

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 15-Jan-18 12:42 PM GMT

Thanks all for your comments 😊

2017

Looking back at my 2017 diary I notice that I have not mentioned much other than Red Admirals or White Letter Hairstreak since April. Obviously, although I was focused on specific things, there was plenty more going on. So as a brief catch up here are a few of the other things that crossed my path during 2017. Much of this is from Southwick in Hampshire my most visited/favourite site last year.



I reared Orange Tips for the first time in 2017. These 2 pictures were taken a month apart. Just after hatching on 30.4.2017 and 4 days before pupation 30.5.2017. Hopefully I will be able to report more fully on this in a few months with a positive outcome.



4.6.2017 One of the first Meadow Browns of the year at Southwick.



6.8.2017 A similar theme later in the season at the same location. Common Blues at Southwick.



2.7.2017 I could not resist sneaking a White Letter Hairstreak in. Here enjoying Bramble nectar at Southwick with a fresh Gatekeeper.



2.9.2017 Small Coppers seemed to be a bit thin on the ground during 2017 around my neck of the woods. Here is one of the few I saw at Southwick.



2.9.2017 at Southwick again. This fresh looking female Speckled Wood caught my eye

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 15-Jan-18 01:01 PM GMT

Great set of images Jack 😊 The White-letter with the Hedge Brown is a real cracker 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Goldie M, 15-Jan-18 01:43 PM GMT

I second that Jack, I saw my first WLHS last year, your shot brings back good memories Goldie 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Andrew555, 16-Jan-18 07:48 AM GMT

Very nice Jack. That's a fine looking Speckled. 😊

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 18-Jan-18 09:52 PM GMT

Lovely stuff, Paul.

Have lived most of my adult life in Hants (albeit S.W.), and had never heard of Southwick!

BR, Jon

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 21-Jan-18 09:27 PM GMT

Excellent, evocative images, Paul. Well done with the Orange Tips and if you have more to post then please go ahead!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 18-Feb-18 10:02 PM GMT

Thanks all for the comments 😊😊

Sunday 28.1.2018 & Saturday 17.2.2018 Southwick

I have been visiting Southwick for some weeks/months now to monitor the Red Admiral early stages over the Winter. I have become one of the 'fixtures & fittings' there. There is one particular chap who is also a regular passer-by who always stops for a chat and knows exactly what I am doing and is always interested in how things are progressing. We have joked that I have not actually gone home since December 2017 😊. On the 28th January whilst I was deeply engrossed in eggs and larvae he stopped as usual to say hello. A few metres further down the path he called and pointed out a Red Admiral that he had put up from the path. That was my first butterfly of 2018 😊. In fact that is the first butterfly I have ever recorded in January. I saw it (or another one) several times but was unable to get a photograph.



First male Brimstone of the year – Southwick – 17.2.2018



Female Red Admiral – Southwick 17.2.2018

Yesterday I woke to a beautiful clear blue sky and plenty of sunshine and also had time to spare. I was quietly confident of a Red Admiral at Southwick. I arrived at 11.45 to find the surprising sight of a male Brimstone fluttering around, bringing a massive smile to my face 😊. It settled several times giving me plenty of opportunity for photograph. A little later at about 12.25 the anticipated Red Admiral appeared giving me another smile 😊. It was a little nervous at first but was soon settling for longer periods and laying eggs!! (more of that in the appropriate thread). It was the only one I saw but it was quite active for a couple of hours and gave me plenty of opportunity for observation and photographs.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-18 10:41 PM GMT

Since you've got your shots have you now visited home Paul 😊😊 Great find that Brimstone and in very good nick as well 😊🇬🇧 Looking forward to some more.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 20-Feb-18 07:57 PM GMT

What a joy to see a February Brimstone, Paul! Well done and let's hope there'll be many left for the rest of us over the next few weeks (although I suspect that the forecast cold snap may delay this for most).

