

**Hesperiidae family**

# Donnysa Sedge-skipper

*Hesperilla donnysa*

**Also known as:** Varied Sedge-skipper

**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Uncommon

**Flight:** Either single or double-brooded, depending on area; Oct–Apr

**Wingspan:** m 31 mm; f 36 mm

**Mature larva length:** 25–38 mm

This Skipper's *Gahnia* species caterpillar food plants can be grown in Adelaide Hills gardens and outer suburbia. As the Donnysa Sedge-skipper is a good coloniser, it is possible that if enough *Gahnia* were grown throughout the suburbs, it would become established. This species has suffered from the destruction of its habitats and any known colony should be protected as much as possible.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Saw-sedges. The caterpillars eat the leaves.

**Adelaide native species:** Red-fruit Cutting-grass (*Gahnia sieberiana*), Cutting Grass (*Gahnia trifida*), Curled Saw-sedge (*Gahnia ancistrophylla*), Limestone Saw-sedge (*Gahnia deusta*), Thatching Grass (*Gahnia filum*).

**Other South Australian species:** Tall Saw-sedge (*Gahnia clarkei*) (Lower South East Region).

A variable butterfly, the Donnysa Sedge-skipper breeds on *Gahnia* species, and is quite accepting of the various species found throughout the state. It can be found living on compact *Gahnia* species in areas near the sea and in dryland Mallee areas, and also on taller species growing in cooler streamside and swamp habitats in higher rainfall areas.



As with all of our native South Australian skipper species, the Donnysa Sedge-skipper's caterpillar forms a tubular shelter made by binding two or more of the long leaf blades of its food plant together with silk. These shelters are often detectable by looking for leaves that have a sharp elbow bend in them and the tops of these and surrounding leaves will show chewing marks.

Both male and female butterflies of this species have brown upper surfaces to their wings. They have patterns of yellowish markings, which may be stronger or paler and more or less extensive, depending on the area the butterfly comes from.

On the underside, the background colour is greyish-brown, sometimes with a pinkish tinge. The male may be distinguished from the female by its smaller size and markings, its more pointed wings and a grey oblique line of sex-scales on the upper side of the forewing.

