

## Eufala Skipper *Lerodea eufala*



**Dorsal:** 9/29/95, Gainesville Airport, Alachua Co, FL



**Ventral:** 9/24/95, Homestead, Miami-Dade Co, FL



The Eufalas were one of several native tribes that once lived just north of Florida (along with Creeks, Mikasuki, etc.). Members of these tribes eventually moved south to form the Seminole Nation. It is not clear why the name of this particular tribe was chosen for *Lerodea eufala*—or even that the tribe's identity was specifically involved, since the skipper's range extends to Oklahoma, where a city named Eufala is located.

Small and nondescript, the Eufala Skipper is the northernmost representative of a fairly large tropical genus of grass skippers. Two of its relatives, the Violet-clouded Skipper (*L. arabus*) and the Olive-clouded Skipper (*L. dysaules*), also reach the United States. Unlike some emissaries of tropical genera in our region, the Eufala is not simply a northern break-away. Rather, it is a highly successful, cosmopolitan butterfly that has been able to incorporate large regions of the United States into its extensive range, along with most of Central and South America. Yet despite its wide distribution the Eufala lacks recognized subspecies, perhaps because its mobile disposition leads to regular gene-sharing across populations.

Eufalas are low perchers, and by many accounts they remain within inches of the ground at all times. But we have seen them nectaring several feet high at times in Texas and South Carolina. This is a butterfly of flat, open habitats, nonetheless, whose males perch on grass stems throughout the day awaiting females.

### Identification

Small and inconspicuous, intermediate in size between Neamathla and Three-spotted, with *long, pointed FWs, short antennae*. Viewed from below, the *body is white* (contributing to the general, light-toned appearance). Eufalas make two quick wing-claps on landing (Glassberg, 1999). Grayish color is often cited as the most reliable primary field mark, but color is variable, with some individuals being rather brown-toned.

### Dorsal

*Plain gray-brown* above, normally lighter than most potential look-alikes (Swarthy, Neamathla, Three-spotted, Cloudy, etc.). Obscure Skipper is also light-toned, but not grayish. Note a *U-shaped series of white dots* on postmedian FW (including subapical dots), which resembles a bite mark. Male lacks a stigma.

### Ventral

Base color is light brown ("cool tan"), variably covered by *even, gray overscaling*. In some individuals (see photo above), *HW has a faint crescent-like dot pattern*, usually less pronounced than in Three-spotted. HW veins are not lightened.

### Habitat

In our region, mainly flat, grassy areas with low vegetation, including vacant lots, road edges, agricultural areas, pastures, gardens, lawns, etc. Also coastal lowlands (SC), pine woods (Keys), salt marsh edges, wood margins, savannas. Elsewhere, oak openings, desert valleys, TX hill country. Only one record from mountains in NC.

### Hostplants

Various grasses, including Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), St. Augustine Grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*), and Johnson Grass (*Sorghum halepense*), a weedy exotic. Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) in Cuba. Larva lives in rolled leaf nest. Pupa has pointed "head."

### Occurrence

Widespread but uncommon. Resident from se SC coast through FL Keys; not cold hardy, rebuilds populations each summer in mid-Atlantic states; strongly emigratory, strays north as far as s. NJ in late summer (especially Cape May). Also Midwest and southern rim of US to se CAN, south to ARG. Two broods in North (Mar-Apr and Aug-Sep), all year in s. FL. Diapause stage not reported.

### Ecology

**Generalist.** A versatile and widespread species.



**Ventral (grayer variant):** 2/19/98, Bentsen State Park Hildago Co, TX

av wingspan: 1.0"

