



Dingy Skipper

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

DINGY SKIPPER (ERYNNIS TAGES)

Associated Habitat Action Plans:

Limebeds



Ecology

Appearance

Despite its name, this butterfly is beautifully marked with brown and grey. The dingy skipper has a wingspan of around 29-30mm.

Habitat

This butterfly lives in small colonies and prefers chalk or limestone hills with short turf. It can be found in areas of rough grass or disused railway embankments with patches of bare earth where it can bask during warm, sunny days. Examples of these areas are, woodland, calcareous grassland and limestone pavements.

Food

The dingy skippers main food plant is common birds foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*). However they will also feed on greater birds foot trefoil, daisy, speedwells, buttercups and horseshoe vetch.

Life Style

Dingy skippers often bask on bare patches of earth, stones or low vegetation. When they are not basking they usually zip around taking nectar from plants.



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The males have a distinct fold on the edge of their forewings. The fold has pheromones incorporated into special wing-scales this attracts females.

During copulation (which usually occurs in mid-morning), both the male and female butterflies keep their wings spread flat. This makes it easy to see the fold on the wings of the males.

As night falls the butterflies wrap their wings very tightly around flower heads and roost in this position overnight.

The bright orange eggs are laid singly at the base leaflets of plants, usually birds foot trefoil but occasionally on greater birds foot trefoil or horseshoe vetch.

The caterpillars live within a tent of leaves spun together at the base of a foodplant during the day and emerge to feed in early evening.

In early August the caterpillar enters hibernation and overwinters in a thin, silk tent, remaining there until April when it pupates.

Current status

The population of dingy skipper is confined to four sites in the Cheshire region (the Witton Limebeds complex at Northwich, The Weaver Parkway, Wirral Way and Lea-by-Backford)

The species favours short turf where its larval foodplant bird's-foot trefoil grows. It lives in small colonies in areas of rough ground or disused railway embankments, where there are warm sunny patches of bare earth on which it can bask.

This species is quick to recolonise adjacent areas of suitable habitat. At the Northwich site it has moved from areas as and when the preferred habitat has changed from short turf and bare ground to longer grass and scrub. The sites at Northwich and the Weaver Valley Parkway are both post-industrial sites, whilst the Wirral sites are along the old railway and cliffs.

In 2007 Dingy Skipper was added to the UKBAP priority list.

Threats

- * Loss of suitable habitat through invasion of scrub and erosion of grassland due to walkers.
- * Unsuitability of adjacent sites for re-colonisation naturally.
- * Loss of habitat through land reclamation and / or development



How are we helping to conserve the Dingy Skipper in the Cheshire region?

* Habitat creation schemes to favour the Dingy Skipper as part of Cheshire County Council's derelict land reclamation scheme.

* Ongoing monitoring at key sites.

Objectives, targets and actions

The objectives, targets and actions to help conserve the dingy skipper in the Cheshire region can be found on the [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#) along with full details of our progress so far.

How to find out more about the Dingy Skipper

UK Butterflies - <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/index.php>

Butterfly Conservation - www.butterfly-conservation.org

Contact details

LBAP Chair Paul Hill, Lepidoptera & Odonata LBAP Action Group

References and Glossary

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http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/species.php?vernacular_name=Dingy%20Skipper

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