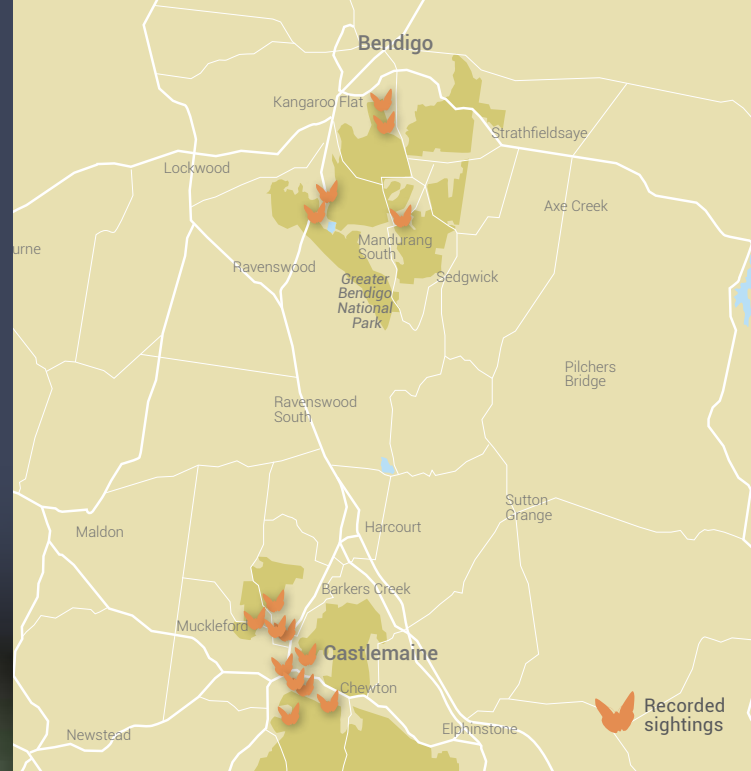


How can you help?

- > Retain and restore bush with indigenous understorey, especially the host plant, Sweet Bursaria
- > Stay on pathways during walks through public land and keep pets on a lead
- > If you see this butterfly, visit our website to report a sighting
- > Join the Eltham Copper Butterfly monitoring program and help monitor this amazing species
- > Volunteer with local groups that support habitat restoration.

Below: Sweet Bursaria provides vital food and must be protected for the butterfly to survive. Photo: Reiner Richter of the Atlas of Living Australia.



Above: Recorded locations of the Eltham Copper Butterfly in central Victoria.

Please check our website for a detailed identification guide, videos and maps:
butterflies.net.au

Photos generously donated by Elaine Bayes and Damien Cook of Rakali Ecological Consulting, John Harris of Wildlife Experiences, Reiner Richter of Atlas of Living Australia. Graphic design by Jane Satchell.



Eltham Copper Butterfly

in central Victoria



Central Victoria is home to the largest known population of the threatened Eltham Copper Butterfly in the world.

Ecology and Habitat

The Eltham Copper Butterfly is a small butterfly with bright copper colouring on the tops of its wings. It is endemic to dry open woodlands of Victoria. This special butterfly (*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*) is restricted to only a few locations around Castlemaine, Bendigo, Kiata and Eltham in Victoria.

Eltham Copper Butterflies depend on a complex association between Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) plants and colonies of *Notoncus* ants. This symbiotic relationship means the butterflies can only exist in areas where these ants live.

Adult Eltham Copper Butterflies lay their eggs at the base of Sweet Bursaria plants. The caterpillars hatch and make their way to the ant nest, where the ants guard the caterpillars, leading them to and from the ant nest to browse on Sweet Bursaria leaves. In return, the ants feed on sugar syrup, which the caterpillars secrete from their skin.

Larvae pupate in or near the ant nest, and adult butterflies emerge between October and March. The adults feed mostly on nectar of Sweet Bursaria flowers.

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Below: An Eltham Copper butterfly caterpillar with its ant attendants. Photo: John Harris.



Threats and conservation

Major threats:

- > Inappropriate planned burning and wildfire
- > Habitat loss, particularly loss of Sweet Bursaria and habitat for *Notoncus* ants
- > Invasion by environmental weeds
- > Competition for food and nectar.

It is critical we monitor known populations and search for new populations so they can be protected, particularly from planned burns.

For this special butterfly to survive we must carefully manage its habitat and increase community awareness about its needs.

Local community groups, land managers and volunteers are working to protect butterfly habitat through weed management, education and revegetation.

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Below: The butterfly's brilliant copper display. Photo: Elaine Bayes.



Conservation status

The future of this special butterfly remains uncertain. In 1991 it was listed as threatened under Victorian legislation, then in 2016 listed as endangered under Commonwealth legislation. This places considerable importance on the sites around Castlemaine, where the butterfly exists and has bred successfully.

The full extent of the Castlemaine population is not known. Excitingly, there could even be undiscovered populations on both public and private land around Castlemaine.

Monitoring known butterfly populations, finding new populations, and mapping preferred habitat are priorities.

More research is essential to better understand and protect this threatened species.

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Above: Adult butterfly. Photo: Elaine Bayes.