaans common name: Mosambiek-streepvlerkie
Wingspan: ♂ 22–25 mm ♀ 25–28 mm

Notes: Darker than other Cigaritis species; underside has deep orange bars on a cream background. Found in concentrated colonies on hillsides and at the base of hills. Both sexes strongly attracted to flowers. Larvae feed on the Wild Sweetpea Bush Sphenostylis angustifolia.

Flight period: Year-round, but more common Sept–May; peaks late summer.
Family Lycaenidae

Cigaritis natalensis

Natal Bar

Alternate common names: Natal Barred Blue, Natal Red Bar

Afrikaans common name: Natalse-streepvlerkie

Wingspan: ♂ 25–32 mm ♀ 26–34 mm

Notes: Widespread and common, often settling upside down with half-open wings. Both sexes found at mud puddles and on flowers. Larvae have a wide food plant spectrum including the Turkey-berry Canthium inerme, Tinderwood Clerodendrum glabrum and Sourplum Ximenia cajfa.


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Family Lycaenidae

Scarlet
*Axiocerses tjoane tjoane*

**Common Scarlet**

*Alternate common name:* Eastern Scarlet  
*Afrikaans common name:* Ralie-rooivlerkie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 24–32 mm ♀ 25–34 mm  
**Notes:** Upperside of wings red with black markings, underside cryptic. Rapid, darting flight. Both sexes found on flowers. Larvae feed on *Acacia* and *Peltophorum*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Sept–Nov and Mar–May.
Family Lycaenidae

Arrowhead

*Phasis clavum*

**Namaqua Arrowhead**

Alternate common names: Boland Copper, Samba Copper

Afrikaans common name: Samba-pylpuntjie

Wingspan: ♂ 29–39 mm ♀ 35–44 mm

Notes: Larval food comprises various species of *Searsia* (formerly *Rhus*).

Coppers

*Aloeides aranda*

**Aranda Copper**

Alternate common name: Common African Copper

Afrikaans common name: Aranda-kopervlerkie

Wingspan: ♂ 20–29 mm ♀ 27–31 mm

**Notes:** Has a tail-like projection at the hindwing anal angle. Male perches on low vegetation or rocks, and chases other butterflies. Female more sedentary.

**Flight period:** Sept–Apr in warm areas, peaks Oct and Feb.
**Aloeides damarensis**

**Damara Copper**

**Alternate common name:** None

**Afrikaans common name:** Damara-kopervlerkie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 25–32 mm ♀ 28–36 mm

**Notes:** Underside similar to Dull Copper. Larvae use various low-growing plants such as *Aspalathus* and *Gnidia*.

**Flight period:** Continuous broods, Sept–Apr in southern areas, year-round in arid north.
**Aloeides depicta**

**Depicta Copper**

**Alternate common name:** None  
**Afrikaans common name:** Depicta-kopervlerkie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 26–29 mm ♀ 29–35 mm  
**Notes:** Very variable. Hindwing underside ground colour sandy to buff-brown, occasionally reddish. Sexes similar; female paler, wings rounder.  
**Flight period:** Continuous broods through warmer months, Sept–Jun.
Family Lycaenidae

Aloeides pierus

Dull Copper

Alternate common name: Streaked Copper
Afrikaans common name: Dowwe-kopervlerkie

Wingspan: 25–30 mm

Notes: Male upperside tawny red, dark borders very wide, veins black. Female paler, upperside orange more extensive, penetrating the forewing apical area.

Flight period: Several broods; Sept–Apr; peaks Oct and Feb.

Photo: Christopher Willis

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**Family Lycaenidae**

*Aloeides taikosama*

**Dusky Copper**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Donker-kopervlerkie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 22–27 mm ♀ 27–33 mm  
*Notes:* In small colonies; settles on bare earth. Easily flushed, seldom flying far from the colony.  
*Flight period:* Continuous broods, Aug–Apr, with peaks in Nov and Mar.

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**Aloeides henningi**

**Henning’s Copper**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Henning-se-kopervlerkie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 23–26 mm ♀ 24–26 mm

**Notes:** Larger than similar Susan’s Copper, forewing more pointed. Forewing outer margin straighter than Almeida Copper. Larvae feed on *Aspalathus* and the Creeping Red Hermannia *Hermannia depressa.*

**Flight period:** In cooler areas single-brooded, Sept–Nov; in warm areas, second brood, Jan–Feb.
Family Lycaenidae

Chrysoritis zeuxo

Jitterbug Daisy Copper

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Suidkus-kopervlerkie
Wingspan: ♂ 22–25 mm ♀ 24–28 mm
Notes: Usually found close to its larval food plant, Chrysanthemoides monilifera. Rarely seen feeding at flowers. The female is scarcer than the male and is best distinguished by the duller lustre of the orange-yellow colour on the upperside and her stouter abdomen.
Family Lycaenidae

**Opal**  
*Chrysoritis pan lysander*

**Lysander Opal**  
Alternate common name: Pan Opal  
Afrikaans common name: Lysander-opaal  
Wingspan: ♂ 20–28 mm ♀ 22–32 mm  
Notes: Larvae associated with *Crematogaster* cocktail ants.  

---

![Photos: Christopher Willis](image)
Family Lycaenidae

Grey

\textit{Crudaria leroma}

**Silver-spotted Grey**

Alternate common name: Silver-studded Grey  
Afrikaans common name: Spikkel-valetjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 20–32 mm ♀ 25–34 mm  
Notes: Very variable, especially on the underside; series of spots on both wings vary from strongly outlined in black to almost invisible. Upperside varies from pale grey to olive-brown. Sexes similar, female larger, wings rounder. Hindwing has a short tail. Usually found in bare rocky areas; fond of flowers. Larvae feed on \textit{Acacia} species and the Broad-pod Elephant-root \textit{Elephantorrhiza burkei}.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, Oct–Mar in cooler areas.

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**Sorrel Copper**

*Lycaena clarki*

**Eastern Sorrel Copper**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Oostelike-kleinkopervlerkie  
Wingspan: ♂ 21–27 mm ♀ 22–30 mm  
Notes: Has pale rings around dark spots on the underside. Usually found in vleis and along watercourses where its food plant *Rumex* grows.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peak in summer.

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Family Lycaenidae

Hairtails
_Anthene amarah amarah_

**Black-striped Hairtail**
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Swartstreep-kortstertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 21–26 mm ♀ 23–29 mm

Notes: Unique black streak at the forewing base on the underside of both sexes. Very fond of _Acacia_ flowers. Larvae feed on _Acacia_.
Flight period: Year-round, peak in summer.

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Anthene definita definita

Common Hairtail
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Donker-kortstertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 21–27 mm ♀ 24–29 mm
Notes: Sexes dimorphic. Widespread and common in the northern parts of South Africa and around the coast. Male has pointed wings, upperside deep steel-blue, and underside dove-grey, with rows of slightly darker grey spots. Female upperside is pale blue with grey borders. Larvae have a very wide food plant spectrum.
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peak in summer.

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Family Lycaenidae

*Anthene butleri livida*

**Pale Hairtail**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common names:* Bleek-kortstertjie, Vaal-kortstertjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 23–28 mm ♀ 25–32 mm  
*Notes:* Male a common midday hilltopper in rocky, hilly country. Larvae feed on *Kalanchoe*.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, peak in warmer months.

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Black Heart

*Uranothauma nubifer nubifer*

**Black Heart**

*Alternate common name*: None

*Afrikaans common name*: Swart-hartbloutjie

*Wingspan*: ♂ 22–26 mm ♀ 24–28 mm

*Notes*: Common name refers to the black scent patch in the centre of the male forewing on the upperside, but absent in the female. Fond of flowers and wet mud. Larvae feed on *Acacia karroo*.

