

Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)



Cabbage White (female). Note: two black spots on forewing. *Photos: Noel Young*



Cabbage White (male). Note: Single black spot on forewing. *Photos: Euan Moore*

Other Common Names: Cabbage Butterfly, Small White.

Family of Butterflies: Pieridae (Whites and Yellows)

Wingspan: 44mm.

Local Records: This is a common species frequently seen around gardens and weedy areas where its food plants are found. It is less common in areas dominated by native vegetation.

Larval association with ants: None.

Distribution: This is an introduced species that was first recorded in Victoria in 1929. Since then it has spread across the state and much of Australia. It occurs wherever suitable food plants are found. The

[Australian distribution](#) is shown by records in the Atlas of Living Australia where you can zoom in on the map to see Victorian and local distributions.

Larval Host Plants: Many members of the Brassicaceae including weed species such as wild raddish, *Raphanus raphanistrum*, and economically important plants such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, turnip, canola and radish.

Adult Flight Times in Victoria: August to June. Across Australia, overall flight times are similarly August to June but with peaks of activity in September and April. Ref: [iNaturalist](#).

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](#): Not Listed

Other Notes: This is an introduced pest species that can have economically significant impact on crops. It is a declared pest species under the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 (Victoria).

An introduced parasitic wasp, *Cotesia glomerata*, provides some biological control of Cabbage White butterflies. When the wasp larvae emerge from the caterpillars, killing them in the process, they spin small cocoons from which the adult wasp will later emerge. Leaving these cocoons to develop helps provide some control for the following season. For small gardens, inspection for and physical removal of the caterpillars will also provide a measure of control.

References and further reading:

Atlas of Living Australia – [Pieris rapae](#), Cabbage White

Gardening Australia Fact Sheets Series 25, Episode 32. Friends and Foes. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Oct 2014. (<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/friends-and-foes/9436002>)

iNaturalist – [Pieris rapae](#), Cabbage White