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-Feb-18 10:19 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 it was starting to get a bit cold out so I have indeed popped home 😊

Thanks David 😊 not much chance of seeing anything for the next few days. That gives me a chance to post a few 'odd bits and bobs':

The ongoing search for all things Elm and White Letter Hairstreak often (more often than not actually) turns up things other than White Letter Hairstreak. Here are a few of them.



4.2.2018 These unidentified eggs often turn up in the search for Hairstreak eggs. They are always tucked next to a bud.

Whilst checking on my White letter Hairstreak eggs at the weekend I noticed the unidentified egg above was hatching. I managed a few pics



If anyone can put names to any of these unidentified species then please let me know.

Elms also don't always require hours of searching miles from anywhere. Never ignore what is on your doorstep. A few years ago I did not think there were any Elms on my local patch.



I found this Elm recently 10 minutes walk from home on the local industrial estate.



24.2.2018 This sight always gives me optimism for the season ahead. A healthy crop of Wych Elm flower buds at Southwick



Re: jackz432r

by Andrew555, 28-Feb-18 10:25 AM GMT

Hi Paul, interesting stuff, love the hatching egg sequence.
I think your first caterpillar is of the Angle Shades moth. 😊

Cheers

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-18 11:25 AM GMT

Some of those larvae seem familiar Paul but I can't place them at the moment 😊 Great set of images of the emerging cat 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 28-Feb-18 09:09 PM GMT

Well done with those images of the larva emerging from its egg, Paul. Few of us are afforded such a spectacle so thanks for recording it and showing it to us.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Mar-18 05:44 PM GMT

Thanks David, Wurzel & Andrew for the comments 😊😊😊

Whilst I wait for the snow to melt, I thought I would post a few more bits and bobs from last year to warm me up. A selection of photos/stories from various sites I visited during 2017.

Old Down, Basingstoke 14.5.2017 – This was my first and only visit to this site. I was hoping to find Small Blues as there is apparently a good colony here. I was perhaps a bit early and although the forecast was for warm sunshine it was actually cold, overcast and windy. The site was also not really my 'cup of tea'. It is right next to a large housing estate and was busy with joggers, cyclists, dog walkers and assorted others. Needless to say I did not see any Small Blues or indeed much else at all, 2 butterflies in fact. One bonus was one of the only Small Heaths I saw all year and the only one I managed to photograph.



Small Heath – Old Down, Basingstoke – 14.5.2017.

Kitsons Clump, Wonston 14.5.2017 – After my lack of results at Old Down I meandered my way home and stopped at a random spot. Nothing out of the ordinary here, but I spent a pleasant couple of hours exploring somewhere new.



Green Veined White – Wonston – 11.5.2017



Orange Tip - Wonston - 11.5.2017

IBM/Lakeside, Cosham 11.6.2017 - This site has been perhaps the best known for White Letter Hairstreak in Hampshire. It is also an early site so I use it as a guide to when to start looking elsewhere. I popped in on the 10.6.2017 as I was passing and found to my surprise that the Hairstreaks were already out (that's been documented earlier). I returned the following day with my camera to record the Hairstreaks and whatever else was going on. I had not seen Bee Orchids before, but in 2017 I found them at several locations including the IBM/Lakeside complex.



Despite never having seen one before, I saw Bee Orchids at several locations during 2017 - IBM/Lakeside - 11.6.2017



There was also a great selection of Dragonflies - IBM/Lakeside 11.6.2017

Knowle Village 21.5.2017 - This is one of my favourite sites though I did not visit as much in 2017 as I have in previous years. I was here on this day primarily to release a Red Admiral that had been reared through the winter. Red Admirals were on show in 3 out of 4 life stages with adults, larvae of various sizes and newly laid eggs all present. This is also my 'go to' site for Small Tortoiseshell. Larvae were evident in all stages as well as a parasitic fly paying close attention to one particular larval web.



I was not the only one interested in this Small Tortoiseshell larval web – Knowle Village – 21.5.2018



Small Tortoiseshell larvae showing the whole spectrum of development – Knowle Village – 21.5.2017



Broadmarsh 11.6.2017 – I was here looking for (surprise,surprise) White Letter Hairstreaks, but there was lots more on offer. The verge along the edge of the road was bobbing with fresh Marbled Whites.



