

# The Purple Copper Butterfly



Grade 3-6  
Meadow Flat Public School



## **Enviro-Stories Education Program**

Enviro-Stories is a competition based education program for primary schools that was developed by PeeKdesigns.



[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

This program provides an education experience for kids through learning about the environment. The final product is a published story written about local issues, by local kids, for local kids and future generations.

In 2013, the “Save Our Species” Enviro-Stories Education Program provided local kids with the opportunity to write and illustrate stories about threatened species. This program was sponsored by the Central West and Lachlan Catchment Management Authorities.

## **Central West Catchment Management Authority**

The Central West CMA is committed to work with the community to conserve, improve and manage natural and cultural resources. The catchment is located in central western New South Wales.

[www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au)

## **Lachlan Catchment Management Authority**

At the Lachlan CMA we work to achieve balance between productive and natural landscapes. The catchment is located in central western New South Wales and in the heart of Wiradjuri Country.

[www.lachlan.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lachlan.cma.nsw.gov.au)

# The Purple Copper Butterfly

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School: Meadow Flat Public School

This “Save Our Species” Enviro-Stories Education Program consists of the following books:

## **Sponsored by Central West CMA**

- The Purple Copper Butterfly
- The Dying Forest
- Jimmy the Jacky Dragon
- Brushy the Squirrel Glider
- Save Our Friends

## **Sponsored by Lachlan CMA**

- Bobby and Alex’s new place to call home
- The Survival of Bob the Frog
- Kevin the Baby Koala
- The Adventures of Squirt the Malleefowl
- Mia the Malleefowl’s Rescue

ISBN: 978-0-7313-3620-3

The Enviro-Stories Education Program is a PeeKdesigns initiative.

Graphic design by PeeKdesigns, [www.peekdesigns.com.au](http://www.peekdesigns.com.au)

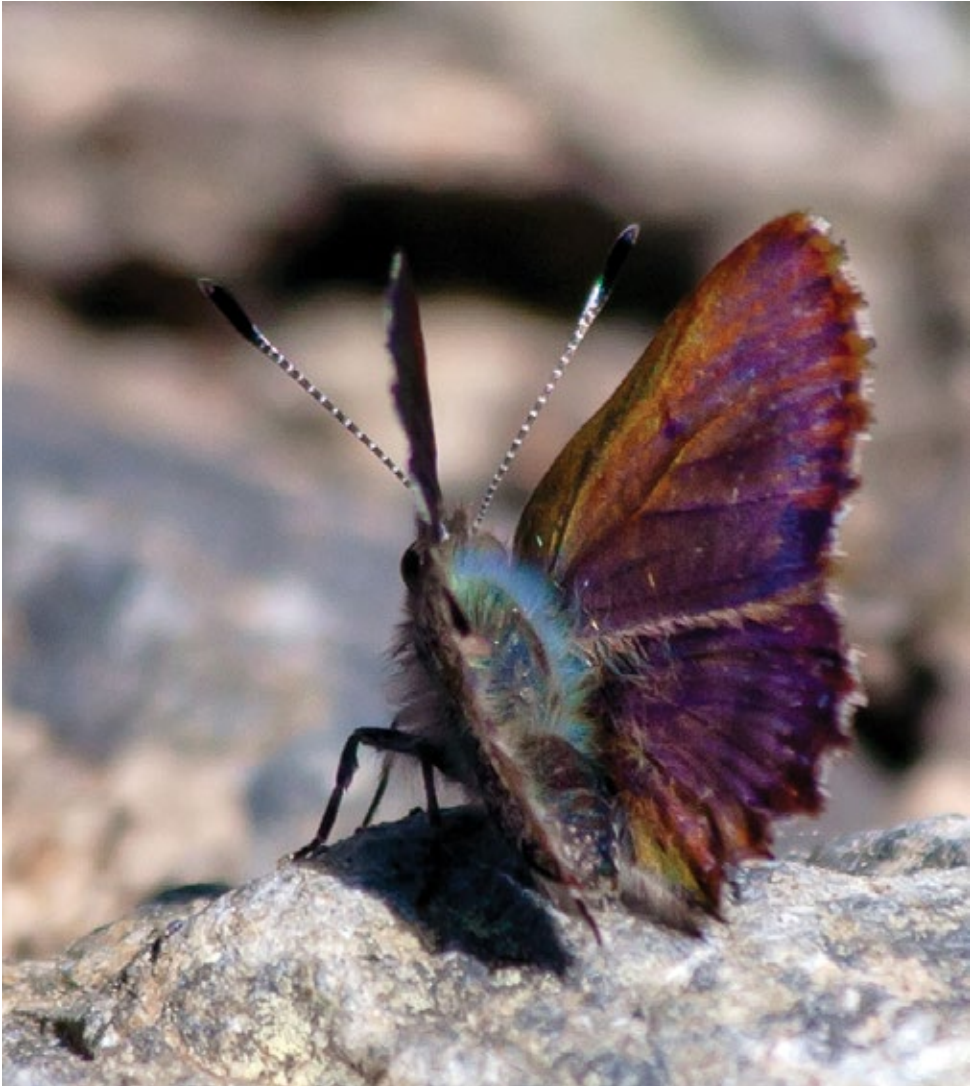
Printed by Greenridge Press, [www.greenridgepress.com.au](http://www.greenridgepress.com.au)