**Bronzes**

*Cacyreus lingeus*

**Bush Bronze**

Alternate common name: Bush Blue  
Afrikaans common name: Bos-malvabloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 22–27 mm ♀ 22–28 mm  
**Notes:** Favours stream banks, wooded kloofs and gardens. Larvae feed on *Salvia*, *Plectranthus* and *Leonotis*.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peak from Oct–Feb, seldom in winter months in cooler areas.

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Cacyreus dicksoni

Dickson’s Geranium Bronze

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Dickson-se-malvabloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 16–24 mm ♀ 19–25 mm

Notes: Smaller than the Geranium Bronze, upperside deeper, more metallic bronze in both sexes. Underside with more basal white marbling than the Geranium Bronze. Larva with food plants similar to those of the Geranium Bronze.


Family Lycaenidae
Family Lycaenidae

*Cacyreus marshalli*

**Geranium Bronze**

*Alternate common names:* Common Geranium Bronze, Geranium Blue

*Afrikaans common name:* Malvabloutjie

*Wingspan:* ♂ 15–23 mm ♀ 18–27 mm

*Notes:* Range overlaps with the Water Bronze, but the upperside lacks the violet or violet-blue sheen of the Water Bronze. Widespread owing to adaptation to cultivated pelargoniums. Probably originally only in southwestern parts of South Africa, but has spread to the rest of the country and even to Europe.

*Flight period:* Year-round in warmer areas, usually Aug–May.

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Family Lycaenidae

*Cacyreus virilis*

**Mocker Bronze**

Alternate common name: Mocker Blue

Afrikaans common name: Na-aper-malvabloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 24–26 mm ♀ 24–27 mm

Notes: Very similar to, but not as widespread as the Bush Bronze. Larva has similar food plants.

Flight period: Year-round, with peak Nov–Feb.
**Family Lycaenidae**

**Hintza Blue**

*Zintha hintza hintza*

**Hintza Blue**

Alternate common name: Hintza Pierrot  
Afrikaans common name: Hintza-bloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 24–28 mm ♀ 24–27 mm  
Notes: One of South Africa’s most striking small blues. Found wherever its food plants, species of *Ziziphus*, grow.  
Flight period: Sept–Apr.
Pie
*Tuxentius melaena melaena*

**Black Pie**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common names:* Swart-bontetjie, Bont-bloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 19–24 mm ♀ 21–25 mm  
*Notes:* Similar to the White Pie; distinguished by underside markings. Larvae feed on *Ziziphus* species.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, most common from Oct–Mar.

![Photo: Christopher Willis](image_url)
Family Lycaenidae

Blues

*Leptotes babaulti*

**Babault’s Blue**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Babault-se-ertjiebloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 22–29 mm ♀ 26–30 mm  
Notes: Only really distinguishable from other members of the Common Blue group by genital dissection. Underside grey tends to be darker than in others of the group.  
Flight period: Year-round, peak Nov–Apr.
Leptotes pirithous pirithous

Common Zebra Blue
Alternate common name: Common Blue
Afrikaans common name: Gewone-ertjiebloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 21–29 mm ♀ 24–30 mm
Notes: Attracted to wet mud. Distinguishable from other members of the Common Blue group only by genital dissection. Common and widespread throughout South Africa in all biomes; absent only from the highest mountains. Larvae feed on Plumbago.
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, Oct–Mar in cooler areas.

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Family Lycaenidae

*Tarucus sybaris sybaris*

**Dotted Blue**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Spikkelbloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 22–26 mm ♀ 20–27 mm

Notes: Only member of the *Tarucus* genus in South Africa to carry a hindwing tail. Underside (both sexes) white, polka-dotted with black. Flight slow, close to its food plants (*Ziziphus* species)

Flight period: Year-round, peak from Nov–Mar.

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Family Lycaenidae

*Tarucus thespis*

**Fynbos or Vivid Blue**

*Alternate common names:* Vivid Dotted Blue, Macchia Blue  
*Afrikaans common name:* Fynbos-spikkelbloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 20–25 mm ♀ 20–27 mm  

**Notes:** Underside forewing has white chequering on a dark grey background. Larvae feed on *Phylica imberbis.*  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Sept–Nov and Feb/Mar.

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Photo: Christopher Willis
Family Lycaenidae

*Lampides boeticus*

**Pea Blue**

Alternate common names: Long-tailed Blue, Lucerne Blue  
Afrikaans common name: Lusern-bloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 24–32 mm ♀ 24–34 mm  
Notes: Common and widespread all over the Old World and Africa. Underside with distinctive white lines on a fawn ground colour. Larva feeds on a vast variety of legumes (lentils, peas, beans and vetches—defined as legumes in the genus *Vicia*).  
Flight period: Year-round with peak from Nov–Mar.

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**Leptotes brevidentatus**

**Short-toothed Blue**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Kortgetande-bloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 22–29 mm ♀ 26–30 mm  
*Notes:* Distinguishable from other members of the Common Blue group only by genital dissection. Attracted to wet mud.

*Flight period:* Year-round in warmer areas, Oct–Mar in cooler areas.
Family Lycaenidae

Dusky Blue

*Pseudonacaduba sichela sichela*

Dusky Line Blue

Alternate common name: Dusky Blue
Afrikaans common name: Donker-bloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 25–28 mm ♀ 25–27 mm
Notes: Small blue. Underside of both sexes is slate-grey, with fine white striations. Often found on wet mud along streams. Larvae feed on Cork-bush *Mundulea sericea*.
Flight period: Continuous broods, Oct–May.

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Photos: Christopher Willis
Ant Blues

*Lepidochrysops macgregori*

**McGregor’s Blue**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* McGregor-se-bloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 28–32 mm ♀ 30–33 mm

**Notes:** Brown upperside has bright coppery golden sheen. The Hantam National Botanical Garden outside Nieuwoudtville serves as the type locality for this species, where it was first recorded by Ken Pennington on the Farm Glenlyon on 6 September 1968. Named for Mr and Mrs Gordon MacGregor, owners of the Farm Glenlyon at the time. Underside similar to Pennington’s Blue.  
**Flight period:** Single-brooded, late Aug to early Oct.

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Family Lycaenidae

*Lepidochrysops patricia*

**Patricia Blue**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Patricia-bloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 35–44 mm ♀ 36–46 mm  
Notes: Male upperside pearlescent mauve-blue; female upperside has mauve-blue on brown-grey ground colour. The young larvae feed on seeds of *Lantana* and *Salvia* species. Like other *Lepidochrysops* blues, they enter the nests of *Camponotus* ants when half grown, to feed on their young.  
Flight period: Two broods, Sept–Dec and Jan–Apr, with some overlap.

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**Lepidochrysops plebeia plebeia**

**Twin-spot Blue**

**Alternate common name:** None  
**Afrikaans common name:** Dubbelkol-bloutjie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 35–43 mm ♀ 38–45 mm  
**Notes:** Common savanna species. Female upperside violet-blue, resembling the Patricia Blue. Compared with others of the group, has an extra hindwing underside black spot. Larva feeds on *Lantana* before switching to the ant brood.  

**Flight period:** Two broods, Sept–Dec and Jan–Apr, with some overlap.
Family Lycaenidae

*Lepidochrysops ignota*

**Zulu Blue**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Zoeloe-bloutjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 27–29 mm ♀ 27–30 mm

**Notes:** Small brown species, upperside grey-brown; underside paler grey, with small blackish spots. Flight rapid and jinking close to the ground, difficult to follow. Larva feeds on Cat’s Whiskers *Becium obovatum* before switching to the ant brood.

