

# Dusted Skipper



Dusted Skipper



Photo credits: Steve Walter

**Scientific Name** *Atrytonopsis hianna*  
(Scudder, 1868)

**Family Name** Hesperiidae  
Skippers

## Did you know?

In New York, the dusted skipper is found along utility right-of-ways in pine barrens and other sandy habitats. It may also be found on rock outcrops in the New York City area.

## Summary

**Protection** Not listed in New York State, not listed federally.

This level of state protection means: The species is not listed or protected by New York State.

**Rarity** G4G5, S2S3

A global rarity rank of G4G5 means: Apparently or Demonstrably Secure globally - Uncommon to common in the world, but not rare; usually widespread, but may be rare in some parts of its range; possibly some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors. More information is needed to assign a single conservation status.

A state rarity rank of S2S3 means: Imperiled or Vulnerable in New York - Very vulnerable to disappearing from New York, or vulnerable to becoming imperiled in New York, due to rarity or other factors; typically 6 to 80 populations or locations in New York, few individuals, restricted range, few remaining acres (or miles of stream), and/or recent and widespread declines. More information is needed to assign a single conservation status.

## Conservation Status in New York

Although there are likely to be only a few dozen occurrences in New York, the species does not appear to be threatened in the Upper Hudson Valley or on Long Island. It is apparently quite scarce in the more immediate New York City area.

## Short-term Trends

The short-term trends indicate that the population is stable.

## Long-term Trends

Although the long-term trend is unknown, there probably are fewer occurrences now than originally, even though the overall range in New York does not appear to have changed.

# Conservation and Management

## Threats

The main threat is habitat loss. Colonies are often found on utility right-of-ways and the management of these could be an issue for this species.

## Conservation Strategies and Management Practices

Unburned habitat (refugia) should be provided during prescribed burning where this species is known or suspected to occur.

## Research Needs

The response of this species to the management practices at the Albany Pine Bush and in Saratoga County should be investigated.

# Habitat

In New York, the Dusted Skipper inhabits mostly openings and utility right-of-ways in pine barrens and other sandy habitats. This species also occasionally inhabits various types of rock outcrops in the New York City area. The adults are rarely seen more than a few feet from the larval foodplant [bluestem grasses, usually Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)], unless they are forced into adjacent habitats to find nectar.

## Associated Ecological Communities

### Chestnut Oak Forest

A hardwood forest that occurs on well-drained sites in glaciated portions of the Appalachians, and on the coastal plain. This forest is similar to the Allegheny oak forest; it is distinguished by fewer canopy dominants and a less diverse shrublayer and groundlayer flora. Dominant trees are typically chestnut oak and red oak.

### Dwarf Pine Plains

A woodland community dominated by dwarf individuals of pitch pine and scrub oak that occurs on nearly level outwash sand and gravel plains in eastern Long Island. The soils are infertile, coarse textured sands that are excessively well-drained.

### Pitch Pine-oak Forest

A mixed forest that typically occurs on well-drained, sandy soils of glacial outwash plains or moraines; it also occurs on thin, rocky soils of ridgetops. The dominant trees are pitch pine mixed with one or more of the following oaks: scarlet oak, white oak, red oak, or black oak.

## **Pitch Pine-oak-heath Woodland**

A pine barrens community that occurs on well-drained, infertile, sandy soils. The structure of this community is intermediate between a shrub-savanna and a woodland. Pitch pine and white oak are the most abundant trees.

### **Associated Species**

Cobweb Skipper (*Hesperia metea*)

## **Identification Comments**

### **Identifying Characteristics**

This species can be identified from a good image or any specimen. The pictures must show the forewing spots and should also include good images of the upper and undersides.

### **Characteristics Most Useful for Identification**

The habitat and time of year are strong clues for identifying this species. Compare illustrations of the Roadside Skipper (*Amblyscirtes vialis*) and females of Hobomok Skippers (*Poanes hobomok*) and Zabulon Skippers (*Poanes zabulon*) from any butterfly guide. The white spot near the base of the underside of the hindwing is diagnostic if present. Otherwise, note the white above the eyes, the relatively straight thin line of apical spots, and the details of the underside color and pattern. There is no orange or yellow present on any surface.

### **Best Life Stage for Identifying This Species**

This species should be identified from adults, although an expert could identify the larva.

### **Behavior**

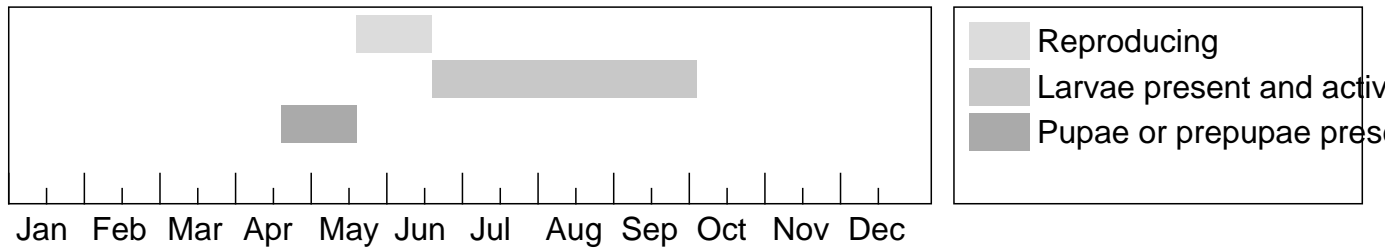
A localized late spring skipper always found near bluestem grasses, usually in sandy openings.

### **Diet**

In New York the primary, and possibly exclusive, larval foodplant is Little Bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), but Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) and other species of *Andropogon* grasses might also be used. The adults take nectar from a variety of native and non-native flowers including blueberry and other heaths, blackberry, and vetches.

### **The Best Time to See**

The adults occur for about two or three weeks in the spring, usually beginning to appear by the end of May. The larvae are probably mature by September and hibernate fully grown or nearly so, with pupation in the spring.



The time of year you would expect to find Dusted Skipper in New York.

## Taxonomy

**Kingdom** Animalia

└ **Phylum** Mandibulates (Mandibulata)

└ **Class** Insects (Insecta)

└ **Order** Butterflies, Skippers, and Moths (Lepidoptera)

└ **Family** HesperIIDae (Skippers)

## Additional Resources

### Links

#### NatureServe Explorer

<http://natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=ATRYTONOPSIS+HIANNA>

#### Google Images

<http://images.google.com/images?q=ATRYTONOPSIS+HIANNA>

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