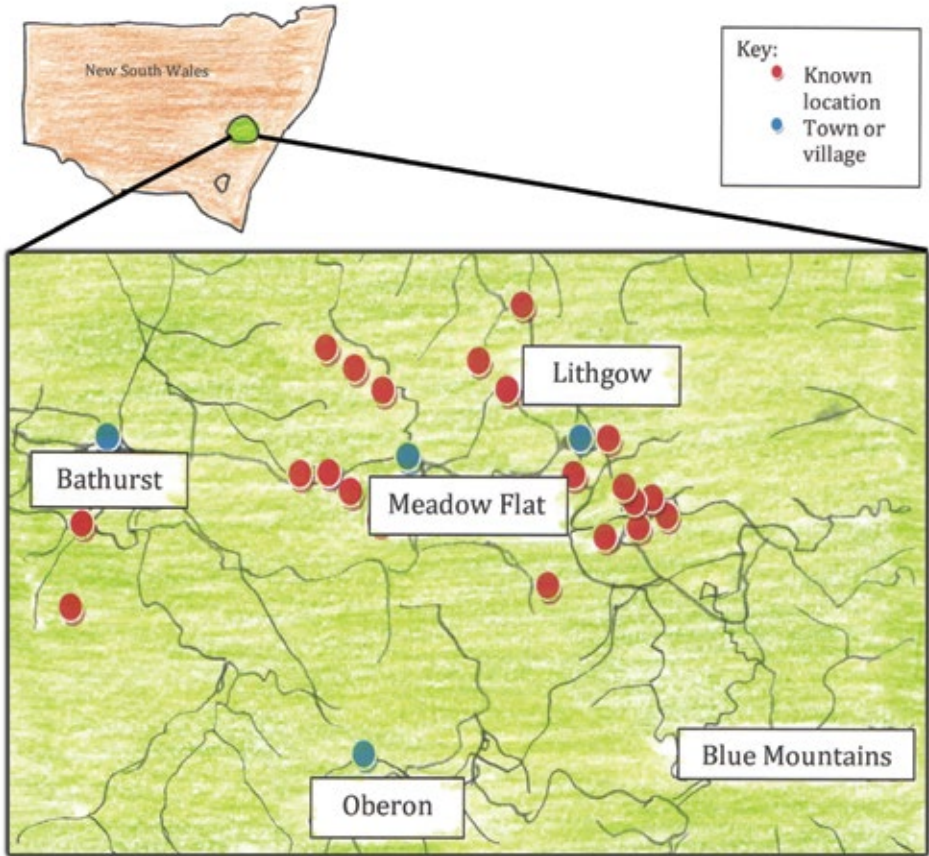
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Citation: Meadow Flat Public School. 2013. *The Purple Copper Butterfly*. Central West Catchment Management Authority, NSW.

The Purple Copper Butterfly is known by many names. Some of these include the Yetholme Copperwing Butterfly, the Lithgow Copper Butterfly and the Bathurst Copper Butterfly.

Its scientific name is *Paralucia spinifera*.





The Purple Copper Butterfly can only be found in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales. Most populations have been found between Oberon, Hartley, Bathurst, and Lithgow with an elevation of 900 metres above sea level.

The Purple Copper Butterfly is classed as a threatened species.

