

Two-spotted Skipper

Euphyes bimacula

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DESCRIPTION

Taxonomy and Basic Description

The Two-spotted Skipper (Grote & Robinson, 1867) is a member of a genus of primarily wetland species, which is especially diverse in the Southeast. This is primarily a species of the Northeast and upper Midwest, with scattered records in the Southeastern Coastal Plain. The species is rarely common and has apparently been declining across its range. In South Carolina, the species is known historically from only a single locality (Gatrell 1975), which has been destroyed by development.

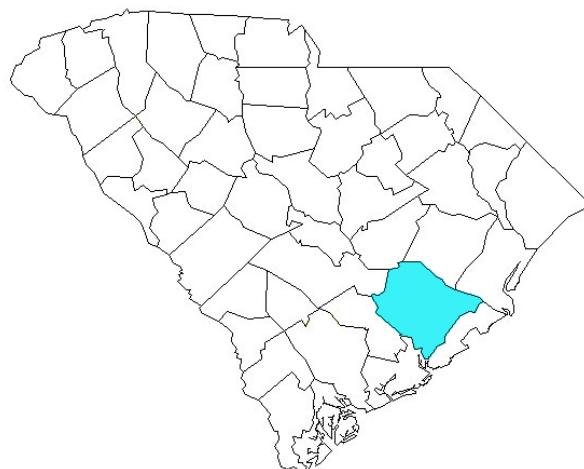
The Two-spotted Skipper is typical of grass skippers in its quick, darting flight. This species has a forewing length of 1.5-1.8 cm (0.6-0.7 in.) (Opler & Krizek 1984). This species is sexually dimorphic (as are many grass skippers), with males having an obvious, black streak of scent scales on the forewing. In contrast, females have a series of 3 yellowish spots (one sometimes reduced) in place of the streak. The base color is a fairly uniform dark brown, with orange highlights along the costal margin of the forewing (and expanding to surround most of the scent streak in males). The underside is a warm, orange-brown. The forewing has two spots on the underside, and the hindwing has distinctly lightened veins with a white line along the inner margin of the highwing, which blends in with the body, which is white ventrally and laterally (Cech and Tudor 2005).

Status

The Two-spotted Skipper is known only from Berkeley County in South Carolina, but the status of this species in the State is currently unknown. It may be extirpated. Gatrell (1975) collected several specimens from 1970-1973 at a location near the intersection of I-26 and Hwy. 17A, near Summerville. Additional, more extensive surveying is warranted to confirm the status of this species in the state.

POPULATION SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

Historically, populations of the species occurred throughout the Northeast and upper Midwest in the appropriate habitats, and in several scattered locations in the Southeast (Opler and Malikul 1992). Currently, nearly all populations seem to be declining. No estimates of population size have been made.



HABITAT AND NATURAL COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS

The species is a specialist of open bogs, fens and marshes with extensive growth of *Carex* (Cech and Tudor 2005). The only population in South Carolina was an isolated wetland of this type. The documented host plants are Hairy-fruited Sedge (*Carex trichocarpa*) and Tussock Sedge (*Carex stricta*). There is a single brood in the north, but in the south there are two, flying in May-June and July-August. The species overwinters as a partially grown larva (Cech and Tudor 2005). Adults often nectar on iris blooming in the marshes by sitting on the stem below the flower and inserting the proboscis at the base of the flower (Scholtens, pers. observ.).

CHALLENGES

Because the status of this species in the state is unknown, extensive surveys are needed to document its distribution. Preservation of appropriate sedgy wetlands is likely to have the most impact on the species, if it still occurs in the state.

CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

No conservation work has been done on this species in South Carolina.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct surveys to determine the distribution of the Two-spotted Skipper in South Carolina.
- Monitor any identified populations of the Two-spotted Skipper.
- List the Two-spotted Skipper in South Carolina, pending survey results.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

As research and management needs are identified, projects will be initiated to address those needs.

LITERATURE CITED

- Cech, R. and G. Tudor. 2005. Butterflies of the east coast, and observer's guide. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. xii + 345 pp.
- Gatrell, R. R. 1975. The Hesperioidae of the south coastal area of South Carolina. J. Lepid. Soc. 29: 56-59.
- Opler, P.A. and G.O. Krizek. 1984. Butterflies east of the Great Plains. An illustrated natural history. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. Baltimore, Maryland. xvii + 294 pp.
- Opler, P.A. and V. Malikul. 1998. A field guide to eastern butterflies. xvii + 486 pp.