

A new southern record of the Golden Jezebel (*Delias aruna*) on Cape York Peninsula

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Abstract

The Golden Jezebel (*Delias aruna*) is a large pierid butterfly known in Australia from Torres Strait and from Cape York to the McIlwraith Range, with most sightings in the Iron Range area. This paper records a new southern record, and thus a possible extension of range, in Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park some 100 km south-east of previous records and in quite different habitat to normal.

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The Golden Jezebel (*Delias aruna inferna* Butler, 1871) (Lepidoptera: Pieridae) is a large pierid butterfly of rainforests and adjacent habitats. It is also known as the Orange Jezebel. The species occurs in Australia from the Torres Strait to McIlwraith Range and just south of Coen (Braby 2000) but most sightings are from the rainforests of Iron Range where it can at times be a common species. The life history has been described from mistletoes at Iron Range (Wood 1997).

On 27th July 2014, a single male Golden Jezebel adult was seen by Jun Matsui flying along the edge of a small waterhole on the southern end of Nifold Plain. Exact coordinates are 14°38'03.7"S, 143°58'30.6"E. The butterfly was feeding at flowers of a *Melaleuca* sp. and was able to be photographed (Fig. 1). It was observed for 20 minutes before it flew away. It is surprising that this rainforest species was present in the mainly grassland environment of Nifold Plain. Figure 2 shows the waterhole and adjacent area where the butterfly was observed.



Figure 1. Golden Jezebel (*Delias aruna*) at Nifold Plain, Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park.

The right hand photograph shows that it was a male. Photographs by Jun Matsui.



Figure 2. Nifold Plain waterhole where the Golden Jezebel was seen.
Photo by Jun Matsui.

Nifold Plain is in the northern part of Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park and consists primarily of open grasslands, termite mounds and a few tree-lined drainage lines and lagoons. The previous most southern record of this species (also a male) was at the Stewart Creek crossing of the old Coen Road at the southern end of the McIlwraith Range (in July 1975, Peter Valentine pers. comm.; in Braby 2000) about 100 km to the north-west. There are patches of vine thicket, riparian forest and clumps of rainforest scattered through the largely woodland environment between the southern end of the McIlwraith Range and Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park, and it is possible that the species breeds in these. It is alternatively or additionally possible that the butterfly was on one of the irregular movements into adjacent habitats that are a feature of the genus mentioned by Braby (2000), but it may be that there is sufficient intervening rainforest habitat to provide potential breeding opportunities nearby. This is a matter for further study. This sighting also raises the question as to whether the species occurs in the Cape

Melville National Park, less than 100 km to the northeast of Nifold Plain. There has been very limited butterfly survey of this area, which contains more extensive stands of rainforest than Rinyirru, and this prospect provides a possible target for further survey.

References

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