**Flight period:** Single-brooded, Oct–Nov.
Family Lycaenidae

Smoky Blue
Euchrysops dolorosa

Sabie Smoky Blue
Alternate common names: Sabie Blue, Odzani Blue
Afrikaans common name: Sabie-dowwebloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 22–26 mm ♀ 23–29 mm
Notes: Flight low, weak and erratic, settling on flowers or the ground. Larvae feed on Salvia and Becium.

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Blues

_Eichochrysops messapus_

**Cupreous Blue**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Koperbloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 17–22 mm ♀ 17–24 mm

**Notes:** Two subspecies. Male of _E. messapus mahallakoeana_ has a variable pinkish copper blush. Larvae feed on _Thesium_ and _Indigofera_.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, peak Oct and Mar.

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*Eichochrysops hippocrates*

**White-tipped Blue**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Witpunt-koperbloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 18–23 mm ♀ 20–24 mm  
Notes: Male has a bold white forewing apical tip. Found in wet, marshy areas; seldom found far from water, where its food plants *Rumex* and *Polygonum* grow.  
Family Lycaenidae

Meadow Blues
*Cupidopsis cissus cissus*

**Common Meadow Blue**
Alternate common name: Meadow Blue
Afrikaans common name: Vleibloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 22–34 mm ♀ 23–36 mm
Notes: Both sexes have conspicuous bright orange hindwing anal lunules; both tailless. Usually found in open grassland. Larvae feed on *Eriosema* and *Vigna*.
Flight period: Sept–Apr and May, sometimes Jun and Jul in subtropical areas.

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Cupidopsis jobates jobates

Tailed Meadow Blue

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Aasbloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 23–30 mm ♀ 26–33 mm

Notes: Not as common as the Common Meadow Blue. Habitat similar but prefers damper areas. Hindwing carries a short anal tail. Orange lunules spread along the margin forming a band. Larvae feed on Rhynchosia and other low-growing legumes.

Flight period: Sept–Apr and May, sometimes to Jun and Jul in subtropical areas.
Blues

*Zizeeria knysna*

**African Grass Blue**

Alternate common name: Sooty Blue

Afrikaans common name: Duwweltjie-bloutjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 18–23 mm ♀ 21–26 mm

**Notes:** Most common small Blue, most often on suburban lawns infested with its food plant *Tribulus terrestris*, a common weed. Flight low, quite fast, circling and erratic. Described by David Swanepoel as the ‘Street Dweller’, the species is very widespread and fairly common in most parts of South Africa’s grasslands and bushveld areas. Can be mistaken for the Tiny Grass Blue, but the following differences are the most striking: it is larger, underside colour is duller with spotting not so clear, and the body is much stouter.

**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Oct–Dec and Feb–Apr.
Azanus moriqua

**Black-bordered Babul Blue**

*Alternate common name:* Thorn-tree Blue  
*Afrikaans common name:* Doringboom-bloutjie  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 19–24 mm ♀ 19–25 mm  
**Notes:** All over South Africa, but absent from high mountains and fynbos/karoo areas. Larval food includes the flowers, buds and fresh shoots of *Acacia* species such as the Sweet Thorn *Acacia karroo*.  
**Flight period:** Continuous broods all year, mainly Sept–May.
**Zizina antanossa**

**Clover Blue**

Alternate common name: Dark Grass Blue  
Afrikaans common name: Klawer-bloutjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 20–24 mm ♀ 21–28 mm  
Notes: Small blue butterfly resembling the African Grass Blue with similar low, weak flight. Seldom found far from its food plants Sweethearts *Desmodium incaum* and *Indigofera* species.  
**Azanus natalensis**

**Natal Babul Blue**

Alternate common names: Natal Spotted Blue, Natal Blue

Afrikaans common name: Natalse-bloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 23–27 mm ♀ 24–30 mm

Notes: Largest *Azanus*. Larvae feed on *Acacia*.

Flight period: Continuous broods all year, mainly Sept–May.
Family Lycaenidae

Actizera lucida

Rayed Blue

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Witstreep-bloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 15–23 mm ♀ 17–25 mm

Notes: Distinguished from other small Blues by having a bright white diagonal streak on the underside of the hindwing. Larvae feed on low-growing legumes.

Flight period: Year-round, more numerous in summer.
Family Lycaenidae

*Brephidium metophilis*

**Tinktinkie Blue**

*Alternate common name:* Diminutive Blue  
*Afrikaans common name:* Tinktinkie-bloutjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 16–20 mm ♀ 17–21 mm  
*Notes:* Very small brown butterfly. Flight low, weak and erratic. Dark hindwing submarginal spots mirroring those on the underside. Larvae feed on *Exomis microphylla*.  
*Flight period:* Continuous broods, depending on the rainfall.

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Azanus jesous jesous

**Topaz Babul Blue**

Alternate common names: Topaz-spotted Blue, Topaz Blue

Afrikaans common name: Hemels-bloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 17–26 mm ♀ 22–28 mm

Notes: Most common South African Azanus. Widespread over almost all of South Africa. Like other Azanus Blues, the larva feeds on Acacia species.

Flight period: Continuous broods from Sept–May in cooler areas; in warmer areas, year-round, peak late summer.
Azanus ubaldus

Velvet-spotted Babul Blue

Alternate common name: Velvet-spotted Blue
Afrikaans common name: Fluweelkol-bloutjie

Wingspan: ♂ 16–23 mm ♀ 18–21 mm

Notes: Male has a velvety blue patch on the forewing upperside. Flight slow. Underside more finely marked than in other Azanus species.

Flight period: Continuous broods, Sept–Apr.
Jewel Blue  
*Chilades trochylus*

**Grass Jewel**  
Alternate common name: Grass Jewel Blue  
Afrikaans common name: Grasjuweeltjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 15–19 mm ♀ 16–20 mm  
Notes: Tiny brown butterflies. Flight slow and halting, low amongst vegetation. Generally solitary in grassy areas, in vleis and marshes sometimes in numbers. Larva feeds on *Heliotropium* and *Indigofera*.  
Flight period: In warmer areas, continuous broods all year, mainly Oct–May. In cooler areas only found Oct–May.
Blue

*Zizula hylax*

**Tiny Grass Blue**
Alternate common name: Gaika Blue
Afrikaans common name: Gaika-bloutjie
Wingspan: ♂ 17–21 mm ♀ 18–25 mm
Notes: Delicate, small blue butterfly; flight weak; abdomen protrudes beyond hindwings. Underside has tiny black spots on pale grey ground colour. Sometimes common in riverine and coastal forests. Larvae feed on low-growing Acanthaceae such as *Justicia* and *Phaulopsis*.
Flight period: In warmer areas, continuous broods all year, peaks Sept–Nov and Mar–Jun. In cooler areas double-brooded at those times.

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Family Pieridae
Zebra White, Vagrants, Tips, Whites, Small Whites, Wood Whites, Dotted Borders, Clouded Yellows, Migrants, Grass Yellows

Zebra White
*Pinacopteryx eriphia eriphia*

**Zebra White**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Kwagga

**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–55 mm ♀ 42–47 mm

**Notes:** An inhabitant of bushveld and savanna. Upperside black or brown-black, with conspicuous white to cream-yellow zebra stripes and spots. Feeds on flowers or sometimes found sucking at damp mud. Larva feeds on *Boscia* species and Bush-cherry *Maerua caffra*.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, Oct–Apr in cooler areas.

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Tips

Colotis ione

Bushveld Purple Tip

Alternate common names: Common Purple Tip, Purple Tip
Afrikaans common name: Bosveld-perspuntjie

Wingspan: ♂ 45–50 mm ♀ 48–52 mm

Notes: Mostly a widespread bushveld species that also flies in suitably dry coastal bush. WSF with heavy black markings and veins blackened. DSF with reduced black markings, veins not blackened and they are generally paler. Many female forms have been described. Specimens are often seen feeding on the nectar of flowers, in particular the purple-flowered Vernonia species. Like many other Pieridae, the larva feeds on species of Boscia, Maerua and Capparis.

Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall. More prevalent during summer and autumn.

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Colotis evenina evenina

Common Orange Tip

Alternate common name: Orange Tip
Afrikaans common name: Oranjepuntjie
Wingspan: ♂ 38–45 mm ♀ 35–42 mm

Notes: A common and widespread species in savanna and woodland of southern Africa. Sexually and seasonally dimorphic; upperside resembles a small Red Tip. Larval food plants include species of Boscia and Capparis (Capparaceae).

Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall.
Family Pieridae

Colotis subfasciatus subfasciatus

Lemon Traveller

Alternate common names: Lemon Traveller Tip, Lemon Tip, King Teracolus
Afrikaans common names: Suurlemoensmous, Geelsmous

Wingspan: ♂ 45–52 mm ♀ 48–55 mm

Notes: Predominantly a bushveld species. Both sexes can be found flying at very high speeds. Males establish their territories around the larval food plants. Upperside of wings pale yellow, forewings pointed. Underside pale green, finely striated with pale grey-brown; white-edged darker line crosses the hind wing. Larval food plant is the Shepherd’s Tree Boscia albitrunca (Capparaceae).

Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas.
Family Pieridae

*Colotis antevippe gavisa*

**Red Tip**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Rooipuntjie

Wingspan: 40–45 mm

Notes: A common and widespread inhabitant of savanna, woodland and coastal bush. Sexes are dimorphic and seasonally polymorphic. Both sexes can often be seen feeding on nectar, and occasionally visiting muddy places.

Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall. Peak towards late summer and autumn.
Family Pieridae

Colotis danae annae

**Scarlet Tip**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Skarlakenpuntjie  
*Wingspan:* 35–55 mm; variation in size of seasonal forms  
*Notes:* A widespread inhabitant of bushveld areas. Sexually and seasonally dimorphic. Normally flies in a leisurely fashion around thorn trees, but can fly rapidly if disturbed or when searching for females. A common visitor of roadside flowers. Upperside forewing of the male is white with a broad carmine-red tip. Larva feeds on Cadaba species, often alongside those of the Sulphur Orange Tip.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, depending on rainfall. Peak towards late summer and autumn.

![Butterfly photos](image-url)
Family Pieridae

*Colotis evagore antigone*

**Small Orange Tip**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Kleinoranjepuntjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 28–35 mm ♀ 28–38 mm  
Notes: A common and widespread inhabitant of arid bushveld. Has a weak flight and is seldom seen more than half a metre above the ground. Seasonally polymorphic.  
Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall. Usually most abundant in autumn.

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Family Pieridae

Colotis euippe omphale

Smoky Orange Tip
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Donkeroranjepuntjie
Wingspan: 35–45 mm
Notes: A common and widespread inhabitant of woodland, savanna and coastal bush. WSF on the upperside with a broad black cross bar centrally and across the lower part of the hindwing. Tends to prefer to fly in the shade of trees rather than in open spaces. A common visitor to flowers and feeds at damp places.
Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall. Peaks towards late summer and autumn.

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Family Pieridae

Colotis auxo

Sulphur Orange Tip
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Swaeloranjepuntjie
Wingspan: 35–40 mm
Notes: A common and widespread species in bushveld and savanna. Sexually and seasonally dimorphic. Ground colour a distinctive pale yellow.
Flight period: Year-round, depending on rainfall. Peaks towards late summer and autumn.
Family Pieridae

Whites

*Belenois creona severina*

**African Common White**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Afrikaanse gewone witjie

Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 42–50 mm

Notes: A common, widespread species that inhabits bushveld and woodland areas. Sexually dimorphic. Males do not fly as fast as others of the genus and are often seen flying in a leisurely manner around their woodland habitat. Can be a prolific migrant at times, especially north of South Africa, but not as often as the Brown-veined White. Hindwing with submarginal and marginal areas broadly dark brown to black.


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![Butterfly Images]
**Family Pieridae**

*Belenois gidica abyssinica*

**African Veined White**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Laeveldwitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–55 mm ♂ 40–53 mm  

**Notes:** A common, widespread species that inhabits bushveld and woodland areas. With strong seasonal and sexual dimorphism. Both sexes feed on flowers or on damp sand or mud. Underside hindwing with veins narrowly dark brown. The base of the hindwing is yellowish in female specimens.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, more common in late summer and autumn (Jan–May).
**Family Pieridae**

*Belenois aurota aurota*

**Brown-veined White**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Grasveldwitjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 40–45 mm ♀ 42–50 mm  

Notes: Common and widespread species that migrates in vast numbers almost every year: numbers grow in home areas until overcrowding triggers lemming-type migration, usually Dec–Feb, in a northeasterly direction. Bad weather usually brings these migrations to a halt. Hindwing veins on the underside broadly brown. Both sexes found feeding on flowers or on damp sand or mud.  

Flight period: Year-round in home areas.

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Family Pieridae

*Pieris brassicae*

**Cabbage White**

**Alternate common name:** Large White  
**Afrikaans common name:** Kool-witjie  
**Wingspan:** 50–55 mm  
**Notes:** Only South African representative of an introduced alien Palaearctic species, first recorded in 1994. Common autumn garden butterfly near Cape Town, spreading to the Eastern Cape. Sexes dimorphic. Female has two large upperside spots in the lower middle forewing whereas the male has only underside spots. Larvae feed on nasturtiums, cabbages and canola.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Aug–Nov and Mar–May.

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**Family Pieridae**

*Belenois zochalia zochalia*

**Forest White**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Boswitjie  
Wingspan: 40–50 mm  

Notes: An inhabitant of woodland, coastal bush and forest. Males fly rapidly along forest edges whereas females generally keep to the undergrowth, seldom emerging unless to feed on flowers. The species has been recorded roosting communally at night, often with other species of pierid.  

Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peak Nov–Feb.

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![Forest White Butterfly](Photo: Christopher Willis)

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Family Pieridae

*Pontia helice helice*

**Meadow White**

*Alternate common names:* Common Meadow White, African Cabbage White  
*Afrikaans common name:* Bontrokkie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 37–43 mm  
*Notes:* Common, widespread species found through most open habitats. Keeps low to the ground where it often settles on low plants and feeds on flowers. Males show hilltopping behaviour. Underside wing pattern distinctive: apex of forewing and veins of hindwing broadly blackish brown with yellow edging. Often seen in urban gardens.  
*Flight period:* Year-round, peaks Sept–Nov and Mar.

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Family Pieridae

Wood White
*Leptosia alcesta inalcesta*

African Wood White

Alternate common name: Large White
Afrikaans common name: Fladderpapiertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 30–40 mm ♀ 35–42 mm

Notes: Appears green, but it is an illusion caused by a mix of black and yellow scales. The only South African pierid found in deep forest; prefers shady places in the undergrowth. As the Afrikaans common name suggests, it flies slowly with a characteristic bouncing action, frequently settling on flowers or on the ground.

Flight period: Year-round, peak Mar–May.

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Dotted Borders

*Mylothris agathina agathina*

**Common Dotted Border**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Gewone voëlent-witjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 50–60 mm ♀ 52–65 mm  

**Notes:** Widespread through most wooded habitats from bushveld to forest. Forewing base not orange (see Twin Dotted Border) on both surfaces of the wings. Frequent garden visitors. Together with the Twin Dotted Border, larvae use several species of Loranthaceae mistletoes.  

**Flight period:** Year-round, peaks Oct and Feb–Apr.
Family Pieridae

*Mylothris rueppelli haemus*

**Twin Dotted Border**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Oranjevlerk voëlent-witjie

Wingspan: ♂ 48–55 mm ♀ 50–56 mm

Notes: Inhabitant of woodland and savanna on the highveld and in coastal forest. Forewing base broadly orange, on both surfaces of wings. Small black apex and distinctly dotted border, with black spots at the end of veins.