Marble White – Broadmarsh – 11.6.2017

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 04-Mar-18 05:33 PM GMT

That is a beautifully marked Small Heath Paul and the Bee Orchid is a cracker 😊 I've renamed them Happy Gnome Orchid 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 04-Mar-18 10:09 PM GMT

Those are delightful images, Paul, particularly the Orange Tip, which I hope will return to imbue us all with delight in a mere 6 weeks or so! 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 22-May-18 10:15 PM GMT

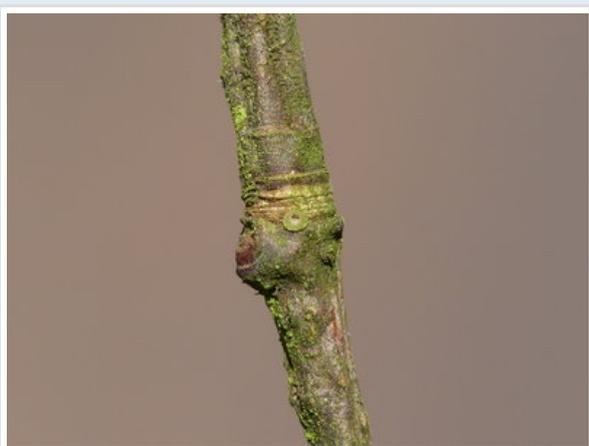
Recent doings 2018

We seem to be well into the season and yet I have not posted anything of note. That does not mean I have not been busy of course. I seem to be spending most of my spare time chasing after Elm trees and seeking out the White Letter Hairstreak, at the expense of seeing much other butterfly action.

Saturday 28.4.2018 Botley/Curdridge – This Wych Elm tree is my nearest source of food for larvae reared at home. I have never seen White Letter Hairstreak here despite there being another colony perhaps a quarter of a mile away. I was pleased to find x1 hatched egg whilst taking food recently. Hopefully a wandering female from nearby has deposited a few more eggs on this tree.



This Wych Elm near Botley is my source of food for rescued Hairstreak larvae. I was excited to find this hatched egg on it recently



Sunday 6.5.2018 & Saturday 12.5.2018 Southwick – I seem to have spent the whole of the winter at this site keeping track of Red Admiral larvae. I thought that today (6.5.2018) I might be rewarded with a pristine freshly emerged adult, but disappointingly I found no sign of anything Red Admiral at all. With the Nettles to herself I watched a solitary female Peacock curling her abdomen under nearly every suitable leaf.



6.5.2018 Without competition this Peacock could afford to be very fussy. However. I did not see her lay any eggs at all
So I turned my attention to the nearby White Letter Hairstreak colony. Here I was able to locate x8 4th instar larvae with some ease once my eye was in. The branches here hang conveniently low and all larvae were found between waist and head height. I was so encouraged with this result that I returned the following weekend and was able to locate a further x7 larvae. I was pleased that at least x1 of these larvae was suspended ready for pupation (encouragingly at the same stage as my rescued larvae at home).



12.5.2018 This larva has changed colour and ready to pupate



12.5.2018 Larvae normally seem to occupy their own twig. Here 2 larvae are living in close proximity



12.5.2018 Larva and feeding damage on Elm seed



6.5.2018 Larvae are well camouflaged amongst Elm leaves



Sunday 13.5.2018 West End, Southampton – After having reasonable success at finding larvae at Southwick I thought I would try my luck at a new location. This fine Elm specimen (one of several in the area) is not obviously Elm when seen in full leaf. In fact I only realised this was an Elm tree when I

saw it in bud earlier this year when it is unmistakably Elm. Like Southwick the lowest branches here are also low at about shoulder height. I was really chuffed to find a 4th instar White Letter Hairstreak larva on the first branch I checked and further inspection revealed another close by.



