

# Lilac-banded Longtail



# Long-tailed Skipper

*Urbanus dorantes*

*Urbanus proteus*

## Biology

The **Lilac-banded Longtail** is a common butterfly in southern and central Florida. It is distributed from Argentina to Central America and in the southern United States. Adults have an approximate wingspan of 1.5 - 2 inches. Its brown upper wing surface lacks the iridescent coloration of a similar species, the **Long-tailed Skipper**. The **Lilac-banded Longtail** feeds on the nectar of various plants such as lantana and bougainvillea. Females lay single, greenish eggs on the leaves and the flower stalks of the host plant. The caterpillars have a dark line on the back and are covered with short hairs. They range in color from brown with yellow markings to green with white markings. The head is conspicuously darker than the body and has few spines. In Florida, the **Lilac-banded Longtail** go through three to four reproductive cycles per year.



## Host Plants

Florida Beggarweed  
*Desmodium tortuosum*

Tick Clover  
*Desmodium incanum*

**Fun Fact:**  
Characteristic leaf roll made by the **Long-tailed Skipper**. Try and see if you can find one!



For access to the online version, visit <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/index.php>

## Biology

The **Long-tailed Skipper** is very similar to the **Lilac-banded Longtail** except that the base of its wings is an iridescent blue-green color. It is a common skipper that is distributed throughout South and Central America and in the southern United States, occasionally straying into Connecticut and Illinois. Adults are slightly larger than adult **Lilac-banded Longtail** (~1.5 - 2.5 inches). Females lay eggs in clusters on the underside of host plant leaves. Caterpillars emerge and feed on the host. When not feeding they retreat to shelters created by rolling up leaves, this feature gives them the nickname **bean leafrollers**. They pupate inside this shelter. This species can be a pest to farmers growing beans and peanuts. In Florida, the **Long-tailed Skipper** undergoes at least three reproductive cycles per year and is known to migrate south in the late summer/early fall and north in the spring.



## Host Plants

Spurred Butterfly Pea  
*Centrosema virginianum*

Florida Beggarweed  
*Desmodium tortuosum*

Downy Milkpea  
*Galactia regularis*

Eastern Milkpea  
*Galactia volubilis*