

Habitat management for the Dingy Skipper

The aim is to maintain a sparse sward interspersed with plenty of bare ground. Some areas of tall vegetation should be retained. Sites need not be large providing high quality habitat is present and other habitats occur nearby.

Grazing

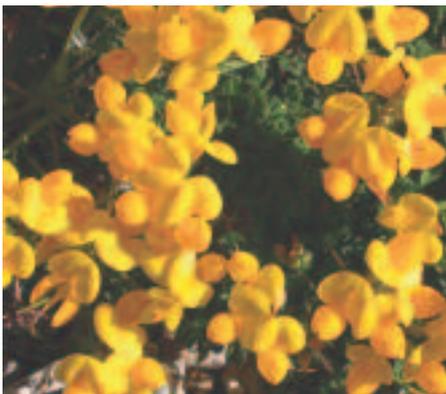
The most suitable grazing regimes are those that produce a range of sward heights including breeding patches of less than 5cm. Cattle grazing is superior to sheep grazing as it results in a less uniform sward. Late spring or early summer grazing should be avoided, as egg-laying female Dingy Skippers generally avoid damaged foodplants.

Mowing

Mowing is always a poor alternative to grazing. However where grazing is impractical, a single annual cut in the autumn can maintain Dingy Skipper sites. Grassland should be mown on rotation, leaving some areas uncut each year. All cuttings should be removed from site.

above Breeding habitat on a brownfield site

below Larval foodplant Bird's-foot-trefoil



Scarification and Topsoil Stripping

Scarification is a useful means of extending and restoring habitat patches within areas of tall vegetation. Scarification is more likely to be successful on nutrient-poor soils. Some tall vegetation should remain untouched, while breeding areas should be avoided entirely. On former industrial sites, where early successional habitats are especially valuable for biodiversity, topsoil stripping can be used to restore suitable habitat. This technique can be used on nutrient-rich substrates that support swards too vigorous for the butterfly and which are effectively unmanageable by conventional means. Topsoil stripping inhibits the growth of vigorous plants, allows colonisation by the foodplants and creates patches of bare ground.

below Breeding habitat in limestone grassland

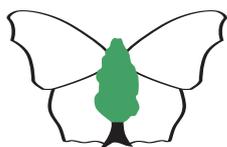


Scrub Control

Periodic scrub removal may be necessary at some sites although some light, well-spaced scrub can provide valuable shelter, especially on more exposed sites. Scrub can be cut on a rotation of 10-15 years to maintain existing levels of cover. Where scrub reduction is necessary, stumps should be treated with herbicide to prevent regrowth.

Habitat Creation

Suitable habitat can be created by either turf stripping or importing inert, low nutrient status substrates. Suitable materials include crushed limestone, railway ballast, crushed concrete, crushed brick, pulverised fuel ash and steel slag. Natural colonisation is preferable to reseeding, but results should be monitored to ensure desirable foodplants are present. Where reseeding is needed it should be a maximum of 50% of the area and only seeds of local provenance should be used. Foodplants will take several years to reach the required size.



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

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