

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

White-letter Hairstreak Report 2017

First and last sightings

The first sighting was 10/06/17. The last sighting was on 31/07/17

Sightings for 2017

A big thank you to everyone who sent me their sightings. WLH seemed to have another good year generally and once again were recorded in a number of new locations. Mick Campbell and Dennis Dell recorded particularly good numbers in Piddington and Little Woods, Oxon, recording the only sighting in double figures. The WLH had an early start to the flight season which was certainly to its advantage as the weather later in the summer was fairly poor. I received sightings of about 140 individuals from 47 different sites. This species seems to be doing reasonably well in our area and appears to be colonising or recolonising new areas. For example this species was found at Sonning Lock in the 1970's but disappeared as the elm died and much of the woodland edge was cut back. Since then some elm has regrown and reached maturity. I have been monitoring these over a number of years without success until 2017 when I recorded four adults, each on a different elm along this stretch of the Thames.

Locations for WLHs recorded in UTB area for 2017.

BUCKS	BERKS	OXON
Bottom Wood, Radnage	Bradfield College	Whittles Farm
Wolverton Road	Dark Lane, Bradfield	Bottom Farm, Mapledurham
Bernwood	Milestone Wood	Chazey Heath
Rushbeds Woods	Basildon Park	Park Wood
Old Park Farm	Maidenhead Thicket	Piddington Wood
Grendon and Doddershall Woods	Caversham Park Road	Standlake Common
Catherine Farm	Sonning	Greenfield Wood
Lee Wood		Little Wittenham
Homefield Wood		Jacksons Lane
West Wycombe		Little Wood
Bridleway TQ 008 797		Footpath to Nuney Green
Weedon Hill Wood		Launton
Little Chalfont		Roadside elms SP624 096
Mentmore		Haddon Hill Golf Club
Frieth		Great Chalk Wood
Iver		Roadside elm SP731 836
Westcot		Rocky Lane
College Lake		Whitecross Green Wood
Princes Risborough		Woodcote
		Headington
		Burford

Finding new colonies

We are finding new colonies of WLH every year and gradually building a better picture of its distribution within the three counties. The easiest way to do this is to look for the sparring adult males in the top of the elms in late June or early July but it is also possible to find a colony by searching for eggs or larvae. Look for eggs once the leaves have fallen. Using a magnifying glass search the twigs, the egg will look like a tiny grey flying saucer. The most common place to find them is at the base of a leaf bud, but they can be anywhere on the twig so try to be careful where you put your hands. The eggs will hatch in March and the young caterpillar will burrow into a flower bud. During the early stages, as it feeds on the flowers and then the seeds, it is very well camouflaged but by May they will be feeding on the open leaves and at this stage is fairly easy to spot, with a little patience and practice, by standing under the tree and looking up.

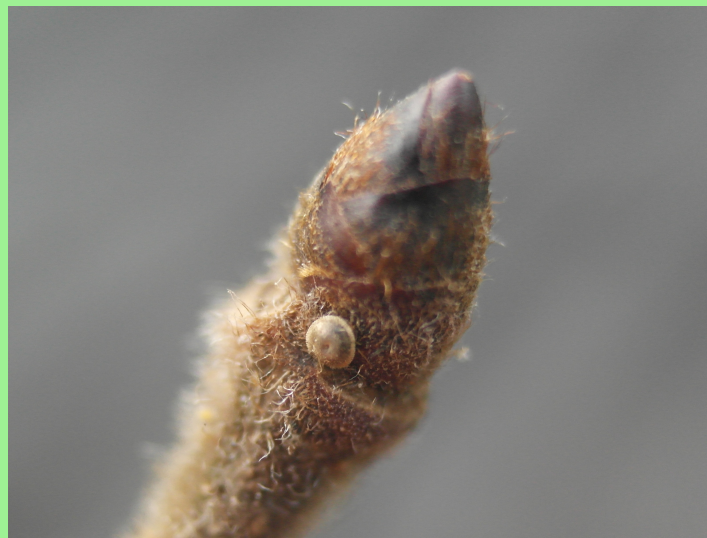
UTB elm project

The planting of both disease resistant elm and Wych elm is continuing. Most plantings take place close to existing WLH colonies. We have now planted over 100 elms and it is hoped this project will run for a number of years.

Getting involved

If you would be interested in getting involved in surveying for WLH or the elm project (or both!) please do get in touch. My contact details are on UTB website, on the species champions list.

Peter Cuss



WLH egg