

Dakota Skipper *Hesperia dacotae*

Habitat Preference: Tall grass prairie

Threats:

- Loss of prairie habitat
 - Conversion of prairie to cultivated ground
 - Tree invasion: shade is detrimental to the success of this species
- Invasion of non-native plants
- Haying and over-grazing at certain times of the year could limit available flowering plants used for food
- Fragmentation could cause butterflies to travel long distance to find the particular plant species it feeds on and isolates small populations and increases chances of extirpation.
- Pesticide use
- Excessive fire

Habitat Improvement Guidelines:

- Prairie preservation
- Caterpillars feed on grass blades while adults feed on forb nectar. When creating a new seeding consider including forbs that bloom at different times throughout the summer to create a constant food source. Creating grassland areas will not only create more suitable habitat for Dakota skippers, but will also defragment existing habitat.
- Fall burnings are very important to promote forb growth. Alternate between spring and fall burns. Early spring burns are better for the Dakota Skipper than late spring burns as larvae are still underground. Area should not be burned more than every 3-5 years. Areas should be broken up into four or more burn units that are burned on a rotational basis to provide refuge for Dakota Skipper. This species will not use an area that is grown up to trees.
- Many grassland areas are heavily encroached with woody vegetation. Removing the woody vegetation will promote prairie grasses and forbs essential for Dakota skippers.
- These butterflies will not use an area that is regularly disturbed. Haying is not a compatible use for Dakota Skipper habitat. Haying every 3 or 4 years when combined with fire will help control trees and shrubs. Hay in August or later and leave a minimum of 6 inches of stubble.