

# SFI Biodiversity Species Fact Sheet

## Appalachian Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus centaureae wyandot*)

Pennsylvania Butterfly Species; State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G1G2Q (critically imperiled)

### Identification

The Appalachian grizzled skipper is a small 1.1-1.3 in. (29-33 mm) grayish-black skipper that is similar to the ever-present Common checkered skipper (*P. communis*). The Appalachian grizzled skipper can be distinguished by its smaller size and fewer white markings on its wings. Its flight period can also aid in identification.



### Biology-Natural History

The grizzled skipper has a single generation each year (univoltine), with adults emerging in mid to late May with adults in some years still on the wing until early June. Adults can be difficult to find due to their typical low flight, short adult lifespan, and cryptic coloration. Males perch on low plants and on open ground. Females lay a single, pale green egg on the underside of the host leaf, then move on to a new leaf a few feet away to lay another single egg. The slowly growing larvae live in leaf shelters and do not reach full size until August. Adults nectar at flowers of a variety of low growing plants like Canadian cinquefoil, wild strawberry, blueberry (*Vaccinium*), spring beauty (*Claytonia*), bird's foot violet (*Viola pedata*), and phlox (*Phlox subulata*). Larvae pupate in late summer and spend the winter in leaf shelters.



### Distribution & Habitat

They can be found in open, sparsely grassed and/or barren areas in close proximity (usually less than 100ft.) to oak or pine forests. An important habitat requirement for this species is its host plant, Dwarf cinquefoil (*Potentilla canadensis*).

### Conservation Concerns

Most researchers feel that spongy moth control measures are the main reasons for the species decline in the Appalachian highlands. The decline of the skipper follows the historical path of the chemical frontiers of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's gypsy moth program from east to west.

### Management Practices

Adequate suitable habitat at occupied sites need to be maintained including the species' host plant. Preservation of the habitats with which this species is disturbance) as the prime ecological process driving the persistence and establishment of these natural communities. In areas where this species or other rare invertebrates occur or are of management concern, burning strategies should only burn part of the available habitat at a time to minimize incidental and/or recolonization. These activities should be conducted in late fall or winter, if possible, to minimize adverse impacts to rare invertebrates.