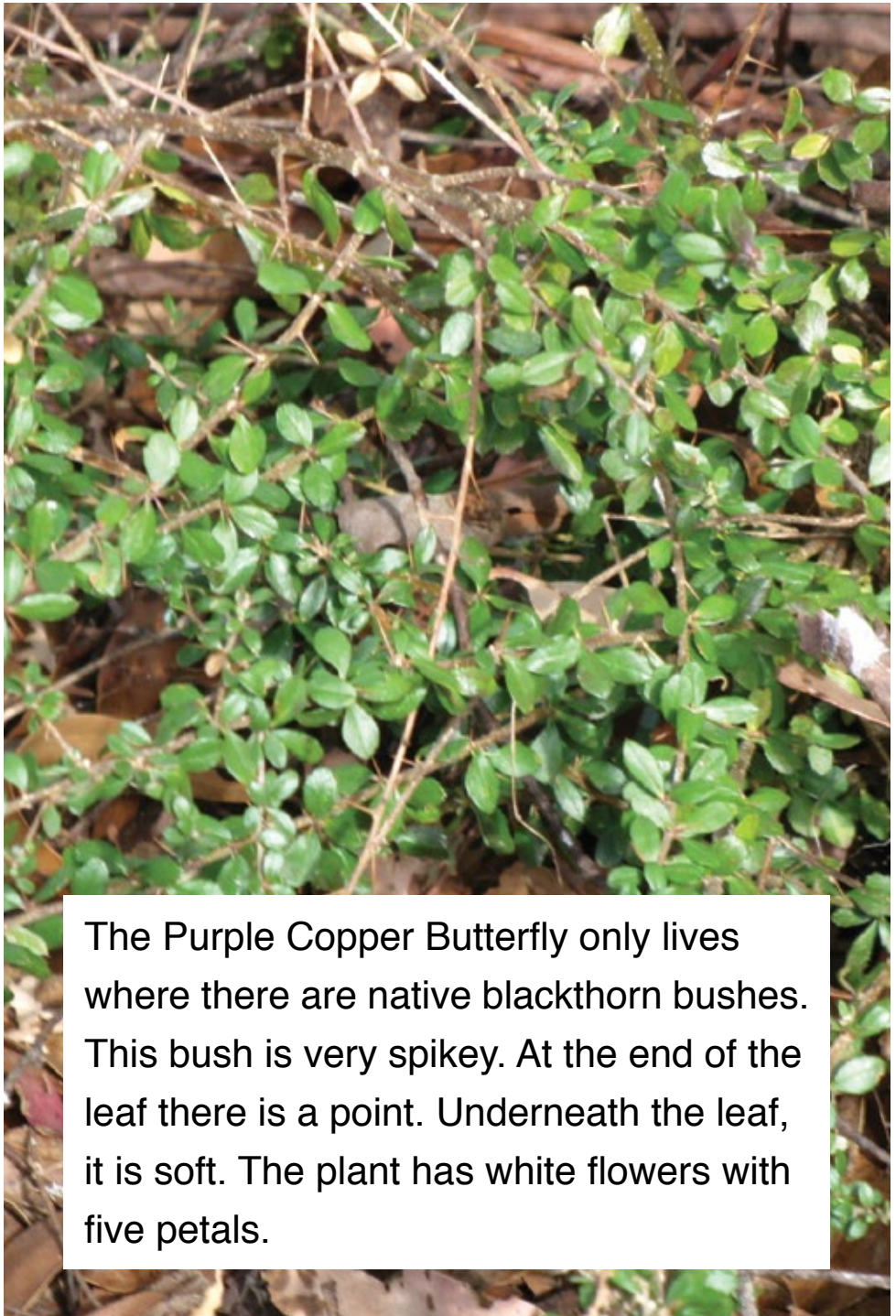


The Purple Copper Butterfly is small, only having a wingspan of 20-30 millimetres.

It has six legs and a small thick body.

The upper wing is black or deep brown with bronze colours.

Its host plant is called the Native Blackthorn bush (*Bursaria spinosa*).



The Purple Copper Butterfly only lives where there are native blackthorn bushes. This bush is very spikey. At the end of the leaf there is a point. Underneath the leaf, it is soft. The plant has white flowers with five petals.

The butterfly eats the black thorny stems and sometimes the nectar from the native blackthorn bush.

The Purple Copper Butterfly likes these blackthorn stems because they taste like sugar.

You can find this bush that the butterflies live on near our school at Meadow Flat.

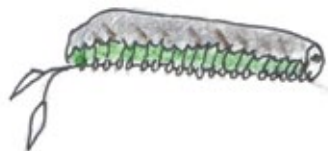






This is one of the Purple  
Copper Butterfly's eggs up close

# Life cycle Of the Purple Copper Butterfly



The Purple Copper Butterfly has four different stages in its life cycle.

