

# BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

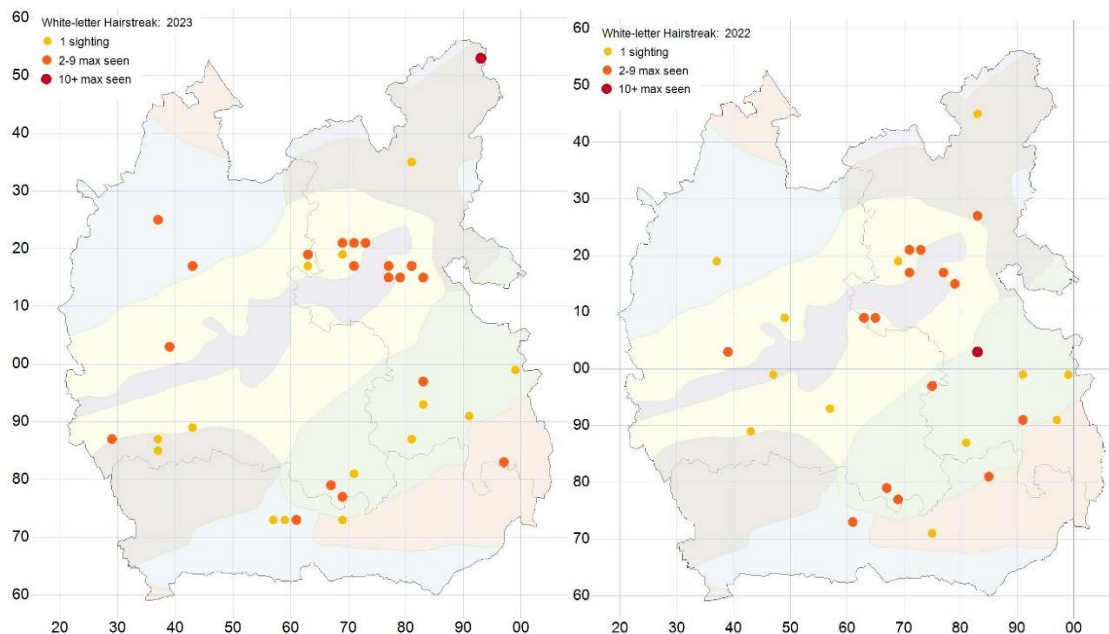
## White-letter Hairstreak report 2023

Peter Cuss

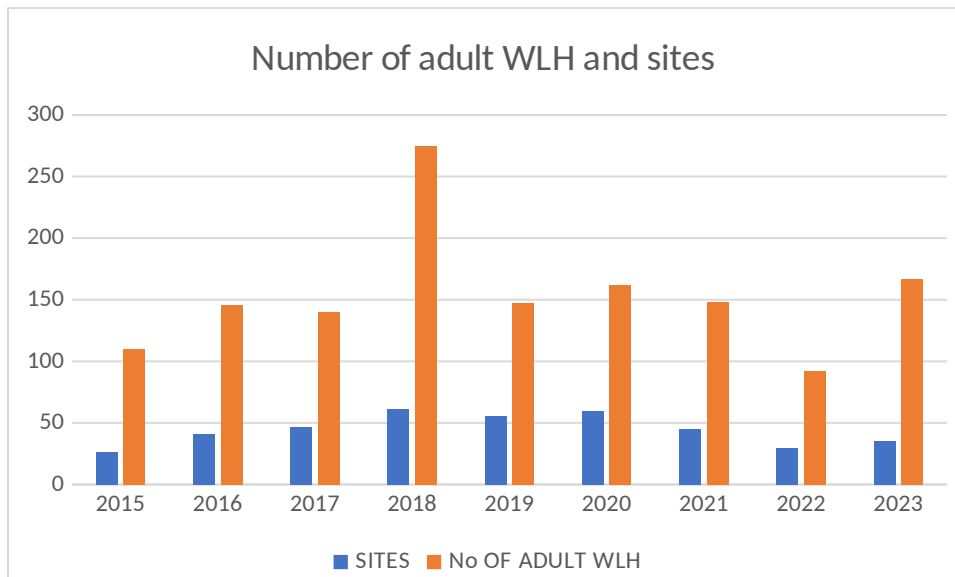
### Overview

168 adult White-letter Hairstreak were recorded in 2023, the second highest figure since I became Species Champion in 2015. The population of this charming little butterfly seems to be stable in the Upper Thames area. Many thanks to all those who sent in their sightings. A particular thanks to Tom Dunbar for a great recording effort. A few sites were, to the best of my knowledge, 'new'. Among these was Palmer Park in Reading. This was an interesting record as I recall seeing a fair bit of elm in the hedgerow here some years ago and had pencilled in the site to check, only to find most of the elm was cut down by the time I went in! A record in 2023 suggests it must have survived somewhere in the park, or recolonised, since then.

The first adult sighting was on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June and the last was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. The majority of records continue to come from Bucks, but the species is distributed across the three counties.



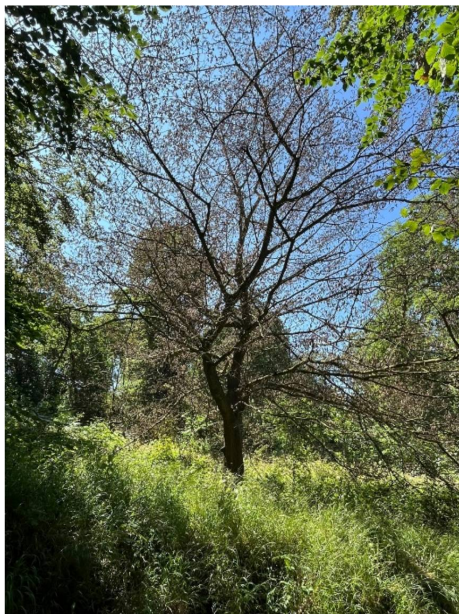
Distribution of WLH sightings for 2023, and 2022 for comparison.



Number of adult WLH and number of sites recorded 2015 to 2023

### Elm planting

Some known colonies of White-letter Hairstreak are lost over time as their host trees succumb to dutch elm disease. 396 elms, mostly of types resistant to dutch elm disease, have been planted across the Upper Thames since 2015 to support the species. Some of these are getting to a size now where they are producing flowers, so will soon become of a suitable size to be used by WLH. Some DED resistant elms planted at Holtspur (prior to the 2015 project) already host the butterfly.



Two elms which had WLH colonies until recently. On left, at Chazey Wood. This tree is now completely dead, and on the right on the track to Whittles Farm. The tree here showing signs of dieback.



Two of the 396 disease resistant elms planted by Upper Thames Branch. On the left a Sapporo Autumn Gold, planted at Sonning Common, opposite a Wych elm with a WLH colony. On the right, another SAG, this one planted at Clayfield Copse, showing the many flower buds. These trees have reached a suitable size to host WLH colonies.

### Helping to record White-letter Hairstreak.

If you would like to help in recording White-letter Hairstreak there are some tips on the UTB website for finding new colonies, look under Conservation/ Hairstreak conservation/White-letter Hairstreak Project.

Peter Cuss

WLH Champion.

15/2/2024