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The Three Skippers I know about in SK12:

The Essex Skipper (a new kid on the block for me in the Goyt Valley) has very distinctive, inky black antennae underside tips, whereas the similarly sized Small Skipper has orange-brown coloured antennae underside tips. As someone suggested to me, it looks as though the antennae tips of the Essex Skipper were dipped in black ink.

With the Large Skipper, (also similarly sized) the key diagnostic feature to look out for is that it always has distinctive hooked and pointed antennae tips, which are readily identified with the naked eye. The antennae of both the Essex and Small Skipper are stubby and rounded.

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The Large Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) – Note (inset) the unmistakable pointed hook at the tip of that antenna. That can be discerned from any angle when shooting. For the other two species of Skipper, it is essential to shoot upwards from below the Butterfly, which is not always easy to do. Tall thistles can be a useful place to look, unless you get lucky.



A 2026 example of the Large Skipper. I will try to obtain better images of this species in 2027, especially the antennae tips.



This is unambiguously the Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and has the distinctive orange underside to the tips of the antennae.



The Essex Skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*). An example photographed in the Goyt Valley close to the Bunsal Cobb (higher) car park. As you step onto the footpath leading in the direction of Wildmoorstone, there is a tall bunch of thistles on your left. Hunt there in season. If shooting images, get everything ready first and practice nearby on an inanimate object. You do not always get a second chance.



Another delightful Goyt Valley example of the Essex Skipper and this one along the old railway. I consider it fair to say the Essex Skipper is indigenous to the Goyt Valley. They all adore the Thistles.