Flight period: Year-round, peaks Oct and late Feb–Apr.

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Family Pieridae

Clouded Yellow
*Colias electo electo*

**African Clouded Yellow**
Alternate common name: Lucerne Butterfly
Afrikaans common names: Lusernskoenlapper, Lusernvlinder

**Wingspan:** ♂ 35–40 mm ♀ 32–40 mm

**Notes:** Commonly known as the ‘Clouded Yellow’, this species is a minor pest on lucerne (*Medicago sativa*). Found throughout South Africa in all biomes. Often settles on flowers, among weeds, grass and even on the ground, usually with closed wings. Specimens are often found feeding on flowers.

**Flight period:** Continuous broods, year-round; peak Apr–Aug.

![African Clouded Yellow butterflies](Photo: Christopher Willis)
Family Pieridae

**Migrant**

*Catopsilia florella*

**African Migrant**

Alternate common names: Common Vagrant, African Vagrant

Afrikaans common name: Afrikaanse swerwer

Wingspan: ♂ 54–60 mm ♀ 56–66 mm

Notes: A common migrant throughout Africa. Sporadic migrations of this species have been recorded for over 100 years. Often flies in millions in a northeasterly direction across Botswana and the northern provinces of South Africa. These migrations occur from late Nov–Jan. A frequent visitor of all kinds of flowers and at damp sand. Larva feeds on the common weed *Senna didymobotrya* and its indigenous relatives.

Flight period: Continuous broods, year-round. Migrations usually occur from summer to autumn, flying in a northeasterly direction.

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Photos: Christopher Willis

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Family Pieridae

Grass Yellows

*Eurema desjardinsii marshalli*

**Angled Grass Yellow**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Reënbosgeletjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 35–38 mm ♀ 37–40 mm  
Notes: An inhabitant of forests and coastal bush. Hindwing outer margin distinctly angled, easily identifying this species. Feeds on flowers and damp sand.  
Flight period: Continuous broods, year-round, depending on rainfall.

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Family Pieridae

_Eurema brigitta brigitta_

** Broad-bordered Grass Yellow  
Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Grasveldgeletjie  
Wingspan: 30–35 mm  

**Notes:** Found throughout most habitats of South Africa except the southwestern parts of the Western Cape and the Karoo. Hindwing outer margin evenly rounded (compare Angled Grass Yellow). Flight is slow and low, seldom higher than 1 m above the ground. Feeds avidly on flowers and damp sand. Like other Grass Yellows, larvae feed on the Fishbone Dwarf Cassia _Chamaecrista mimosoides_ and the Small Hypericum _Hypericum aethiopicum_.

**Flight period:** Continuous broods, all year. Peaks in late summer.

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Family Pieridae

Eurema hecabe solifera

Lowveld Yellow

Alternate common name: Common Grass Yellow
Afrikaans common name: Laeveldgeletjie
Wingspan: ♂ 32–41 mm ♀ 34–42 mm

Notes: A common, widespread inhabitant of open woodland with incursions into bushveld and forests. The forewing underside has a dark brown apical patch. WSF with broader dark markings than DSF.

Flight period: Continuous broods, year-round, depending on rainfall. Peaks in late summer.

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Swallowtails

*Papilio demodocus demodocus*

**Citrus Swallowtail**

Alternate common names: Christmas Butterfly, Orange Dog

Afrikaans common names: Lemoenskoenlapper, Lemoenvlinder

Wingspan: ♂ 100–120 mm ♀ 110–130 mm

Notes: Common and widespread throughout South Africa; absent from extremely arid areas. Common garden butterfly. Hindwing without tails. Males show strong hilltopping behaviour. This is perhaps the most conspicuous of all hilltopping species. The larvae, when plentiful, can do damage to citrus orchards, where they are commonly known as Orange Dogs.

Flight period: Continuous broods year-round, mainly Sept–May.

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**Papilio constantinus constantinus**

**Constantine’s Swallowtail**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Konstantyn-se-swaelstert

**Wingspan:** ♂ 70–90 mm ♀ 80–95 mm

**Notes:** An inhabitant of woodland bushveld but sometimes also penetrating montane forest. Flies low and at random, usually 1 or 2 m above the ground, and often pauses for visits at flowers. Both sexes fond of congregating at muddy places. Black hindwing tails marked with yellow. Antennae with yellow tips (compare Forest Swallowtail). Larvae feed on species of *Vepris* and *Teclea*.

**Flight period:** Continuous broods during the warmer months, peak Nov–Feb.
**Papilio ophidicephalus**

**Emperor Swallowtail**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Koning-swaelstert  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 90–110 mm ♀ 100–120 mm  

**Notes:** The largest butterfly found in southern Africa. An inhabitant of montane forest. Five subspecies are found in southern Africa that differ according to the extent and arrangement of their markings. Have large clubbed tails on the hindwing. Fly low (generally 1–3 m above the ground), often feeding at flowers near the ground or drinking at damp places. Like all swallowtails, their wings are kept in constant motion when feeding on nectar, but are motionless while drinking at muddy places. Males show strong territorial behaviour. Larvae feed on the Cape Chestnut *Calodendrum capense*, Perdepis *Clausena anisata* and species of *Zanthoxylum*.  

**Flight period:** Double-brooded; spring brood (Aug–Dec) less abundant and smaller specimens than the summer brood (Jan–Apr).
Family Papilionidae

Papilio euphranor

Forest Swallowtail

Alternate common name: Bush Kite Swallowtail
Afrikaans common name: Vlieëndepiering
Wingspan: ♂ 80–100 mm ♀ 90–110 mm

Notes: The only Papilio endemic to South Africa. An inhabitant of montane evergreen forest. A fairly large species with spatulate tails. Tails unmarked. Antennae with black tips (compare Constantine’s Swallowtail). Males tend to keep to the forest canopy and tree tops whereas females are most often found along forest margins, clearings or paths in search of the food plant River Wild-quince Cryptocarya woodii on which to lay eggs.

Family Papilionidae

Papilio nireus lyaeus

Green-banded Swallowtail

Alternate common name: Black Velvet
Afrikaans common name: Groenlint-swaelstert

Wingspan: ♂ 75–90 mm ♀ 85–95 mm

Notes: A common and widespread woodland and forest species. Hindwing without tails. Male with a jet-black upperside with greenish blue transverse band. Female upperside brownish black with a bluish green transverse band. Readily attracted to flowers and fond of drinking on the mud at the edge of streams or pools. Also attracted to fresh animal droppings. Larvae use the same plants as the Emperor, Constantine’s and Mocker Swallowtails.

Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peaks Nov and Feb.

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Family Papilionidae

*Papilio dardanus cenea*

**Mocker Swallowtail**

Alternate common name: Flying Handkerchief
Afrikaans common name: Na-aper-swaelstert

**Wingspan:** ♂ 80–100 mm ♀ 90–110 mm

**Notes:** Probably the most extensively researched and well-known butterfly mimic. Only the female is mimetic, with several female forms. A coastal and montane forest species. The male has a prominent lobed tail on the hindwing and has a cryptic, dry-leaf appearance. Males show strong territoriality and fly up and down the edges of forests in search of females with which to mate. The female is shy and generally found only near the food plant. The female is also without tails on the hindwing. Larvae use the same plants as the Emperor, Constantine’s and Green-banded Swallowtails.

**Flight period:** Year-round in northern areas, with peaks in Dec, Jan and Apr.

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Papilio echerioides echerioides

White-banded Swallowtail

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Witlint-swaelstert
Wingspan: 65–75 mm

Notes: An inhabitant of montane forest. Both sexes fly near the ground, and their flight tends to be slower than that of other swallowtails. Females generally flutter slowly through the forest undergrowth in search of food plants on which to lay their eggs. Seldom seen in muddy places.

