

Splendid Ochre

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Butterfly larvae can only survive and thrive if the female adult has chosen the correct food plant on which to lay her eggs. At the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, the *Lomandra longifolia* (Spiny-headed Mat-rush) is the host for the Splendid Ochre, once known as the Symmopus Skipper. After hatching, the larva feeds on the leaves at night, constructing a shelter in which it rests during the day by joining leaves together using its own silk.

Caterpillars are voracious eaters and continue to feed until they attain a length of about 4 cm, when they pupate. The larva forms a silk-lined tubular chamber in either dead leaves or the leaf-litter in which to spend this non-feeding transformative stage.

The wingspan of the fat-bodied adult ranges from 42 to 46 mm. Flight is erratic, generally close to the ground. Males are driven by the mating urge and set up small territories which they defend. The territory will be based on the availability of *Lomandra* and the males conduct patrol flights back and forth or settle on tree leaves where they can watch. Females visit the territory to mate.

Splendid Ochres use open areas of almost any forest type or gardens (including urban parks and home gardens) where there is a profusion of Spiny-headed Mat-rush in the understory. At the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, this includes the garden and beside the pathways into the *Melaleuca* forest.



