

## Merope

Common Brown

*Heteronympha merope merope*

This, as the name suggests, is the commonest of the bush butterflies, and indeed it is common in most country gardens. The sexes are very different in appearance, and as they fly at different times of the year one could well expect they were of different species. The males emerge in the late Spring, and become very common over the Christmas period, easily seen on sunny mornings feeding at flowers. Females do not become abundant until the end of the summer and the early Autumn. How do the sexes ever meet? In fact the females emerge only shortly after the males. Once mated, the females go into hiding (aestivate - resting during summer), waiting until the autumn to lay their eggs on various native grasses, such as Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) or introduced grasses. The female is a little larger than the male. As you can see, the underside is very different from the upper, and, particularly in the female, is patterned rather like a dry leaf. Once settled on the ground, the butterfly is quite hard to see.



30 mm

Common Brown male, above



Common Brown male, below



Common Brown male



30 mm

Common Brown female - on a window, so some of the underside shows through.



Common Brown female, underside.



Common brown female showing the underside hindwing



Common brown female