

Eltham Copper (*Paralucia pyrodiscus* subsp. *lucida*)



Male Eltham Copper Butterfly, Underside.
Note the backward pointing tail on the hind wing. Photo: Euan Moore



Male Eltham Copper Butterfly showing upper wing. Photo: Hans van Gemert



Female Eltham Copper Butterfly showing upper wing.
Photo: Euan Moore

Other Common Names: Fiery Copper, Dull Copper

Family of Butterflies: *Lycaenidae* (Blues and Coppers)

Size: Wingspan 26mm.

Local Records: There are several small populations of this butterfly in the Castlemaine area that have been found as part of extensive field searches. Most populations consist of a small number of individuals closely associated with pockets of suitable habitat. These local populations have been recorded at Castlemaine Botanic Gardens, Kalimna Park, Walmer SF, The Monk, Campells Creek and Quartz Hill.

Tony Morton's records of Eltham Copper from the local area (between 2000 to 2013): Seventeen

Date	Location	Notes
1-Jan-2013	Kalimna ridge	a few
30-Dec-2012	Kalimna ridge	a few
24-Dec-2011	Kalimna Point	several ? Males
10-Dec-2011	Upper Botanic Gardens, Castlemaine	a few fresh males
10-Dec-2011	Kalimna Ridge & Point	a few fresh males
15-Jan-2011	Bot Gardens, off Froomes Road, C'maine	new area. Two seen.
21-Dec-2009	Kalimna Ridge & Point	11.30 - 12.30 both sexes fresh
17-Dec-2009	Kalimna Ridge & Point	3 - 4 p.m. both sexes fresh
29-Nov-2009	Kalimna Ridge & Point	1 - 2 p.m. mainly male fresh 18°
25-Nov-2008	Kalimna, N. of Point, down hill, by seat	1 fresh male, <i>Bursaria</i> flowering
3-Dec-2006	Kalimna Ridge	also seen in Jan 07
30-Nov-2005	Kalimna Park	colony spread. Subsequent visits (to end Dec) show them on Kalimna Point and West down hill therefrom; South, East and North from Ridge up to No 5 hole of Golf course. Adults seen on most shrubs of flowering <i>Bursaria</i> in this area. None seen in Bot Gdns (three visits only), however.
early Jan 2005	Kalimna Park, Castlemaine, Vic.	very fresh on ridge
21-Nov-2002	Castlemaine	Kalimna ridge
16-24 Jan 2002	Kalimna Park, Castlemaine, Vic.	several seen, inc. ovipositing female
10-Jan-2002	Kalimna Park, Castlemaine, Vic.	ridge on r. 50m past Coliban Water turnoff. Track leads off r. to ridge. Two areas of big and small <i>Bursaria</i>

Distribution Across Victoria: Only known from a few locations across the state, including the populations in Castlemaine, 1-2 populations near Bendigo, one near Kiata and a fragmented population in Eltham.

Larval Host Plants: Sweet *Bursaria* (*Bursaria spinosa*).



Patches of Sweet *Bursaria* like this are prime habitat for Eltham Copper Butterflies.

Photo: Hans van Gemert

Larval association with ants: In Castlemaine, larvae are always attended by small ants *Notoncus capitatus*.

Adult Flight Times in Victoria: Uncertain if there are one or two generations per year within the Castlemaine populations. Most Victorian records of adults in flight are during December and January, but they have been recorded from September to April.



At night the ants shepherd the caterpillars out onto Bursaria bushes to feed.

Photo: Hans van Gemert

Conservation Status:

[The Action plan for Australian Butterflies:](#) Vulnerable in Australia

[Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999:](#) Not listed

[Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 – Threatened List 2021:](#) Critically Endangered

Other Notes: Anyone finding this butterfly should record the location and attempt to photograph it and load the photograph onto iNaturalist where the sighting may be verified and/or report the sighting to Victorian Biodiversity Atlas or to Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club who will ensure the sighting is properly recorded.

PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO CATCH THIS BUTTERFLY OR OTHERWISE CAUSE IT HARM

References and further reading:

Atlas of Living Australia – [Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida](#), Eltham Copper Butterfly

iNaturalist – [Paralucia pyrodiscus ssp lucida](#), Eltham Copper Butterfly