

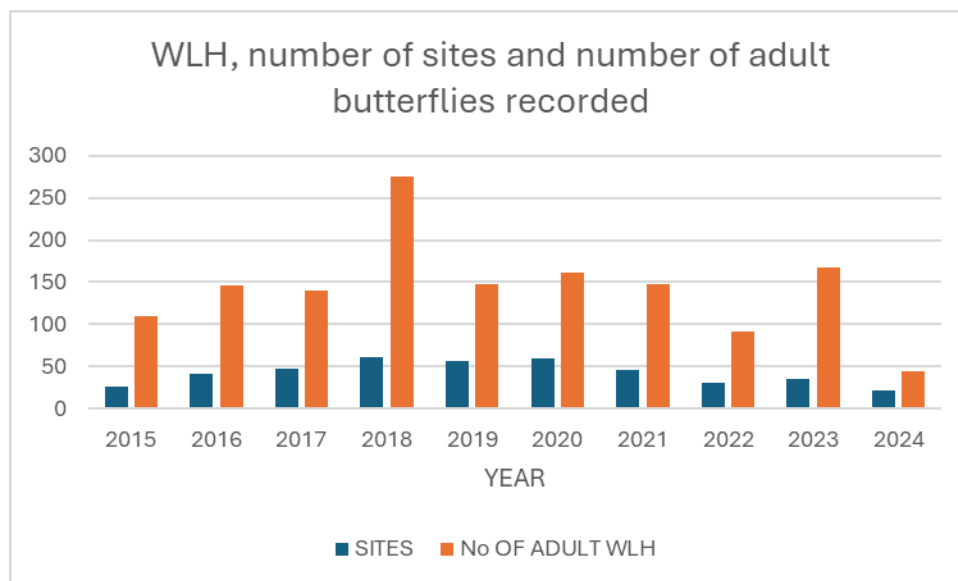
BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

White-letter Hairstreak report 2024

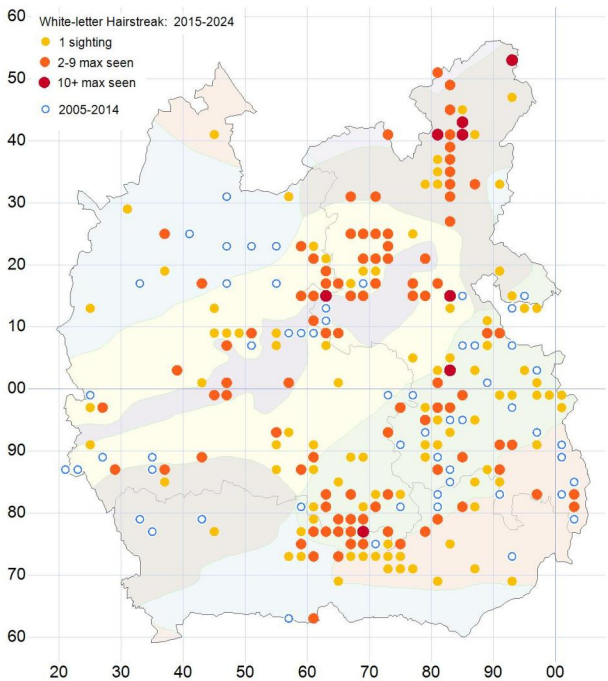


Overview

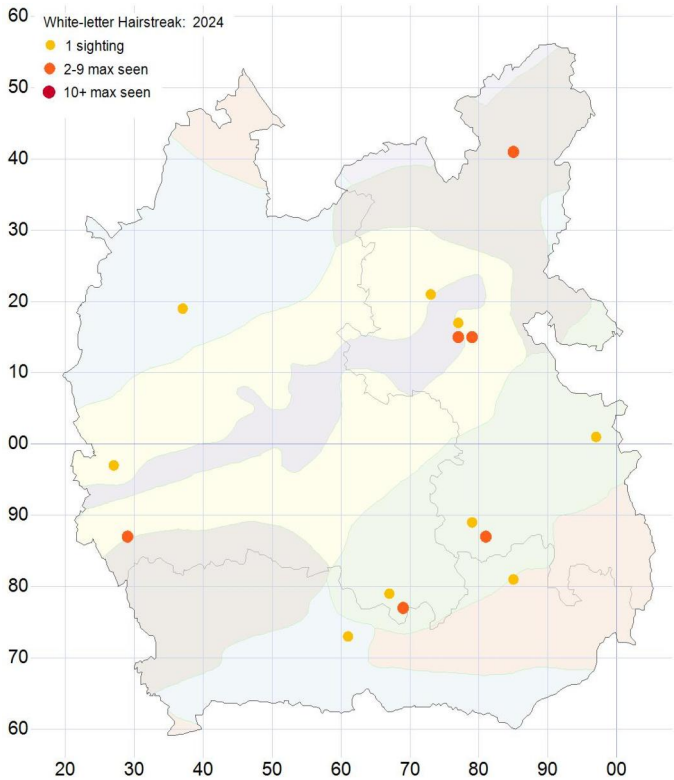
The first sighting for 2024 was on the 17th of June, and the last sighting was the 2nd of August. The butterfly appeared to have a poor year with only 44 adult White-letter Hairstreak recorded from 22 sites. This was the lowest number of sightings in the last ten years, with the mean average each year between 2015 to 2023 being 154 butterflies. The first half of July was both cool and wet. As well as effecting butterfly numbers this also reduced the amount of recording opportunities.