1. The egg is a tiny round oval or cylindrical object
2. The caterpillar (or larvae) is the long worm-like stage of the butterfly.
3. The chrysalis (or pupa) is the transformation stage.
4. The butterfly then comes out of its chrysalis.



The caterpillar or larvae is very small only about 10 millimetres long.

The Purple Copper Butterfly never goes more than 10 metres from its blackthorn habitat.

It lives in this adult butterfly stage for only a few weeks from November to January.

A type of black ant (*Anonychomyrma itinerans*) has developed a mutually beneficial relationship with the Purple Copper butterfly.



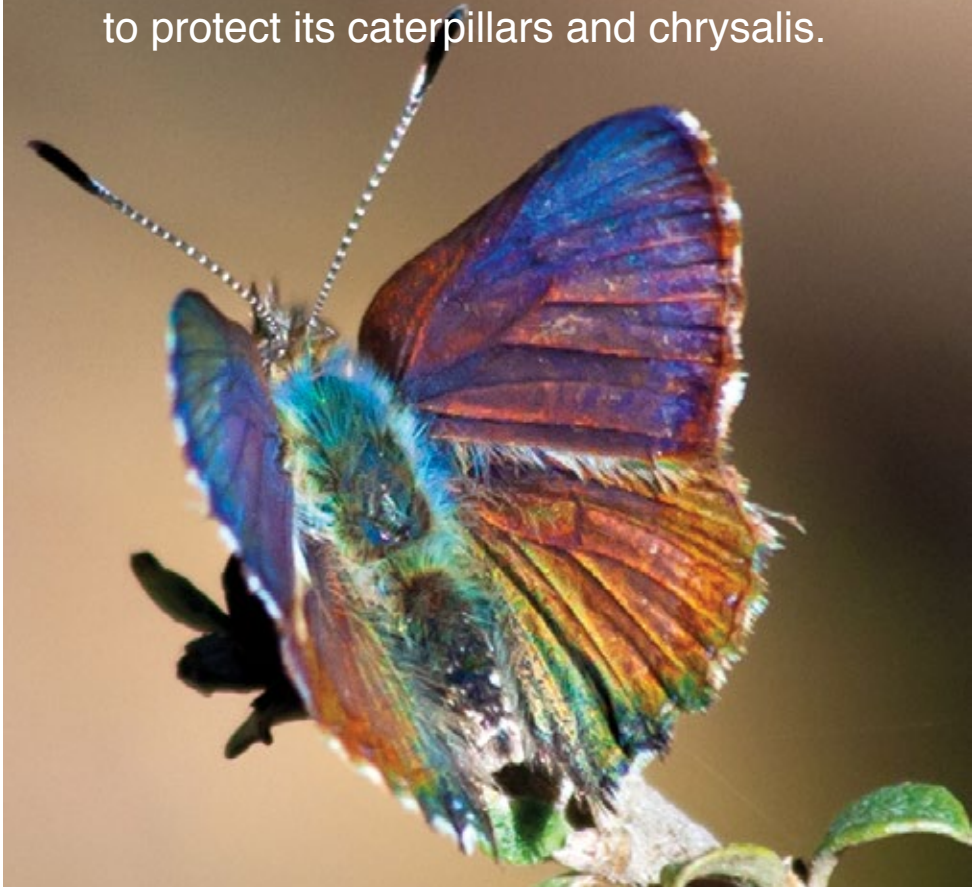
The ants eat the honeydew that comes out of the caterpillar. If another animal comes to attack the caterpillar the black ant will defend it. The ants even take care of the caterpillar in their nests.

The local Wiradjuri Aboriginal people were aware that the butterfly existed. They used fire to control weeds in the butterfly's habitat. They probably didn't harvest them because the caterpillars would have been too small to eat and the butterfly does not have much nutritional value.



The Purple Copper Butterfly is endangered because:

- It can only live in a small amount of places.
- There are low numbers of the native blackthorn bush and it must be at the right elevation and have the right climate.
- The butterfly must also have the black ants to protect its caterpillars and chrysalis.



Everyone has a role to play to ensure they protect the habitat of the Purple Copper Butterfly.

Weeds need to be controlled to let the blackthorn bush and black ants flourish.

