

## Lycaenidae family

## Blotched Dusky-blue

*Candalides acastus***Also known as:** Blotched Blue**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Throughout the year**Wingspan:** m 22 mm; f 22 mm**Mature larva length:** 11–12 mm

This species of Blue breeds on the parasitic vines Slender Dodder-laurel and Downy Dodder-laurel. It is usually present where this caterpillar food plant occurs and this is mostly in areas of native vegetation. It would be interesting to try to grow one of these food plants in your hills or southern beaches garden by smearing the seed of a mature fruit onto a small shrub. If you try this, keep in mind that this parasitic vine may eventually kill the host.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Parasitic Dodder-laurels. The caterpillars eat the flower buds.

**Adelaide native species:** Slender Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha glabella* f. *dispar*), Downy (or Rusty) Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha pubescens*).

**Other South Australian species:** Peninsula or Streaked Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha peninsularis*).

A small butterfly, the Blotched Dusky-blue is generally found in coastal scrub in the Adelaide area. It is a purple to purple-blue butterfly on the upper side wing, the female having broad, dark brown margins that are slightly more rounded than in the male butterfly. While the male is generally more of a purple to purple-bronze in colour, occasional butterflies are found that are of bronze-brown. Underneath, the wings are a grey-brown colour, with dark brown blotches and two larger blotches at the base of the forewing near the outer margins. Near Adelaide, these blotches are usually distinctive and prominent, though elsewhere they can be relatively obscure.



The eggs are laid on filiform, leafless plants of the genus *Cassytha*. Near Adelaide, the food plant is commonly the Slender Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha glabella*), a generally low, tangling vine, often of a yellow-green colour with orange to red growing tips. This plant is parasitic on other plants and can be common in coastal shrubland.

The caterpillars are very well camouflaged on their food plants and are extremely hard to see. The pupae are hidden in curled leaves or other sheltered hiding spots either caught up in or near the food plant.

The best way to encourage the survival of this butterfly is to protect the habitat and caterpillar food plant where the butterfly presently occurs. Even relatively small reserves and parks containing coastal shrublands with the Slender Dodder-laurel as part of their flora will provide a suitable habitat for this little butterfly.

