



Brenton Blue female Justin Bode

WANTED – ALIVE! R20 000 REWARD

Payable to the first person, group or organisation who discovers another place where the Brenton Blue butterfly is breeding

The Brenton Blue butterfly was discovered by Roland Trimen at Knysna in 1858. For many years it was thought to be the same as other more widespread butterflies, until it was rediscovered at Nature's Valley in 1977 by Jonathan Ball, who realised that this species is different from all the others. After a 10-year search, Ball only recorded it at Brenton-on-Sea near Knysna, leading to the discovery of a strong breeding colony at Brenton-on-Sea by Ernest Pringle (proclaimed in July 2003 as the Brenton Blue Butterfly Reserve = BBR). Following research on its ecology by Dave Edge, careful management of the BBR increased the adult population to 50-250 individuals per brood.

The BBR was sadly destroyed by the devastating fire of June 2017, and although some recovery of the vegetation has been seen, only a few butterflies survived and are struggling without their companion ants, driven away by the fire. The food plants of the caterpillars *Indigofera erecta* are fortunately plentiful at the BBR, and there are plans to reintroduce the ants when the time is right.

The Brenton Blue Trust is offering a reward of R20 000 for any individual, group or organization that can find another breeding site of this butterfly, so that the population at the BBR can be rescued by bringing in new individuals. The following conditions apply:

- Permission must have been obtained from landowners for any searches on privately owned ground
- A viable colony of the butterfly must be located, rather than a single, isolated specimen (this species appears to be highly colonial, so the latter eventuality is considered unlikely)
- A good, clear photograph of the underside of the butterfly would be sufficient proof. The discovery has to be confirmed by an expert member of the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa.



Brenton Blue male (upperside)



(underside) A Coetzer



Indigofera erecta

D Edge

When and where to look

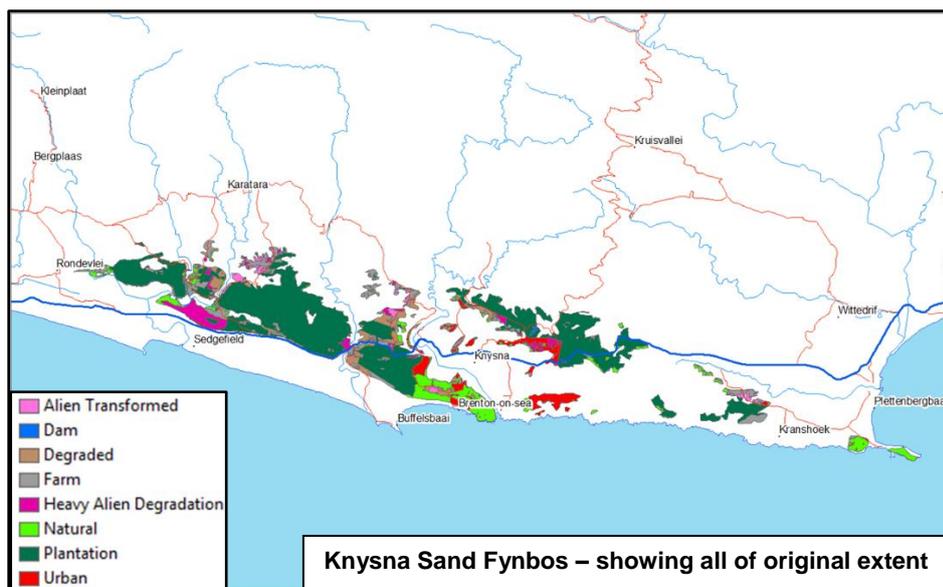
The adult butterflies fly in November and February/ March. They will only be found breeding where there is a good quantity of their larval host plant *Indigofera erecta* (which has pink flowers and trifoliate leaves). This will be on south facing slopes, probably quite near the sea at an altitude of 150–180 above sea level. The presence of mature Candlewood trees providing good partial shade is an indicator of suitable habitat.

The region to search is from east of Nature's Valley in the east to the Wilderness area in the west. Suggested places to look are:

- Brenton Peninsula
- Drie Valleyen between Wilderness and Swartvlei
- Rondevlei
- Sinclair Nature Reserve east of Noetzie
- Harkerville State Forest
- Kranshoek
- Cairn Brogie
- Inland from the Otter Trail east of Nature's Valley
- Forest Hall near the Crags
- Bloukrans State Forest west of Nature's Valley

Knysna Sand Fynbos

Since the Brenton Blue is known to occur in this vegetation type it is mapped below (mostly transformed).



Identification of the Brenton Blue

When it flies the butterfly is brownish purple in colour, with a wingspan of 30-35 mm. When it settles and closes its wings it is pale grey in colour, with a pattern of black dots ringed with white, and a white “semi-circle” on the hindwing. It does not have tails like other commoner blue butterflies. The male flies quite strongly more or less in a straight line at knee height, whereas the female “flutters” quite close to the ground. The only other butterfly it could be confused with is the Sooty Blue, which is smaller in size (c. 20mm wingspan) and a brighter blue.

DO NOT CATCH THE BUTTERFLY – TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH AND SEND TO Dave Edge (orachrysops@gmail.com)