Flight period: Double-brooded, Jan–Mar and Sept–Nov.
Lady, Swordtails

*Graphium angolanus angolanus*

**Angola White-lady Swordtail**

Alternate common name: Angola White Lady
Afrikaans common name: Angola-witnooientjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 65–70 mm ♀ 70–75 mm

**Notes:** An inhabitant of bushveld and woodland. Tailless. Fond of flowers and muddy places along streams. Unlike the White Lady, has three large white spots in the forewing cell. Males occasionally show hilltopping behaviour. Generally flies low and fast through the trees in its woodland habitat. Larvae of all Swordtails feed on Annonaceae (Custard Apples) and their relatives.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer months, peaks Nov and Feb.
Graphium antheus

Large Striped Swordtail
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Jag-swaardstert
Wingspan: ♂ 65–70 mm ♀ 70–75 mm
Notes: Inhabits coastal lowland forest and bushveld areas. Large, brilliant turquoise and black swordtail. Transverse bands in forewing cell wavy (compare Small Striped Swordtail). Hindwing with long, thin, pointed tails. Males patrol along the edges of bush as well as rocky hill slopes.
Flight period: Continuous broods in warmer months, peak Nov–Dec, sometimes flying as late as May.
**Family Papilionidae**

*Graphium colonna*

**Mamba Swordtail**

Alternate common name: Black Swordtail  
Afrikaans common name: Mamba-swaardstert  
Wingspan: ♀ 55–60 mm ♀ 60–65 mm  
**Notes:** Uncommon and localised. Inhabits coastal forest in KwaZulu-Natal. The central area of the hindwing lacks the banding and spotting of other swordtails. White tail tips are very conspicuous. Both sexes feed on flowers and damp sand. Seldom fly high, keeping to about 1 m above the ground.  
**Flight period:** Continuous broods in warmer months, Oct–Apr.
Family Papilionidae

**Graphium policenes policenes**

**Small Striped Swordtail**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Ooskus-swaardstert  
*Wingspan:*  
♂ 55–60 mm  ♀ 60–65 mm  

**Notes:** Inhabits coastal forest from the Eastern Cape to northern KwaZulu-Natal. Flight is fast, erratic and elusive. Smaller than the Large Striped Swordtail. Transverse stripes in the forewing cell are straight, not wavy (compare Large Striped Swordtail). Hindwing with long, thin, pointed tails.  
*Flight period:* Continuous broods in warmer months, often seen as late as May.
Family Papilionidae

*Graphium leonidas leonidas*

**Veined Swordtail**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Bont-swaardstert  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 75–80 mm ♀ 75–85 mm  

**Notes:** Common woodland and forest species. Tailless. Both sexes feed on nectar from flowers and at damp sand. Males show strong hilltopping behaviour.  
**Flight period:** Continuous broods, peaks in warmer months from Oct–Apr; flies midwinter in subtropical areas.

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Graphium morania

**White Lady**
*Alternate common name:* Small White-Lady Swordtail
*Afrikaans common name:* Witnooientjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 50–55 mm ♀ 55–60 mm

**Notes:** A bushveld and woodland species. Tailless. Smaller than the similar Angola White-Lady Swordtail, with only two large white spots in the forewing cell. Males show hilltopping behaviour.

**Flight period:** Continuous broods in warmer months, Sept–May.
**Family Hesperiidae**
Policemen, Flats, Elves, Buff-tipped Skipper, Skippers, Sandmen, Sylphs, Rangers, Darts, Night-fighters, Hoppers, Swifts, Hottentot Skippers

---

**Policemen**

*Coeliades forestan*

**Striped Policeman**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Witbroek-konstabel  
Wingspan: ♂ 42–55 mm ♀ 55–64 mm  
Notes: Forewing brown. Hindwing brown with a broad white median band without black spots (compare Two-pip Policeman). Inhabits rainforests, coastal bush and savanna areas. Males show hilltopping behaviour and are known to scent-mark using a black, brush-like organ which is exserted from the anal end of the abdomen. Larva has a wide range of food plants.  
Flight period: Continuous broods, all year in warmer areas; peak Sept–Apr.

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![Striped Policeman](image)

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Coeliades pisistratus

Two-pip Policeman

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Dubbelkol-konstabel

Wingspan: ♂ 55–65 mm ♀ 63–70 mm

Notes: Underside is brown with a white hindwing band with a row of three or four black spots. Often observed feeding at flowers and occasionally sucking at mud. Females are usually observed in the vicinity of their food plants. Larva has a wide food plant range, but prefers the Lesser Moth-fruit Creeper Sphedamnocarpus pruriens.

Flight period: Continuous broods, all year in warmer areas; peak Sept–Apr.
Family Hesperiidae

Flats
*Celaenorrhinus mokeezi*

**Christmas Forester**
*Alternate common names:* Large Flat, Large Sprite
*Afrikaans common name:* Kersfees-bosjagterjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 40–48 mm ♀ 45–51 mm

**Notes:** An endemic southern African species commonly found through many of South Africa’s eastern forests. Usually found around shady spots at the edges of forest clearings, glades and paths. Flight flitting and dancing, landing on leaves with wings open, sometimes on the underside of the leaf. Larva feeds on the Buckweed *Isoglossa woodii*.

**Flight period:** Double-brooded, Dec and (larger brood) Feb–Apr.

![Photo: Christopher Willis](image)
Family Hesperiidae

Tagiades flesus

Clouded Forester

Alternate common names: Clouded Flat, Clouded Skipper
Afrikaans common name: Skaduwee-dartelaartjie

Wingspan: ♂ 35–47 mm ♀ 43–49 mm

Notes: Upperside of wings dark brown with hyaline patches. Underside is almost completely white. Very common species in most wooded areas, both bush and rainforest. Has an erratic flight pattern and often settles on the underside of leaves, apparently ‘disappearing into thin air’ during the process. Is very conspicuous on the wing because of its white hindwings. Larva feeds on Dioscorea species.

Flight period: Year-round, more numerous in late summer and autumn.
Family Hesperiidae

Elf

_Eretis umbra umbra_

**Small Marbled Elf**

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Kleinmarmer-kluisenaar

**Wingspan:** ♂ 30–32 mm ♀ 32–37 mm

**Notes:** Similar to the Marbled Elf, but this species is smaller, with brown forelegs instead of the white forelegs characteristic of the Marbled Elf. Usually inhabits grassland and bushveld areas, where they settle with expanded wings. Males often establish territories around a particular bush. A widespread and common species. Larvae feed on low-growing Acanthaceae such as *Justicia* and *Phaulopsis*.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, Aug–May in cooler areas.

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**Elfins**

*Sarangesa seineri*

**Dark Elfin**

Alternate common name: Northern Dark Elfin  
Afrikaans common name: Donker-kaboutertjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 36–38 mm ♀ 38–40 mm  
Notes: The white patch on the antenna below the club is peculiar to this species. Found mainly in woodland, bushveld and savanna country. Often present on steep hillsides, but sometimes also found in dry river beds. Perch close to or on the ground with expanded wings, often on the underside of a leaf. A relatively uncommon species, but is widely distributed.  
Flight period: Year-round, scarcer in winter and dry season.

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![Image of Dark Elfin butterfly](image_url)

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Sarangeza motozi

Elfin Skipper

Alternate common name: Forest Elfin
Afrikaans common name: Motozi-kaboutertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 36–38 mm ♀ 38–40 mm

Notes: Inhabits dense woodland or evergreen forest. Often found in shady places and sheltering in holes in the ground. Frequently visits damp patches. Always perches close to or on the ground with expanded wings.

