



WINGED WONDERS: Peter Kern and Markus Riegler out catching common grass yellow butterflies. Picture: Tim Marsden

Butterfly shows net effect of climate change

PETER Kern has turned the gentle art of butterfly catching into a lifetime pursuit.

He hopes to find out where butterflies go in a drought. For he suspects a particular butterfly, called the common grass yellow, may be the canary in the coal mine when

it comes to climate change.

Part of the genus *Eurema*, one species is known to migrate to rainfall areas in drought, the other tends to hibernate, or go into diapause, in creek beds.

The University of Western Sydney PhD student and his

lecturer, Markus Riegler, have been collecting samples at Ten Mile Creek, west of Charters Towers, as part of their road trip through outback Queensland. One third of Queensland was officially declared in drought last week.

“We are studying how the

different species of these insects deal with climate change and drought periods,” Mr Kern, 27, said.

“Many insects could be seen as the canary in the coal mine of global warming. Butterflies make a good barometer.”

Peter Michael