

Hesperiidae family

White-banded Grass-dart

*Taractrocera papyria papyria***Also known as:** White Grass-dart**Abundance in Adelaide area:** Common**Flight:** Mid Sep – early May**Wingspan:** m 19 mm; f 20 mm**Mature larva length:** 21 mm

This lovely Skipper breeds on many native and introduced grasses and will benefit if grass is allowed to grow long, especially if the grasses are kept green through summer. The White-banded Grass-dart is more likely to occur in the outer and near-hills suburbs.

Caterpillar food plant: Native and introduced grasses. The caterpillars eat the leaves.

Adelaide native species: Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia* spp.), Spear Grasses (*Austrostipa* spp.), Umbrella Grasses (*Enteropogon* spp.), Kunai Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), Meadow Rice-grass (*Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides*), Tussock Grasses (*Poa* spp.) and probably other grasses.

Foreign species: Weed grasses — Couch Grass*, Kikuyu*, Rice Millet*, Veldt Grass* and others.

One of the more widespread and common of the Skipper butterflies, it is one of two small Skippers, known as Darts, that will happily colonise overgrown, grassy areas in the inner city area, as well as throughout the greater Adelaide region. Both Dart species rest with the hind wings held on a horizontal plane, while the forewings are held vertically.

The upper surface of the wings of both sexes are similar, though the female is a little larger and



has a more rounded wing margin. The wings have a background colour of mid to deep brown.

The underside has a golden-brown background colour. The markings of the upper surface are replicated. The central and lower portions of this wing are a pale brown in colour.

The caterpillars make their tubular shelters on various overgrown native and introduced grasses, including some that are used as lawn grasses. The mature caterpillar is slender, cylindrical and green in colour. It has a darker line down its back. The head is black in colour with cream, linear markings. The pupa is pale brown with a white, powdery material packed around the pupa in the shelter.

This butterfly will benefit from a little 'wild' patch in an urban, hills or other garden, where the grasses are allowed to grow long and no insecticides are used. It will happily flit around flowerbeds and provide a spark of colour.

