

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Invertebrate Abstract

Element Code: IILEP87200

Data Sensitivity: No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Agathymus alliae*  
**COMMON NAME:** Mojave Giant Skipper; Allie's Agave Borer  
**SYNONYMS:**  
**FAMILY:** HesperIIDae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Stallings and Turner, 1957.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** Highway 64, 15 miles west of Cameron, along the canyon of the little Colorado River, Coconino county, Arizona.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:**

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** There are 10 species in this genus, 7 of which are located in Arizona. Scott recognizes 2 subspecies, one of which is unnamed.

**DESCRIPTION:** A large and robust skipper with a wingspan of 2.25-2.5 inches (5.7-6.4 cm). The upper side is black with reddish orange at the wing bases and costa. There are orange-yellow forewing spots that are widely separated and completely surrounded by black in males but are only separated by veins in the females, forming an almost continuous band. The underside of the hind wing is mottled gray with bands of yellow-orange spots.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** There are orange-yellow forewing spots that are widely separated in males but are only separated by veins in the females, forming an almost continuous band. The underside of the hind wing is mottled gray with bands of yellow-orange spots.

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Color photo (*In* <http://www.nearctica.com/butter/plate33/Aalliae.htm>)  
Color drawing (Tilden, 1986: pl. 39).

**TOTAL RANGE:** Limited range centered near Utah, northwestern Arizona, Nevada juncture and then extending west barely into California.

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Northwestern Arizona

## **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** A young caterpillar crawls to a leaf tip and burrows inside where it eats pulp and then hibernates. In the spring the caterpillar makes a new burrow in a leaf base where it feeds on sap until becoming inactive for the summer. Before pupating, the caterpillar enlarges the opening of its burrow and makes a silk trap door from which the adult can emerge. Unlike most butterflies, skippers pupate in a cocoon of leaves and silken strands. In contrast to true butterflies, which hold both wings either vertically or horizontally at rest, skippers often rest with fore wings open at about a 45-degree angle and hind wings horizontal. Their rapid, direct and bouncing flight is aptly suggested by the name “skipper”.

**REPRODUCTION:** From early morning to noon the males perch near host plants to wait for receptive females. The females lay eggs singly on the host and fall to the base of the plant. They have one brood from August to October.

**FOOD HABITS:** The plant *Agave utahensis* is used as a host plant. The adult females do not feed but the males sip moisture from mud.

**HABITAT:** Desert, woodland-conifer. Pine woodland canyons and desert with *Agave utahensis*.

**ELEVATION:** Unknown

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Unknown

**POPULATION TRENDS:** Unknown

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:**

**STATE STATUS:**

**OTHER STATUS:**

Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3  
1999)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Their habitat should be preserved and overgrazing discouraged.

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:** Unknown

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Unknown

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** Unknown

**SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION****REFERENCES:**

- Milne, L. M. 1980. National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York. pp. 715.
- NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2001. Version 1.6. Arlington, Virginia, USA: NatureServe. Available: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: May 22, 2002).
- Nearctica. Available at <http://www.nearctica.com/butter/plat33/Aalliae.htm>.
- Tilden, J.W. 1986. A Field Guide to Western Butterflies. Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, MA. Pp.212-213.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 1999. Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List.
- USGS, Available at <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/byflyusa/usa/410.htm>

**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**Revised:** 2002-05-31 (AMS)

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