



Dingy Skipper © Sam Ellis

Working with Wildlife

Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*) Species Action Plan

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Plan Lead	Butterfly Conservation
Latest version	January 2008

Description

From a distance the dingy skipper can easily be mistaken for a day-flying moth. Both the male and female are fast fliers and appear similar. It is a small well camouflaged brown and grey butterfly and is best seen on sunny days. During dull days or at night they rest with their wings folded back in a moth-like way.

They require a sparse sward with an abundance of the larval food plants, common bird's foot-trefoil, greater bird's foot-trefoil or horseshoe vetch. Bare ground is also important for this species, as much of its time is spent basking in the sun with its wings wide open. Habitats include woodland rides and clearings, chalk downland, sand dune systems, heathland, old quarries, railway lines and waste ground. Periodic scrub cutting and rabbit grazing can prolong the suitability of sites for this butterfly.

Eggs are laid singly on young leaves of the food plants with larvae emerging in May. The larvae feed through the summer months, hiding in tents that they create by spinning leaves together. By August the larvae will be fully grown and will spin more leaves together to form a hibernaculum for the winter.

The Dingy Skipper is an inactive species and unlikely to colonise new areas of habitat unless they are in close proximity to existing populations. Colonies are distinctly small, containing fewer than 50 individuals at the peak flight period, which means they can easily be overlooked.

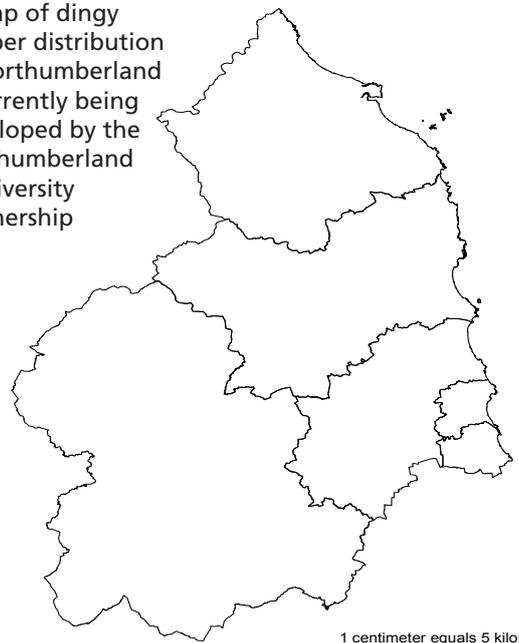
Conservation Status

UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species

Current Extent in Northumberland

In recent decades the Dingy skipper has had a 42% decline nationally. Although the species has no legal protection it is designated a medium priority both locally and nationally by Butterfly Conservation. Any site found supporting a dingy skipper population automatically meets the criteria for designation as a Local Wildlife Site. It is a highly localised species and except for a few isolated colonies in Scotland, Northumberland is generally considered the most northerly extent of its distribution. Many of the key sites in Northumberland tend to be post industrial sites in the south east of the county. There are no recent reports of dingy skipper to the north of the county.

A map of dingy skipper distribution in Northumberland is currently being developed by the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership



1 centimeter equals 5 kilometers

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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Loss of habitat through development, agriculture and tree planting
- Lack of site management leading to natural succession by scrub and tall vegetation, which shades out the food plants and reduces bare ground
- Isolation of existing colonies
- Trampling of vegetation by humans in the larval and pupal stages

Associated Action Plans

Brownfield Land
 Transport Corridors
 Lowland Meadows & Pastures

Further Information

This dingy skipper action plan links to the dingy skipper UK BAP action plan

Butterfly Conservation website -
<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/index.php>

United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme website –
<http://www.ukbms.org/default.htm>

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

Targets

Maintain the current range of the dingy skipper in Northumberland by 2010

Increase the current range of the dingy skipper in Northumberland by 2015

Code	Priority Actions	Date
DS A01	Carry out monitoring at all key sites to determine any change in status	ongoing
DS A02	Secure the protection of all known dingy skipper sites	ongoing
DS A03	Ensure that land owners and managers are aware of the presence of the species and establish appropriate methods of habitat management	2009
DS A04	Include the habitat requirements of dingy skipper when drawing up mitigation or restoration measures in the development control process where sites are located adjacent to existing colonies	ongoing
DS A05	Seek and develop opportunities to establish new colonies	ongoing
DS A06	Re-survey locations where current status is not clear	2009