

Hesperiidae family

Flame Sedge-skipper

*Hesperilla idothea clara***Also known as:** Flame Skipper**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Rare**Flight:** Early Nov – late Jan**Wingspan:** m 36 mm; f 39 mm**Mature larva length:** 35–40 mm

An attractive Skipper, this species is uncommon in the Mount Lofty Ranges. It would benefit from weed elimination and caterpillar food plant regeneration efforts in its preferred habitat—where large *Gahnia* species grow under or near a tree canopy, especially in creek-lines or in swamps. The Flame Sedge-skipper is considered vulnerable in the Adelaide area.

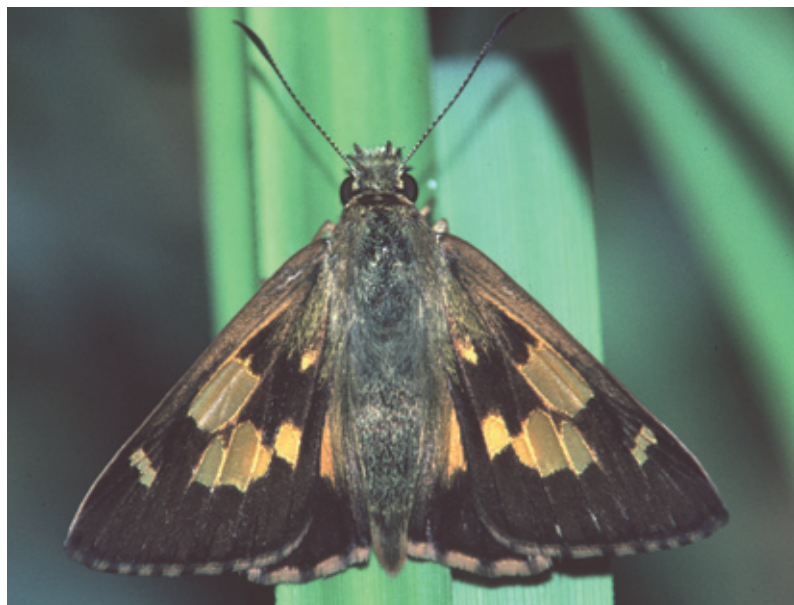
Caterpillar food plants: Saw sedges. The caterpillars eat the leaves and prefer plants growing in shade.

Adelaide native species: Red-fruit Cutting-grass (*Gahnia sieberiana*), Cutting Grass (*Gahnia trifida*).

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

A rare butterfly confined to the cooler areas of the Mt. Lofty Ranges and Fleurieu Peninsula, this butterfly is very habitat specific. They require the tall *Gahnia* Saw-sedges that the caterpillars feed on, growing in a swamp or creek line, with a canopy providing some shade to the area. They also need surrounding bushland with suitable flowers, to provide nectar for the adults during their flight period.

The appearance of the upper side of the male and female butterflies is quite different, while the undersides are quite similar. The upper side



of the male is generally brown, with a yellow dash about halfway along the upper margin of the forewing, and a couple of other small cream coloured spots closer to the tip or apex of this wing. The hind wing is brown, with a somewhat obscurely defined central dash of orange-yellow. The female has a much darker black-brown background colour to both wings. The undersides of the wings have a russet background.

The mature caterpillar is green and has a darker line down the middle of the back. The head is pale yellowish-tan in colour with a central and two outer brown markings that meet at the back of the head. The caterpillars make a tubular shelter from the leaves of the food plant, from which they emerge at night to feed. They feed upon the Saw-sedge leaves in a characteristic manner, eating a pair of wedge shaped notches on either side of the leaf before progressing on to eat the tip at an oblique angle.

