



Butler's Ringlet

Erebiola butleri

Description

A native species of Butterfly that still needs a great deal of study & whose life history is not well known. (See bottom of page for unanswered questions). I have also come across articles that says it's distribution is smaller in range than the map to the left, so possibly this is the potential range more than the commonly seen range of the main divide only. The old scientific name of *Erebia butleri* was changed as it has different structural characteristics from the European *Erebia* as defined by Wise in 1967. The name *Erebiola* originates from *Erebia* through.

Ovum

Ovipositing has only been observed in a field enclosure, in which ovum were laid singularly on nearby shrub (*Trailing neinei* *Dracophyllum pronum*) stems. The ovum is ivory in colour & has 28-32 vertical ribs. As the larva is almost developed, the spots & setae appear through the shell. Unlike other many other Satyrinae Butterflies, the head of the larva is a similar colour to the body, so doesn't show through the shell. They hatch in about 14 days. Most of the shell is eaten by the newly hatched larva for its first meal.

Larvae

Yellow-brown with dark & light stripes. It has a smooth & tapered body with short, blunt setae which are the same colour as the body. The number of instars is unknown, suspect 5. It is suspected that they are night feeders, but this might be due to them being intermittent feeders. Their movement is slow. The larvae grow up to 20mm when fully grown.

Pupa

Grey to cream colour with fine black spots on the abdomen & a mottled brown on the rest of the body. It is stout with an angular head which is flattened across the top. There is a ridge formed at the base of the wings behind the eyes. The abdomen tapers quickly & is arched dorsally, but is flat ventrally. The pupa measures 11mm long. The style of pupation is not known, in the field enclosure, only 2 larvae were observed pupating, one formed a loose cocoon on ground amongst grass roots & the other hang by a cremaster from a blade of Tussock. Pupation lasts about 21 days.

Imago

The imago has a 35-43mm wingspan, male average is 40mm & female average is 37mm. The males have gentle flight with occasional periods of gliding. The female has a feeble flight & often stops on Carpet Grass (*Chionochloa australis*) &

flowers. The female rests with its wings open, which are remarkably camouflaged, so it is difficult to spot. Both genders fly low to ground & can achieve fast flight to escape perceived dangers. Normally flies on sunny days only & will settle as soon as a cloud comes over. However males have been recorded on overcast days. The male will fly a long time & hence distance, but the female only flies short distances. Males appear more common, but is probably due to them spending more time on the wing. Since they are a difficult Butterfly to get close to, look out for a dark Butterfly that is flying over vegetation as opposed to scree & boulders, which is more likely to be a Black Mountain Ringlet. Their flight is similar to the 3 Tussock Ringlets, however the Butler's Ringlet appears darker. There are 2 ocelli on the forewings & 3 black spots on the hindwings. The female is paler with dull yellow around the ocelli & smaller than the male. The male has reddish-brown around the ocelli, however the reddish-brown reduces towards the northern range. Underside is brown with predominate silver markings on both genders.

Male



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Female



Habitat

Damp (almost boggy) terraces of alpine scrub & Snow tussock from 900-1300m.

Food Plants

This is not known at present, however final instar larvae have been spotted feeding on Snow Tussock (*Chionochloa spp*) until pupation, but first instar larvae refuse to eat this plant. First instar larvae have been tested on Blue Tussock Grass (*Poa colensoi*) & also refused to eat that as well. But they did eat various lawn grasses. I suspect that since the females like to stop frequently on Carpet Grass (*Chionochloa australis*) they maybe ovipositing or checking for suitable nearby ovipositing locations. However, this is just a theory as I have no proof of this.

Status

Rare - Alpine grasslands from Nelson to Otago, including Fiordland, Paparoa ranges & mountains east of Lake Hawea. Can become very common in local areas.

Distribution



Phenology

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Adult												
Egg												
Caterpillar												
Pupa												

Note: there is no published information for lifecycle of this species. I would guess eggs are present in March, but who knows beyond that.

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