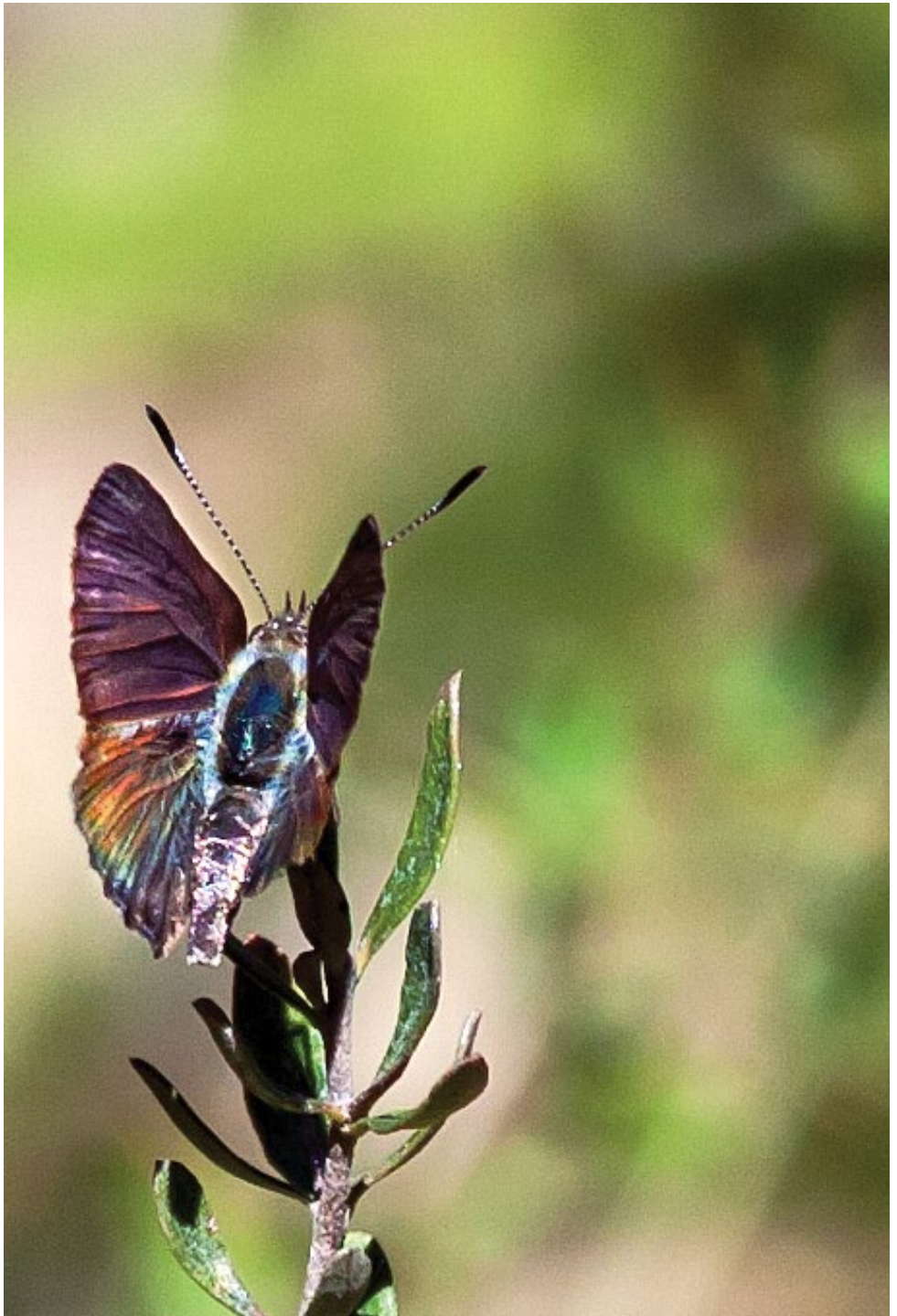
Governments and local councils need to make sure they do not disturb the butterfly's environment when they are building or widening roads.

Farmers should protect the butterfly's blackthorn bush habitat by not clearing land and fencing off stock.

Everyone should protect known habitat sites from bushfire especially during the sensitive summer months.

The species is an important part of Australia's biodiversity and needs to be protected.





## Acknowledgements

This book was created by all students in Year 3 to 6 at Meadow Flat Public School following consultation with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

The photographs are credited to Meadow Flat Public School students and David McKellar. David has given us permission to use and publish his photos.

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**Grade 4** - Molly Madden, Jenna McManus, Isabel Olsen, Peter Woodhead, Grace Johnson

**Grade 5** - Maya Brooking, Abbey Chadwick-Cocks, Orlagh Fitzgerald, Teleisha Helgesson, Darren Kubbere, Lachlan Mannell, Adrienne Slattery, Isac Stirling

**Grade 6** - Faith Shean & Bryce Underhill





Grades 3-6  
Meadow Flat Public School, 2013



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