

**Genus *Oraidium* Bethune-Baker, 1914**  
**Dwarf Blue**

*Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* **1914**: 331 (314-337).

Type-species: *Lycaena barberae* Trimen, by original designation.

The genus *Oraidium* belongs to the Family Lycaenidae Leach, 1815; Subfamily Polyommatae Swainson, 1827; Tribe Polyommataini Swainson, 1827; Subtribe *incertae sedis*. The other genera in the Subtribe *incertae sedis* in the Afrotropical Region are *Cupidopsis*, *Pseudonacaduba*, *Catochrysops*, *Lampides*, *Uranothauma*, *Cacyreus*, *Harpenderis*, *Leptotes*, *Cyclorius*, *Tuxentius*, *Tarucus*, *Zintha*, *Zizeeria*, *Actizera*, *Zizula*, *Brephidium*, *Azanus*, *Eicochrysops*, *Euchrysops*, *Orachrysops*, *Lepidochrysops*, *Thermoniphas* and *Oboronia*.

*Oraidium* (**Dwarf Blue**) is a monobasic Afrotropical genus.

**\**Oraidium barberae* (Trimen, 1868)#**  
**Dwarf Blue**



Dwarf Blue (*Oraidium barberae*) male upper- and underside.  
Images courtesy Steve Woodhall.

*Lycaena barberae* Trimen, 1868. *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* **1868**: 89 (69-96).

*Lycaena barberae* Trimen, 1868. Trimen & Bowker, 1887b.

*Oraidium barberae* (Trimen, 1868). Bethune-Baker, 1914: 331.

*Oraidium barberae* Trimen. Swanepoel, 1953a.

*Oraidium barberae* (Trimen, 1868). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

*Oraidium barberae* (Trimen, 1868). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 277.

*Oraidium barberae* Trimen, 1868. d'Abreu, 2009: 816.



*Oraidium barberae*. Male (Wingspan 13 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.

Lagerspoort, Gauteng Province. 27 January 2008. M. Williams.  
Images M.C.Williams ex Williams Collection.



*Oraidium barberae*. Female (Wingspan 15 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Loding, Mpumalanga, South Africa. 17 October 2010. J. Dobson.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Dobson Collection.

**Type locality:** [South Africa]: “Highlands, near Grahamstown; Tsomo River; Burghersdorp; Murraysburg”.

**Diagnosis:** Similar to *Brephidium metophis*, from which it differs in the following features: darker on the upperside; on the hindwing underside it lacks the scattered irregular white markings that are present in *metophis* (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Distribution:** Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa (Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Free State Province, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape Province, Western Cape Province, Northern Cape Province), Swaziland (Duke *et al.*, 1999), Lesotho.

In South Africa its distribution covers 176 quarter degree squares (528 records) [see <http://vmus.adu.org.za>]. It is regarded as very widespread.

**Specific localities:**

Botswana – Gaborone (Larsen, 1991); Molepolole (Larsen, 1991); Ngotwane (Larsen, 1991); Jwaneng TV-Hill (Larsen, 1991); Mogoditshane (Larsen, 1991).

Limpopo Province – Warmbaths (Swanepoel, 1953); Polokwane (Swanepoel, 1953); Legalies (Swanepoel, 1953); Highlands Wilderness (Bode & Bode, unpublished checklist).

Gauteng – Pretoria (Swanepoel, 1953).

Free State Province – Bloemfontein (Swanepoel, 1953); Ladybrand (Swanepoel, 1953).

KwaZulu-Natal – Umkomaas (Swanepoel, 1953); Estcourt (Swanepoel, 1953).

Eastern Cape Province – Highlands west of Grahamstown (TL; Barber and Atherstone), Tsomo River (Trimen, 1868); Burgersdorp (Trimen, 1868); between Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage (Swanepoel, 1953); Willowmore (Swanepoel, 1953); Zuurburg (Swanepoel, 1953); Steynsburg (Swanepoel, 1953).

Western Cape Province – Murraysburg (Trimen, 1869); St. Helena Bay (Swanepoel, 1953); Breede River (Swanepoel, 1953); Robertson (Swanepoel, 1953); Calitzdorp (Swanepoel, 1953); Bonnievale (Swanepoel, 1953); Matjesfontein (Swanepoel, 1953); Hanover Road (Swanepoel, 1953); Montagu (Swanepoel, 1953); Beaufort West (Swanepoel, 1953); Bitterfontein (Swanepoel, 1953); Nuwerus (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); near Mossel Bay (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); Yzerfontein (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); Die Kelders (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Northern Cape Province – Garies (Swanepoel, 1953); Kamieskroon (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Swaziland – Mlawula Nature Reserve ([www.sntc.org.sz](http://www.sntc.org.sz)).

Lesotho – Maseru (Swanepoel, 1953).

**Habitat:** Often found in areas with short grass and sandy patches (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Habits:** Males establish and defend small territories (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Flight period:** All of the warmer months (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Early stages:**

Cockburn, 2013: 12-14.

Eggs and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> instar larvae were not found. Feeding by the third instar larva took place on both leaves and flower parts of the food plant. The larva was 8.5mm in length, overall greenish-yellow in colour, with the dorsal humps and lateral extremities of each segment washed with dark pink, matching the colour of the larval host plant very closely. The larva was covered in short bristles, with a dark head, mostly invisible, being concealed under the

front segments as is typical of many lycaenid larvae. The stems of the food plant are, in places, finely speckled and the margins of the fleshy, slightly speckled leaves are also washed with the same pink. The colouration described above renders the larva difficult to detect. In the final instar the larva had lost most of the pink blush. A silken girdle was spun and pupation commenced. The pupa was smooth and, at first, translucent green, and approx. 5.5mm in length. Later the internally developing wings had darkened, followed by a steady darkening of the remainder of the pupa until emergence of an adult female *O. barberae*). The time elapsing from pupation to emergence was 21 days.

A second larva was discovered later, shortly after it had apparently emerged from a feeding chamber in the stem of the foodplant. The chamber was adjacent to the feeding larva and was surrounded by fresh frass. This perhaps suggests that the early instars of this insect remain within, and feed on, the soft fleshy parts of its succulent host plant. This may also explain why in both cases the earlier instars remained undiscovered, despite rigorous inspection of the plant specimens. The feeding manner of the larva is also of interest as it appears to avoid the epidermal material and prefers the internal leaf and stem tissue.



Egg, final instar larva and pupa of *Oraidium barberae*. Images courtesy Allison Sharp.

**Larval food:**

*Crassula expansa* ssp. *fragilis* (Crassulaceae) [Cockburn, 2013; Mholopeni Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa].

*Crassula muscosa* L. (Crassulaceae) [Alison Sharp, unpublished, 2014].

*Exomis microphylla* (Thunb.) Aellen var. *axyrioides* (Fenzl ex Moq.) Aellen (Chenopodiaceae) [Clark & Dickson, 1971: 92; as *Exomis axyrioides*].