

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Lep: Hesperiiidae) at the Shakenhurst Estate.

Kevin McGee. Gardeners Cottage, Shakenhurst, Nr Kidderminster, Worcestershire. DY14 9AR. kevinmcgeeandrena@live.co.uk

Two adults were observed on a south-facing slope of abandoned grazing pasture on 21.05.2020 and a single specimen was seen on 24.05.2020. Grid Ref: SO 678727. These are thought to be the first records of this species in the Wissett's Wood/Shakenhurst Estate complex near the villages of Bayton and Mamble in the north-west of Worcestershire.

The south-facing slope where they were found gradually drops down towards Shakenhurst Brook at the northern edge of Wissett's Wood; one of the densely vegetated 'dingle' woodlands dissected by numerous steep-sided small stream valleys found in the Teme Valley catchment. The entire slope, approximately half the size of a football pitch, is prone to land-slips following periods of heavy rain and the current landowners inform me that the land has not been touched since 2014 (01). This slope is fenced off using electric fencing at times when the pasture to the north at the top of the slope is occasionally grazed by sheep. The ground flora has an interesting mosaic of species associated with wet flushes, including various rushes and sedges with Meadowsweet, Creeping Buttercup, Red Campion, Creeping Jenny, Lady's-smock and Brooklime, and flora associated with more freely-draining soils including Tormentil, Creeping Cinquefoil, Germander Speedwell, Wood Speedwell, Bird's-foot Trefoil (the larval foodplant), Meadow Vetchling, Perforate St John's-wort, Lady's Bedstraw, Goat's-beard and Lesser Stitchwort. There are also Marsh Thistles, stands of Bracken and some developing hawthorn and Dog-Rose shrubs.



01. The south-facing slope prone to land-slips at Shakenhurst during May 2020. K.McGee.

Unfortunately, the specimen I photographed on 21.05.20 was rather worn (02) indicating that the butterfly could possibly have emerged as early as mid to late April during the fine spring weather of 2020 (Lewington, 1999). It will be interesting to see if there will be a second brood this year.

The Dingy Skipper is scarce in Worcestershire but there are populations scattered across the Wyre Forest and at Penny Hill Bank near Martley. An internet search found that it was recorded at Monkwood in 2011 after being absent since 1995. Will Watson photographed a pair near Knightwick in 2017 and they have recently been recorded at Shatterford Woods during 2020 following habitat management to remove conifers to create sunny rides. Mike Williams, Publicity & Marketing Officer for West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, informed me that Jack Green used to find Dingy Skippers in the 1970/80's at Hunthouse Wood SSSI and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Reserve approximately 3.8km to the south-east of this record (Green 1982).



02. A worn specimen of Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* on Bird's-foot Trefoil at Shakenhurst. 21.05.2020. K.McGee.

Other lepidoptera of interest recorded on the slope during May 2020 include Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, Mother Shipton *Callistege mi*, Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica*, and the micro-moths *Cauchas fibulella* (Incurvariidae), *Ancyliis badiana* (Tortricidae), *Dichrorampha sequana* (Tortricidae), *Grapholita compositella* (Tortricidae), *Grapholita jungiella* (Tortricidae), *Lathronympha strigana* (Tortricidae) and *Elachista argentella* (Elachistidae).

Acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to Mike Williams for supplying information regarding nearby records.

References

Green, J. 1982. *A practical guide to the Butterflies of Worcestershire*. Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust.
Lewington, R. (1999). *How to identify Butterflies*. Harper Collins, London.

Images

- 01. The south-facing slope prone to land-slips at Shakenhurst during May 2020. K.McGee.
- 02. A worn specimen of Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* on Bird's-foot Trefoil at Shakenhurst. 21.05.2020. K.McGee.