

Ceraunus Blue Butterfly, *Hemiargus ceraunus* (Fabricius) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) ¹

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Introduction

The ceraunus blue butterfly, *Hemiargus ceraunus* (Fabricius), is a widespread Neotropical butterfly common in southern portions of the United States. It is common in various open, sunny habitats including roadsides, fallow agricultural land, weedlots, utility corridors, scrubs, open woodlands, yards and parks.

Distribution

The ceraunus blue occurs across much of the extreme southern United States southward through Mexico, Central America and the West Indies to South America; occasionally strays northward. In Florida, it can be found in all 67 counties. It is common year-round in southern portions of the state.

Description

Adults: The ceraunus blue butterflies are small and easy to overlook. Adults have a wingspan range of 22 to 30 mm. The sexes are dimorphic. The upper surface of the wings is lavender-blue in males with a

narrow black margin and a single black hindwing spot. Females are somewhat darker with blue scaling limited to the wing bases. The undersides of the wings are gray with dark bars, white bands and white-rimmed black spots. The hindwing has a prominent orange-rimmed black marginal spot.



Figure 1. Adult ceraunus blue butterfly, *Hemiargus ceraunus* (Fabricius). Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida

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1. This document is EENY-425, one of a series of Featured Creatures from the Entomology and Nematology Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Published: February 2009. This document is also available on Featured Creatures Website at <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu>. Please visit the EDIS Website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>. Additional information on these organisms, including many color photographs, is available at the Entomology and Nematology Department website at <http://entnemdept.ifas.ufl.edu/>.
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Larvae: The slug-like larvae are highly variable and range in color from light green to pinkish-red.



Figure 2. Green larva of the ceraunus blue butterfly, *Hemiargus ceraunus* (Fabricius), on indigo (*Indigofera* spp.) (Fabaceae). Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida



Figure 3. Red larva of the ceraunus blue butterfly, *Hemiargus ceraunus* (Fabricius), on indigo (*Indigofera* spp.) (Fabaceae). Credits: Jaret C. Daniels, University of Florida

Pupae: The pupae are yellow-green.

Life Cycle

The ceraunus blue produces multiple generations each year. Adults may be found in all months of the year in southern Florida. Adults fly very low to the ground just above the vegetation. Females lay the small, somewhat flattened blue eggs singly on flower buds of a variety of herbaceous legumes. Larvae feed on the new growth, buds and flowers of the host plant.

Hosts

Hosts include a variety of herbaceous legumes: including rosary pea, *Abrus precatorius* L.; partridge pea, *Chamaecrista fasciculata* (Michx.) Greene; sensitive pea, *Chamaecrista nictitans* (L.) Moench; and indigo, *Indigofera* spp..

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