

THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

The agile and acrobatic Sachem Skipper

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Sachem Skipper (*Atalopedes campestris*) is a butterfly of the Hesperidae family of butterflies, known as the grass skippers.

The wingspan of the Sachem can reach up to 1.5 inches. Their wings are elongated, making this butterfly one of the three largest grass skippers in their species. Colors vary between very light orange to golden amber to tawny with dark brown borders. Females are more colorful, with distinct bands of small, lightly colored spots.

Sachems can be seen in flight from June through autumn. Look for them on your late-blooming garden flowers.

Males tend to perch on the ground awaiting females. Females deposit a single egg on grass blades dried by the morning sun. Sachems have one brood, with the larva overwintering in the first instar (a stage in larval development between molts). Larvae feed on the leaves of grasses



Ventral view of a Sachem Skipper, part of the grass skippers family, on a tall verbena plant in the Applegate School Butterfly Garden.

and live in a shelter of rolled leaves at the base of the grasses, such as bluegrass, crabgrass, or goosegrass.

Adults feed on many flowers, including milkweed, dogbane, thistles, red clover, marigolds, asters, and a wide variety

of native or garden flowers.

Habitat for the Sachem Skipper includes pastures, gardens, roadsides, open meadows, and other open areas. The range of the Sachem Skipper is the Pacific Northwest to Canada, south to Mexico, Central America, Brazil, and east of the Rocky Mountains to New York.

Skippers can at times be hard to follow. I spent nearly an hour at Applegate School's Butterfly Habitat chasing this very quick, agile, and acrobatic species before I finally got a clear shot of the one pictured. This is just one way to get to know a butterfly!

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Linda Kappen

Photo by Linda Kappen

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