

Identification

The Moss's Elfin is a small butterfly with a wingspan of 22 to 26 mm.

Males have dark grey upper and lower wings. The undersides of their back wings have dark brown edges.

Females have light brown or grey upper wings that fade outward to a vibrant coppery orange. Females are slightly larger than males.

Both males and females have a thin white outline on both the upper and lower surfaces of their wings.

Eggs are oblong shaped and pale green. They measure approximately 0.75 by 0.33 mm. Mature caterpillars measure approximately 16 mm long. They are bright green and may have white stripes on their dorsal surface.



Gartrell – Butterflies of Canada



J.B. Tatum- Butterflies of Canada

References

Butterflies of Canada

<http://www.cbif.gc.ca>

E-Fauna BC

<http://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/efauna>

Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

<http://www.goert.ca/>

Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado

<http://cumuseum.colorado.edu>

Teach Engineering

www.teachengineering.org

NatureServe

<http://explorer.natureserve.org>

Moss's Elfin

Incisalia mossii mossii



Val George- E-fauna BC

By Carmen Pendleton and Michelle Lampron

The Moss's Elfin, *Incisalia mossii* has two subspecies that are found in British Columbia, *Incisalia mossii mossii* and *I. m.schryveri*. The *mossii* subspecies is found on southern Vancouver Island and is the focus of this brochure.

Alternative Common Name

Stonecrop Elfin

Alternative Scientific Names

Callophrys mossii mossii

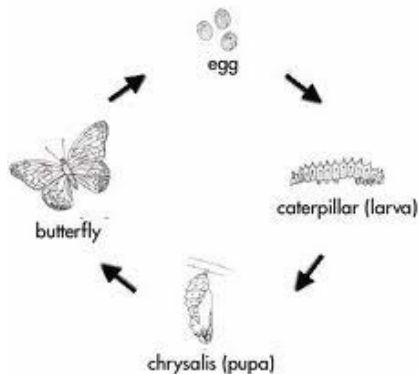
Life Cycle

Moss's Elfin have only one generation each year.

Adult flight season is from March to June. During this time they feed on the nectar of broad-leaved stonecrop (*Sedum spathulifolium*).

Eggs are laid in late spring at the base or on the leaves of the host plant, broad-leaved stonecrop, where they hatch several days later. The caterpillars then feed on the stonecrop flower buds. They subsequently enter their pupal stage and overwinter on the ground amongst the plant litter.

The following generation of adults emerges the subsequent spring, to recommence this cycle.



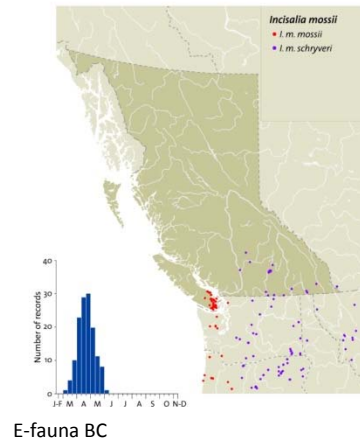
Habitat

Moss's Elfin spend their lives on dry rocky outcrops and scree slopes where their food plant can be found.

They spend most of their lives in a small territory of several square metres, and fly low to the ground, close to their food source and host plants.

Distribution

This subspecies of Moss's Elfin, *I.m.mossii*, is found from southern Vancouver Island, where its range extends as far north as Comox, southward to northern California. This is a coastal subspecies.



Status

Provincial status: Blue List (S2S3)

COSEWIC: Not Assessed

NatureServe: G4T4

The Moss's Elfin is provincially ranked as an S2S3 species and is considered to be of special concern. It has not been assessed by COSEWIC but is on the candidate list as a Priority 1 species.

Threats

The main threat to the Moss's Elfin is habitat destruction as a result of urbanization and outdoor recreation. Deer also contribute to the destruction of their habitat and food source, the broad-leaved stonecrop.

Solutions

To protect and conserve the remaining Moss's Elfin habitat areas it is important to maintain areas of broad-leaved stonecrop. This can be accomplished by staying on routes when hiking or rock climbing to avoid damaging these plants. Supporting native species restoration and removal of invasive species such as Scotch Broom can improve the habitat areas of the Moss's Elfin.