13.5.2018 The larva below is one of 2 found recently on this magnificent Elm tree at West End in Southampton



Re: jackz432r

by ernie f, 23-May-18 08:36 AM GMT

Paul - Hi. I live in north east Hampshire.

Do you know about the White-letter Hairstreak colony on Odiham Common? I saw a few there last year.

I saw a WLH in the "Triangle" at Noar Hill last year too. Do you know where the elms are there?

There are some elms around the central park in the village of Chawton but after repeated visits I have never seen any WLH's. Is there any history of them being there do you know?

The site you mention in West Meon. I know they have been recorded along the path of the disused railway line but I have never seen any there myself. Is the picture you show in one of your diary entries, that fenced/gated area beside the car park by the disused railway station?

Best Regards and keep up the great work you are doing.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 23-May-18 10:24 PM GMT

Cricky Paul you must have Eagle eyes to spot one of those excellently camouflaged cats 🦉😁 Really interesting read and useful shots of the leaf damage caused by their feeding 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 24-May-18 10:26 PM GMT

Fabulous finds there, Paul. We seem to have a lot of early stage reports on here lately and in many ways they are more interesting than those involving the adults. The camouflage is simply stunning on those cats.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-May-18 11:49 PM GMT

Hi Ernie, David & Wurzel thanks for all your comments 😊

ernie f wrote:

Paul – Hi. I live in north east Hampshire.

Do you know about the White-letter Hairstreak colony on Odiham Common? I saw a few there last year.

I saw a WLH in the "Triangle" at Noar Hill last year too. Do you know where the elms are there?

There are some elms around the central park in the village of Chawton but after repeated visits I have never seen any WLH's. Is there any history of them being there do you know?

The site you mention in West Meon. I know they have been recorded along the path of the disused railway line but I have never seen any there myself. Is the picture you show in one of your diary entries, that fenced/gated area beside the car park by the disused railway station?

Best Regards and keep up the great work you are doing.

Hi Ernie

I have noted quite a few Elms in 'your' area to check out this year, I will keep you posted if I find anything.

I found WLH at **Chawton** last year. There is a brief report in my diary last year. I recorded 9 individuals there on 18th June but none were low down. I can pm you with a grid reference/directions if required.

I found the **West Meon** colony in 2015. It is based around a single large Wych Elm on the far side of the fenced/gated area next to the carpark where the station once stood. This area is now a mini nature reserve managed by the local school/HCC and South Downs National Park. This area was a bit overgrown when I discovered the colony (I preferred it that way to be honest). The decision to make it into a nature reserve was unconnected with the WLH colony. They were quite surprised when I told them there was WLH there. I only made one visit during the flight season last year on 18th June when I counted just 3 individuals. As far as I know there are no other Elms along the part of the old railway line between Knowle and West Meon. I have yet to look at the line beyond West Meon which is not quite so accessible.

I have not visited **Odiham Common** but I had heard there was WLH there, I would be interested in the exact location of the colony. There are also a couple of promising looking trees along the A287 near Odiham which I intend to check out this year.

I have noticed a few sporadic reports of WLH at **Noar Hill** over the years, I know Pauline saw one last year. I was hoping to have a look round up there whilst the trees were covered in seed/flowers but I have missed my chance this year. That will have to wait till next year.

Re: jackz432r

by ernie f, 25-May-18 07:43 AM GMT

Paul – Thanks for your information.

I will certainly check out Chawton again. The Elms I found are around the edge of the park in the centre of the village across the road from Jane Austen's house. Is this the tree? Its the biggest – but there are other, smaller ones nearby.



I will also look for the Wych Elm in the old station car park nature reserve at West Meon.

Info for you regarding the location of the Odiham Common Site.

Go into the centre of Odiham village and take the London Road. This is now a now a by-passed road and is a dead-end. Go right to the end of this road, past the pub on the left and over the canal bridge. There is a large car park right at the end, when you can drive no further. At the end of the road are a lot of large recycling skips and next to them a tunnel which goes under the by-pass. Go through the tunnel. On the other side is Odiham Common. You will see the Nature Reserve signboard in front of you. DO NOT go onto the common in front, take instead the tarmac path to the left which leads up to the road. Cross the road and turn left. Walk about 20 to 30 paces and find the entrance to a field on your right. Walk down the slope and ranged in front of you are a line of Elms. The ones in the corner of the field seem to be the most productive and last year WLH's came down to nectar from the flowers in front of them.