Distribution of sightings 2015 to 2024



2024 sightings



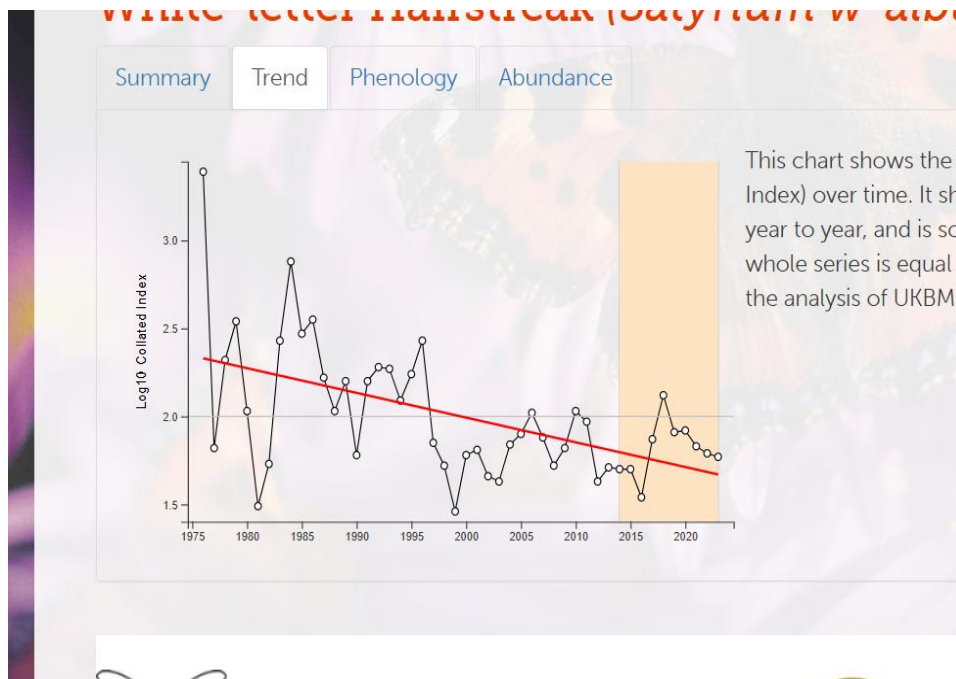
Elm planting.

The Upper Thames Branch has planted over 400 elms across the three counties to support the White-letter Hairstreak. We have also dealt with many enquiries from other groups and individuals regarding obtaining and planting disease resistant elm, and have been able to give advice and details of suppliers. Another exciting project was the Christmas Common Farm Cluster, a group of 20 farms stretching from north of Watlington down to Shiplake nearly Henley, that have just planted 200 Dutch Elm Disease-resistant elms over the winter across their area. The varieties used were a mix of Wingham, Lutece and Ademuz.

Surveying for new WLH colonies.

Mike Wall (of Hants BC) has been contracted to survey for WLH within the Christmas Common Farm Cluster Area. Also, as part of RBOR (Bernwood, Otmoor and River Ray catchment area project) BBOWT, with help from UTB, will be surveying for all 5 Hairstreaks. Hopefully these two projects will help to find new WLH colonies which together with UTB's usual effort in WLH recording will lead to a better year in 2025

UK trend in distibution and abundance.



UK-BMS index of abundance

Although the White-letter Hairstreak has declined in abundance it has increased in its distribution across the UK. The butterfly has spread northwards, believed to be as result of global warming. It was found in the River Tweed area in Scotland in 2017 and was recorded 100 miles further north last year, in Dundee.

P.Cuss April 2025.