

# The Woodland Skipper will visit your lavender

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides*) is of the family HesperIIDae, or simply Skippers. They belong to a subfamily of Skippers called Monocot or Folded-wing Skippers. This family is also known as Grass Skippers. They are generally tawny orange to light brown with dark brown markings on the dorsal side and lighter colored spots or markings on the ventral view.

The Woodland Skipper can be up to one inch in size. It is a light tawny color

with ventral hind-wing markings that are lightly cream-colored and square-shaped. Sometimes these markings are nearly absent.

Various native or naturalized grasses serve as host plants for Woodland Skippers, which have one brood and can be seen flying from late June to early or mid-October. Their small larvae overwinter. This species occurs throughout most of the Pacific Northwest, from coastal areas to mountains and in many habitats in

between: woodland edges, roadsides, open areas, grassy meadows, unsprayed weedy areas, grassy lawns, and butterfly gardens, to name a few. This friendly visitor skips around in abundance from summer to fall.

Some of its nectar sources are yarrow, thistle, pearly everlasting, buddleia, fireweed, and mountain daisy from our foothills and mountains. At our homes they may like the sunflowers and lavender blossoms.

Seeing the Woodland Skipper nectaring on lavender blossoms reminds me of one of my first experiences with this butterfly. For several years, starting in the early 2000s, I worked at one of the very first lavender gardens in Applegate, at Joan and Neil Mendelson's farm next to Applegate School. I was an agent in their business called Applegate Valley Lavender, LLC.

During one of my early years there, Neil made me aware of the many Skipper butterflies all over the lavender blossoms in the field. I took note of the Skippers at my home in Applegate too. I have never seen so many Woodland Skippers at a time as I did then.

As with most butterflies, Woodland Skippers can have banner years, with an outbreak in populations at some locations. These outbreaks may have to do with local weather patterns and plant host availability.

It was great to see so many Skippers on the medicinal lavender crop, which has since gained such popularity in the Applegate Valley and other areas of southern Oregon.

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A Woodland Skipper in the Dutchman Peak area with its wings open ...  
Photo: Linda Kappen.



... and one with its wings closed.  
Photo: Linda Kappen.

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