Flight period: Year-round, scarcer in dry season.

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**Sandmen**

*Spialia diomus ferax*

**Common Sandman**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common names: Gewone-sandmannetjie, Kwagga-sandmannetjie

Wingspan: ♂ 27–31 mm ♀ 29–33 mm

**Notes:** Inhabits woodland, savanna and open montane habitats, almost anywhere in South Africa. Prefers grass and bushveld areas and is scarcer in the Karoo. It is readily attracted to flowers. Males show hilltopping behaviour. Larvae feed on low-growing plants of the families Malvaceae and Sterculiaceae.

Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, more common in warmer months. In cool areas Aug–Apr, usually one of the first spring butterflies.

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Family Hesperiidae

Spialia nanus

Dwarf Sandman

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Dwerg-sandmannetjie

Wingspan: ♂ 18–24 mm ♀ 23–27 mm

Notes: An inhabitant of karroid type vegetation but extends into the Western Cape. Found on flats, slopes of hills and mountains. Flight is rapid and close to the ground. Larval food plants include Hermannia (Sterculiaceae) and Hibiscus species (Malvaceae).

Flight period: Double-brooded, peaks Mar/Apr and Sept/Oct, occasionally in summer between broods.
**Spialia dromus**  

**Forest Sandman**  
Alternate common name: Large Grizzled Skipper  
Afrikaans common name: Bos-sandmannetjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 23–29 mm ♀ 29–32 mm  
Notes: Inhabits forest margins and woodlands. Readily attracted to flowers and often frequents muddy places along streams. Males occasionally show hilltopping behaviour. Larval food plants include *Triumfetta* species (Tiliaceae).  
Flight period: Year-round, more common in the warmer months.
**Family Hesperiidae**

*Spialia spio*

**Mountain Sandman**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Berg-sandmannetjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 22–29 mm ♀ 28–31 mm  
Notes: An inhabitant of open areas, woodland, forest margins and clearings in forests. Flight is rapid and close to the ground. Males show hilltopping behaviour. Larval food plants include species of *Hermannia* (Sterculiaceae), *Pavonia* and *Hibiscus* (Malvaceae).  
Flight period: Continuous broods; year-round in warmer areas, more common in warmer months. In Western Cape fynbos mainly Aug–Oct.

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**Spialia asterodia**

**Star Sandman**

Alternate common name: Asterodia Sandman

Afrikaans common names: Sterretjie-sandmannetjie, Asterodia-sandmannetjie

Wingspan: ♂ 21–26 mm ♀ 26–29 mm

Notes: Generally an inhabitant of grassy hillsides, and often occurs at considerable altitudes. Seldom seen in the bushveld or in the Karoo. Fond of flowers but seldom visits muddy places.

Flight period: Several broods, Aug–Mar, peaks midsummer.
Family Hesperiidae

Sylphs

*Tsitana tsita*

**Dismal Sylph**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Donker-walsertjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 30–38 mm ♀ 32–38 mm  

Notes: An inhabitant of grassy hillsides. It is a slow flier, skipping and zigzagging at the same time in any direction. Frequently rests on the stems of grass or on the ground. Males occasionally show hilltopping behaviour, although they normally establish territories in the vicinity of the larval food plants (grasses).  


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Metisella metis

Gold-spotted Sylph
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Reënbos-walsertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 26–34 mm ♀ 30–33 mm
Notes: An inhabitant of woodland and forested areas. Often seen near the edges of forests. Males do not exhibit hilltopping behaviour and can usually be observed in open places in the bush where they establish their territories.
Flight period: Year-round, peaks Sept–Nov and Feb–Mar; scarce in dry season in cooler areas.

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Metisella malgacha

Grassveld Sylph

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Grasveld-walsertjie

Wingspan: ♂ 25–29 mm ♀ 27–31 mm

Notes: A slow-flying species and always keeps close to the ground. It frequently settles on grass. Males sometimes establish territories in the vicinity of the larval food plants (the grass Ehrharta erecta).

Flight period: Several broods, Aug–May, most common in summer months.
**Metisella willemi**

**Netted Sylph**

*Alternate common name:* None  
*Afrikaans common name:* Willem-se-walsertjie  
*Wingspan:* 30–32 mm

**Notes:** Hindwing white to pale yellow with brown veins and cross lines giving a netted appearance. An inhabitant of grassy areas in deciduous woodland and bushveld. Usually found along rivers at the foot of hills, koppies and mountains. May also be encountered among clumps of trees on the flats. Often observed feeding at flowers. Larval food plants comprise various grasses.

Family Hesperiidae

Rangers

*Kedestes mohozutza*

**Fulvous Ranger**

Alternate common name: Harlequin Skipper  
Afrikaans common name: Mohozutza-wagtertjie  
Wingspan: ♂ 27–31 mm ♀ 33–42 mm  
Notes: Favours short grass. Inhabits grassy slopes, montane grasslands and forest margins. Flight is quite rapid but it often settles. Often found feeding at flowers, especially *Scabiosa* species. Males do not exhibit hilltopping behaviour. Ranger larvae feed on grasses.  
Kedestes nerva nerva

Scarce Ranger

Alternate common name: Scarce Skipper
Afrikaans common name: Seldsame-wagtertjie

Wingspan: ♂ 27–31 mm ♀ 33–36 mm

Notes: A local and uncommon species, inhabiting dry bush, woodland and grassland. Usually flies near the ground among grasses. It skips about quite rapidly in circles but for short distances only. Often encountered feeding on Scabiosa columbaria flowers along the banks of dry streams or dongas.

**Kedestes wallengrenii wallengrenii**

**Wallengren’s Ranger**

*Alternate common name:* Wallengren’s Skipper  
*Afrikaans common name:* Wallengren-se-wagtertjie  
*Wingspan:* ♂ 27–31 mm ♀ 30–35 mm  

**Notes:** Hindwing underside is reddish brown with grey-white longitudinal stripes. An inhabitant of grassland and woodland. It is a fast flier and often disappears from view when disturbed. It is readily attracted to flowers. When not feeding it flies about the grass, resting on leaves or on the ground. Males do not appear to exhibit hilltopping behaviour.  
**Flight period:** Double-brooded; spring brood Aug–Nov, summer Feb–Apr, sometimes overlapping.
Dart
*Acleros mackenii mackenii*

**Macken’s Dart**
Alternate common names: Marsh Skipper, Macken’s Skipper
Afrikaans common name: Macken-se-dartelaartjie

**Wingspan:** ♂ 27–32 mm ♀ 29–33 mm

**Notes:** An inhabitant of swampy areas in forest, thick bush or undergrowth near forest streams. A very common insect in coastal bush and rainforest areas of the eastern part of the country. It is readily recognised by the white tip of its abdomen. It is a relatively slow flier and is not very active. Males establish territories along the edges of forests. Often seen perching on broad green leaves. Larvae feed on species of *Searsia* (formerly *Rhus*).

**Flight period:** Year-round, more common in late summer, autumn and winter than in hotter midsummer months.

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**Palm-tree Night-Fighter**

*Zophopetes dysmephila*

**Palm-tree Night-fighter**

Alternate common name: None

Afrikaans common name: Palmboom-skemervegter

Wingspan: ♂ 40–49 mm ♀ 45–52 mm

Notes: A large skipper with white antennae. An inhabitant of savanna, riversides and forests where its food plants, palm trees, grow. Flies at dusk, after sundown. During daylight hours specimens rest with folded wings inside leaves at the base of their food plant, *Phoenix reclinata*. Only one species found in southern Africa.

