

Black Hairstreak - Records Comparison Chart 2017

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My prediction for the 2017 flight season was completely wrong, with the numbers seen during the 2016 flight period being low, and no Black Hairstreaks eggs having been found during Brown Hairstreak egg searches, despite many of these searches being conducted at Black Hairstreak sites.

After a relatively mild wet winter, and a rather late spring, the first adult was seen on the 1st of June, which is quite early, we had a 26 day flight season, with better weather than in recent years, but we did have a rather windy spell.

It has again been found at new sites and over the twenty years of our recording we have found that it has dispersed itself over a far wider area than previous information indicated, suitable habitat including hedgerow thickets is likely to be the major governing factor in dictating the boundaries of a colony, what was once several individual colonies may only be just one.

At one site on the boundary of North Bucks it was re-discovered after an absence of thirty one years, were one was seen to fly across a path along the edge of a wood from Northants into Bucks.

One issue that arose in the spring of 2017 was that our most popular site that had at one time been our best site to see the Black Hairstreak (the M40 Compensation area) became a secure locked site. It was developed in 1991-2 to compensate for the loss of Brown and Black Hairstreak habitat due to the construction of M40 motorway, which clipped the edge of Bernwood forest - good Blackthorn thickets, home to the two Hairstreaks that depend on it, removed.

A new site with a secure fence to keep the deer out was landscaped close by, banks of Blackthorn were planted interspersed with areas of pasture. Within two years Brown Hairstreak eggs were found, and in 1999 the first Black was seen. By the turn of the century deer were regularly accessing the site, heavy browsing degraded the site, with little young Blackthorn it became largely unsuitable for the Brown. Black Hairstreak numbers peaked and then started to decline. UTB had been pressing for years to get the highways authority to acknowledge their responsibility and restore the fence, and this was eventually done in the spring of 2017, but it is still proving difficult to keep out Muntjac deer. What was once the best site to see the Black Hairstreak could now recover to become ideal for both these Hairstreaks.

The chart below shows the annual comparisons for the last twenty years and as you will see it was a far better year than I had predicted, with higher than average numbers seen, and with quite good weather during the flight period, the prospects for 2018 is good.

The records above are the result of twenty years off observation by a dedicated group of people, without there support little of this knowledge would have been available.

Thanks to everyone who has supported the research behind these figures.

Year.	98	99	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total	
All time Total no of Bucks & Oxon Colonies, some are now extinct.																						104
Colonies visited by the recording group	31	22	36	28	29	40	38	51	54	55	60	67	57	28	34	34	34	35	42	42	92	
Colonies seen by the recording group.	7	13	9	15	9	13	34	34	39	41	40	40	46	38	17	19	29	26	31	36	66	
Colonies extant 1990 - 2013																						78
Colonies found since 1997.	2	1			2	2	2	1	6	4	3	1	4								30	
Colonies re-discovered seen pre 1990.	1	5	2	4	1	1	2	1		2			2								22	
Individual Butterflies seen	19	28	73	90	123	109	525	258	995	655	261	326	1095	586	118	132	263	418	182	435	1	
Hours Spent Looking for Black Hairstreak.																						1580
People helping with the recording.	4	9	12	13	15	16	17	24	21	20	27	30	32	39	34	33	35	42	31	34		
Days with suitable weather for Black Hairstreak activity.	16	18	18	18	21	22	28	28	28	25	18	30	26	31	27	24	22	25	20	23		
Hours of suitable weather for Black Hairstreak activity.	40	90	105	149	151	167	150	176	234	140	115	205	210	168	137	181	142	194	108	188		
Average hours suitable for activity per day.																						6.8
Average no seen per hours observation.	1	0.6	0.8	1	2.2	2.2	6.9	2.7	8.9	6.4	2.8	2.7	9.7	3.7	1	1.2	3.02	5.3	2.49	6.5	3.57	
Number of annual records that make up this information.	7	12	25	99	54	77	129	157	157	186	167	210	383	286	143	112	112	136	115	120		
Kilometre Squares where Black Hairstreak was seen.																						60
New Kilometre Squares.																						8
Total Kilometre Squares with BI H records																						124