

Lycaenidae family

Western Dusky-blue

*Candalides hyacinthinus simplex***Also known as:** Varied Dusky-blue**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Sep–Mar**Wingspan:** m 28 mm; f 28 mm**Mature larva length:** 16 mm

This colourful Blue breeds on the parasitic Coarse Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha melantha*). It is uncommon in the hills, where colonies should be conserved where possible. Both the caterpillar food plant and the butterfly are more common in mallee areas.

Like mistletoe, Dodder-laurels are another indigenous parasitic plant sometimes targeted for eradication by gardeners, 'clean-up' teams and even National Park managers in some cases. While the Coarse Dodder-laurel will kill its host in the long run, it provides a natural mechanism for opening up densely-grown scrub, allowing light to reach areas which may have been shaded out for some time. In this way it allows regeneration to occur, as well as providing the caterpillars of this lovely butterfly with food. If removal of Dodder-laurels is considered necessary, then it should be done judiciously and sensitively.

Caterpillar food plants: Parasitic Dodder-laurels. The caterpillars eat the buds, flowers, fruits and soft stems of the plant.

Adelaide native species: Coarse Dodder-laurel or Devil's Twine (*Cassytha melantha*), parasitic on mallee Eucalyptus species.

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

This butterfly is found in areas of the Adelaide Hills and the Fleurieu Peninsula where its 'Snotty-gobble' or Dodder Laurel food plants



grow in native scrub. The butterflies are around 28–30 mm across the wing span and are a bright mid-blue on the upper side, with blackish-brown borders which are wider near the tip of the forewing.

Underneath, the wings are a soft pale grey in colour with darker grey spots and two prominent black spots at the base of the forewing, near the outer margin.

The early stages of the butterfly occur on the Coarse Dodder-laurel (*Cassytha melantha*) caterpillar food plants. The caterpillars look very much like the wiry tendrils of the plant, both in shape and colour. The mature caterpillars are coloured green, with a broad yellow-green line down the back. There are between one to three spots of red-brown to purple-black distributed down the dorsal band.

The pupae are grey-brown in colour and have an unusual wavy margin around the edge. They hide in cracks of bark or curled leaves that get caught up in the tangle of the food plant.