Flight period: Year-round, peak Dec–May.
Night-fighter

*Artitropa erinnys erinnys*

**Bush Night-fighter**

**Alternate common name:** None

**Afrikaans common name:** Bos-skemervegter

**Wingspan:** ♂ 53–57 mm ♀ 59–63 mm

**Notes:** Restricted to the eastern Afrotropical Region. Inhabits rainforests, favouring forest stream areas. Flies about at sunset, but on cloudy days will visit flowers earlier in the afternoon. Males establish territories in the vicinity of the food plants (*Dracaena* species or Dragon-trees), where they can be found perching on tree trunks.

**Flight period:** Year-round; scarce May–Aug.
Hoppers
Platylesches ayresii

Peppered Hopper
Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Gepeperde-springertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 27–32 mm ♀ 35–38 mm
Notes: An inhabitant of grassland and bushveld. Males show hilltopping behaviour. They nearly always perch on rocks, small stones or on the ground. Its flight is fast but of short duration. Larvae feed on Parinari capensis.
Flight period: Continuous broods Jul–Apr, peaks Sept and Jan.

Flight period: Continuous broods Jul–Apr, peaks Sept and Jan.

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Platylesches robustus robustus

Robust Hopper

Alternate common name: None
Afrikaans common name: Dartel-springertjie
Wingspan: ♂ 34–42 mm ♀ 36–44 mm
Notes: Largest of the genus. Inhabits bushveld, riverine vegetation and woodland. It is fairly local and not seen as often as some of its congeners. Males show hilltopping behaviour. Larvae feed on the Mobola-plum Parinari curatellifolia.
Swifts

*Pelopidas mathias*

**Black-banded Swift**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Swartmerk-ratsvlieër  
Wingspan: ♂ 36–38 mm ♀ 38–41 mm  

**Notes:** Inhabitant of grassy woodlands and forests. Very swift on the wing, often settles on flowers to feed. Males show hilltopping behaviour. A common and widespread species. The larvae of Swifts feed on grasses.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, scarcer in winter.

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Borbo fatuellus fatuellus

Long-horned Swift

Alternate common name: Long-horned Skipper
Afrikaans common name: Reënbos-ratsvlieër

Wingspan: ♂ 33–42 mm ♀ 40–43 mm

Notes: A widespread species found in most habitats, particularly woodland, forest margins and light forest. Male has no hyaline spots on the hindwings.


Family Hesperiidae

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**Family Hesperiidae**

*Pelopidas thrax inconspicua*

**White-banded Swift**

Alternate common name: None  
Afrikaans common name: Witmerk-ratsvlieër  
**Wingspan:** ♂ 42–46 mm ♀ 49–51 mm  
**Notes:** Inhabits woodland and forest margins. Often found in dense rainforests. Frequently visits and settles on flowers in the veld and in gardens and is also attracted to muddy places.  
**Flight period:** Year-round, scarcer in winter.

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Hottentot Skippers
*Gegenes niso niso*

**Common Hottentot**

Alternate common name: Common Hottentot Skipper
Afrikaans common name: Geel-hottentot
Wingspan: ♂ 29–33 mm ♀ 29–35 mm

**Notes:** Yellow-ochre underside of the wings conspicuous at rest, when wings are closed. Fond of flowers and muddy places. Males establish their territories near the larval food plants (grasses). Very common and widespread. Trimen described the Common Hottentot as an ‘active and pugnacious little species’.

**Flight period:** Year-round in warmer areas, peak Oct–Mar; in cooler areas, only Oct–Mar.

![Common Hottentot Skipper images]

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**Gegenes pumilio gambica**

**Dark Hottentot**

Alternate common name: Dark Hottentot Skipper  
Afrikaans common name: Swart-hottentot  
Wingspan: ♂ 28–36 mm ♀ 33–37 mm  
Notes: An inhabitant of bushveld, preferring open areas and dry watercourses. Underside of wings paler grey-brown than the upperside. Males occasionally show hilltopping behaviour but more often establish territories near the larval food plants (grasses). Fond of flowers, muddy places and dry riverbeds. Flight quite rapid.  
Flight period: Year-round in warmer areas, peak Oct–Mar; in cooler areas only Oct–Mar.

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Glossary

Anal angle – the angle between the outer and inner margins of the hindwing. The corresponding angle on the forewing is the inner angle.

Antennae – the feelers or elongated sensory organs attached to the head, sensitive to smell. Antennae club-tipped in butterflies, usually thread-like or feathered in moths.

Dimorphism – phenomenon that an organism can exist as one of two different forms. This may be due to male/female differences (sexual dimorphism, e.g. Common Diadem) or seasonal changes (seasonal dimorphism, e.g. Gaudy Commodore).


Endemic – pertaining to a natural inhabitant, confined to a particular geographical area.

Food plant – the host plant upon which Lepidoptera larvae feed. Female butterflies often fly at random through the bush in search of suitable food plants on which to lay their eggs.

Fynbos – the dominant indigenous vegetation of the Cape Floristic Region characterised by three major growth forms (ericas, proteas and restiroids).

Genitalia – organs used for either mating or oviposition (egg-laying).

Genus (pl. = genera) – a group within a family consisting of one or more closely related species.

Ground colour – the dominant colour of the wing contrasted to that of the pattern.

Hilltopping – the habit of some male butterflies of frequenting higher areas, particularly during the hottest hours of the day, e.g. Citrus Swallowtail, Striped Policeman and Veined Swordtail.

Homoptera – insects that are sometimes called ‘plant lice’, including aphids. They are used as food by carnivorous butterfly larvae and some adult butterflies (e.g. D’Urban’s Woolly Legs) feed on their sweet secretions.

Hyaline – clear, translucent or transparent. Used to describe the clear or semitransparent scale-free patches on the wings of certain butterflies, e.g. Clear-spotted Acraea.
Labial palps – paired finger-like sensory appendages arising from the butterfly’s mouthparts, situated either side of the proboscis. Labial palps are most prominent in the African Snout.

Lepidoptera – the order of scale-winged insects comprising butterflies and moths.

Lunule – a crescent-shaped marking or spot.

Marginal – adjective describing features on the outer margins of the wings.

Mimic – an organism superficially resembling another of a different species, so that one or both benefit, e.g. the female Common Diadem mimics the unpalatable African Monarch.

Ocellus (pl. ocelli) – alternate term for the eye-like spot on the wing of a butterfly.

Polymorphic – with more than two forms in the same species, e.g. Red Tip, Bushveld Purple Tip, Mocker Swallowtail and Small Orange Tip.

Proboscis – an adult butterfly’s tubular mouthparts, adapted for sucking up liquids. Proboscis coiled when not in use. Adults of the Skollies (Thestor species) lack a fully developed proboscis and cannot feed. These butterflies tend to have short, sedentary lives spent close to the larval food source.

Seasonal dimorphism – occurrence of two distinct colour and/or size forms in a species, whose appearance is dependent on the season, e.g. Gaudy Commodore, African Veined White, Common Orange Tip and Garden Commodore.

Sexual dimorphism – genetically controlled phenomenon where males and females of the same species have a strikingly different appearance, e.g. Common Diadem, African Common White, Red Tip and Cabbage White.

Species – the primary biological unit. Members of a species share a common mate-recognition system and are reproductively isolated from other similar insect/animal groups.

Submarginal – below or near the outer margin.

Subspecies – one or more taxonomically and geographically distinct populations or races of a species, e.g. Emperor Swallowtail, Battling Glider.
**Tail** – a tail-like outgrowth along a vein from the outer margin of the hindwing of a butterfly.

**Taxon (pl. taxa)** – a taxonomic group that is sufficiently distinct to be worthy of being distinguished by a name and be ranked in a definite category.

**Wingspan** – the greatest width of an insect measured across the forewings, from wing tip-to-wing tip.

**WSF** – abbreviation for ‘wet season form’. See Seasonal dimorphism.

### References and further reading


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