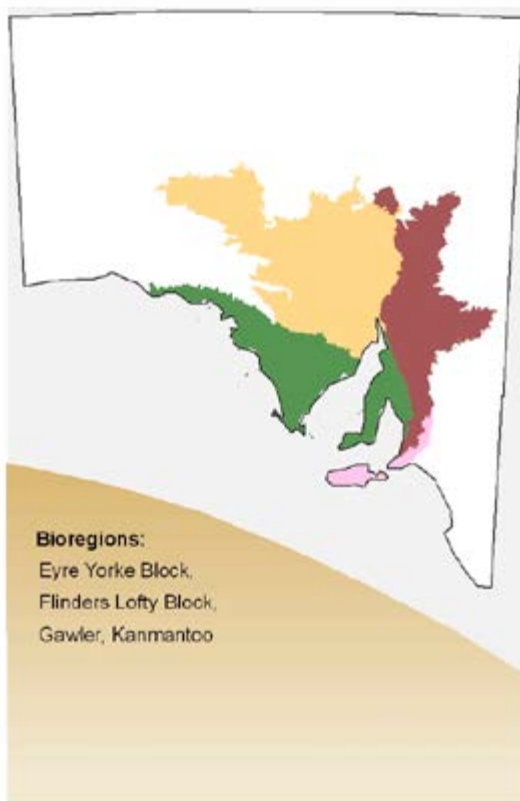


# Waterhouse's Hairstreak

*Jalmenus lithochroa*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Waterhouse's Hairstreak belongs to a family of Australian butterflies that all have a special relationship with ants. Caterpillars are very vulnerable to predation from a range of birds, insects and other animals. As a defence they secrete a sweet substance that is attractive to certain ant species. The ants feed on this substance and protect the caterpillar from other predators. This is done either by attacking potential predators, or simply by crawling on the larvae (the ants do not taste good and make the caterpillar less appetising). These are called attendant ants, and northern populations of Waterhouse's Hairstreak larvae are attended by large meat ant species (*Iridomyrmex purpureus* and *I. viridiaeneus*).

## Diet

Bramble Wattle (*Acacia victoriae*) is the most important larval food plant for the largest, northern population of Waterhouse's Hairstreak; while those in southern regions prefer Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*). The caterpillars are herbivores and eat the leaves and flower buds of the host plant and then complete their lifecycle on the same plant.

## Breeding

Waterhouse's Hairstreak spends the winter months as eggs and hatch in spring. The butterflies emerge during the warmer months of the year from late September to April. In warm weather, they take around eight weeks to complete their lifecycle.

## Habitat

Waterhouse's Hairstreaks are believed to be South Australia's only endemic butterfly. As a plains butterfly, this species lives in small colonies in areas of open shrub and woodland with a grassy understorey. Waterhouse's Hairstreak was once found in the Adelaide plains, but is now believed to be extinct in this area due to urban expansion since the 1960's. Bramble Wattle is still common in the north of the state, so the largest Waterhouse's Hairstreak populations are found in that area.

## Threats

Urbanisation and land clearance for agriculture have greatly reduced the habitat of this butterfly. They are now restricted to small populations which makes them vulnerable to other threats. The loss of food and habitat plants through more frequent fires and drought is another problem, as well as poisoning from insecticides and pesticides.



Calming caterpillars? The substance that the larvae secrete is thought to contain a calming ingredient that stops the attendant ants from eating them!

### Conservation

You can help the Waterhouse's Hairstreak by:

- finding out more about the lifecycle of butterflies and the amazing ways they change form
- planting their favourite acacias depending on where you are.
- find out more about them and participating in Butterfly Watch SA (<http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/whatson/exhibitions/butterfly>)

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

