

Field Notes
August 28, 2006
Johnny Saichuk



This may be the last issue of the season with problem photos. We will prepare one more issue to summarize the verification field trials once we have completed harvesting of the first crop in each field. We still have two to harvest, one in Concordia that should be harvested this week and one in E. Carroll probably to be harvested next week.

The week of August 14th I was called to a field in Avoyelles to look at a problem. It was compounded because there was a heavy population of leaf rolling caterpillars being fed on by birds. The field representative observed cut leaves and broken stems and assumed they were the consequence of the same critter. One led to the other.

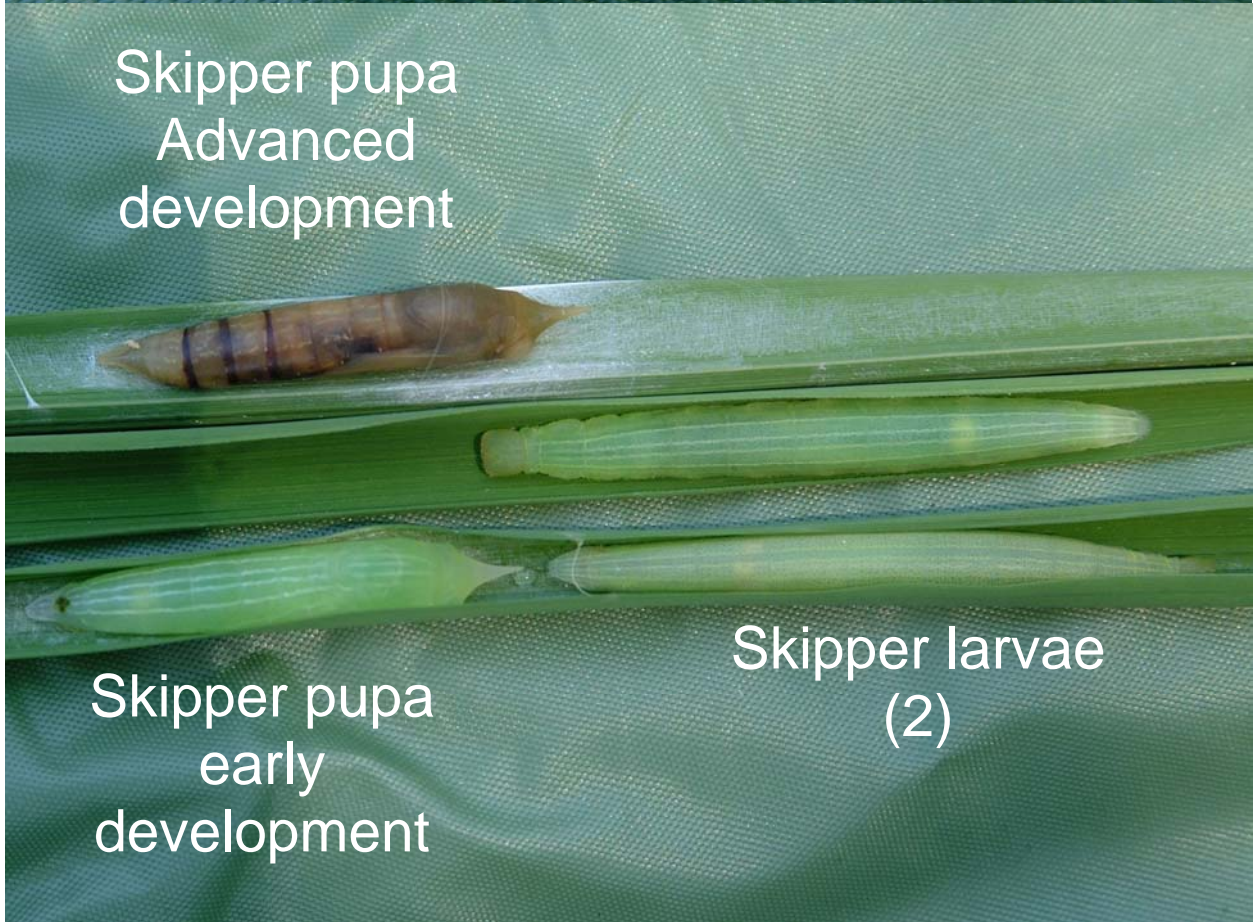
I remember a story related to me by the late Paul Seilhan about a field he had gone to look at that was ragged and beat up and he could not figure out the problem. He called in then Extension Rice Specialist Dr. Steve Linscombe who met him early in the morning. They arrived at the field just after dawn to see a “million” egrets and herons in the field. Problem solved.

Following are a series of photographs of the leaf rolling caterpillars, their pupa and the adults. The adults are known as Skippers because of their habit of frequent short flights from plant to plant, sort of skipping around the plant canopy. Their larvae often tie the opposite leaf margins together with a “spider web-like material” to provide protection from their predators.





Skipper larva



Skipper pupa
Advanced
development

Skipper pupa
early
development

Skipper larvae
(2)



The above photograph shows a developing pupa. The red object is one eye of the developing skipper adult. Note the fine thread attached to both margins of the leaf just in front of the puparium.

The larvae of skippers are easily recognized by the constriction behind the head. There are several species and all have this feature. Skipper adults are similar to moths and butterflies but are considered separate from them. They keep their wings in an upright position when at rest. The adult in the photograph is definitely of the larva shown because we collected several larvae and pupae then placed them in plastic bag where a couple of adults emerged a few days later.

These caterpillars seldom cause enough damage to warrant control.

On the following page is a weed that was once a serious problem in rice fields; however except for isolated cases we seldom see it in fields today. Part of the reason is management and part herbicides especially the introduction of Londax. There are several common names of this weed among the most frequently used are Spearhead and Beak Rush, the latter being the appropriate common name. It is a sedge in that it belongs to the Cyperaceae family. The genus is *Rhynchospora* with at least 40 species listed in one reference.



At left is a photograph of the inflorescence of Beak Rush. The individual structures are the spikelets with a single seed produced in each. The long pointed part is attached to the seed and when removed from the rest of the spikelet resembles the head of a bird with a long beak hence the common name. Others have seen a resemblance to a spear leading to the other common name.

In the photograph below it is easy to see one of the trademarks of sedges. The single stem ends in a group of leaves surrounding and below the inflorescence. This is called an involucre and is found in other plants too, but is distinctive in Beak Rush and other sedges.

