

**Hesperiidae family**

# Phigalia Skipper

*Trapezites phigalia*

**Also known as:** Heath Ochre

**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Rare

**Flight:** Late Sep – early Dec

**Wingspan:** m 29mm; f 31mm

**Mature larva length:** 28mm

In ridge areas of the Adelaide Hills, from Belair and Mt Lofty to Aldgate, try growing the Mat-rush caterpillar food plants of the Phigalia Skipper in gardens near native bush areas (e.g. Belair National Park). This may encourage this restricted Skipper butterfly to form a colony on your property. It likes hilltops with open woodland in which many native nectar flowers are growing. As it is a hill-loving species, it is unlikely it would ever adapt to the suburban Adelaide plains.

**Caterpillar food plants:** Mat-rushes. The caterpillars eat the leaves.

**Adelaide native species:** Soft-tussock Mat-rush (*Lomandra densiflora*), Small Mat-rush (*Lomandra nana*), Hard Mat-rush (*Lomandra multiflora* ssp. *dura*), Mount Lofty Mat-rush (*Lomandra fibrata*).

This Skipper is confined to cooler areas of the Adelaide Hills, where remnant open woodlands with an understorey containing its caterpillar food plants occur. It flies for a limited time in late October and November, spending most of the rest of the year as a caterpillar.

The butterfly is coloured brown on the upper side of the wings, with the area nearest the body suffused with yellow and the scale fringe along the outside of the wing coloured grey and brown. The hind wing is brown with a grey and brown scale fringe and a broad patch of orange in the centre of the wing.



Underneath, both wings are coloured grey, with a complex of yellow-orange and cream coloured marking on the forewing, which has a central patch of black-brown. Curved lines of small brown circles pattern the hind wing.



Like all Skipper caterpillars, this species makes a silk-lined, tubular shelter on its caterpillar food plant. Later in its life, it may move off the plant and inhabit a curled leaf or piece of bark near the plant. The mature caterpillar is grey or greyish-pink in colour. It has faint brown lines running down its body. All skipper caterpillars tend to have prominent head capsules and this caterpillar is no exception. Its head is black and prominently textured or 'rugose'.



The stocky pupa is housed in the final caterpillar shelter and is coloured brown with darker brown speckling.