Incidentally, if you had gone straight onto the common next to the nature reserve info board and walked perhaps only 50 paces you would find a Purple Hairstreak Master Oak. It gets the sun all day long so they stay there all day long and often come down fairly low.



Purple Hairstreak Master Tree

Re: jackz432r

by ernie f, 25-May-18 07:47 AM GMT

Oh yes, I nearly forgot.

I saw a WLH last year at Noar Hill just a few days from when Pauline saw hers. We worked out that the two sightings could NOT have been of the same individual. She saw one first and it showed signs of wear. The one I saw later was in pristine condition. There must have been at least two of them.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-May-18 08:49 PM GMT

Many thanks for the information Ernie 😊 . I have sent you a PM

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-May-18 11:06 PM GMT

The Changing Fortunes Of My Local Duke of Burgundy Sites:

Saturday 19.5.2018 West Wood Nr Winchester– I found both Duke of Burgundy and Pearl Bordered Fritillary at this site three years ago by complete accident. It is not the best known site for either species, in fact I have heard several people say that they have not seen either species here even though they have been visiting the site for many years. You have to know where to look of course, I think I was just lucky 😊 . In 2016 I saw just 2 Duke of Burgundy, last year I saw just 1 but this year I am pleased to say I counted 11 including at least 1 egg-laying female. Pearls were similarly doing well I counted 6. This year I was able to watch 2 female Pearl Bordered Fritillaries actively laying eggs for the first time. I was surprised at the variation of egg-laying locations. One female was seen to lay eggs directly on the foodplant close to the ground and another was seen laying eggs on Bramble 4–500mm off the ground. I bumped into Andy Barker who, amongst other things, is Hants BC species champion for the Pearl Bordered Fritillary he gave me a bit of an insight into the particular conditions that this species requires. Other species flying were Grizzled Skipper, Brimstone and Small White



Small White – West Wood – 19.5.2018

Sunday 27.5.2018 Stephens Castle Down – Following Alan Thornburys recent comments raising concern about Duke of Burgundy at this site, I thought I would check things out for myself. This has been one of my favourite sites over the last few years and one I am very familiar with. Although a relatively small colony of Dukes is present (I have never counted double figures) they seem to have been maintaining their numbers over the last few years. However, I am sad and concerned to say that I also did not find a single Duke yesterday which is rather worrying. Hopefully they are still present and will bounce back. It would be a great shame if they were lost from this site.



Male & Pair Common Blue – Stephens Castle Down – 27.5.2018



Despite the lack of Duke of Burgundy I managed to time my visit to perfection for Common Blues. I arrived under light rain and over the next hour it gradually brightened to a clear blue sky. I was treated to the most astonishing display of Common Blues I have ever seen. The biggest count of Common Blues I have ever recorded at any site. Males were extremely numerous and varying in condition, I counted 66 males but this was very conservative. It was in fact the females that stole the show all seemingly freshly emerged. I only counted 18 females all incredibly beautiful and demonstrating the full, amazing spectrum of variation.

Also on show Grizzled and Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Small Heath, Brimstone, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Large White.



Re: jackz432r

by Janet Turnbull, 28-May-18 11:54 PM GMT

A beautiful Grizzlie and a very handsome Duke, Jack!

Re: jackz432r

by Goldie M, 29-May-18 10:00 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Jack especially the Grizzled Skipper 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 29-May-18 10:26 PM GMT

Sterling work with West Wood Paul and a great set of images, those blue females are REALLY blue 🤩😄 Fingers crossed for the bounce back – though butterflies do seem to manage to g a few years undetected, as in the case of Marshies at Bentley Wood 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 30-May-18 03:14 PM GMT

Those sure are impressive female *icarus*, Paul. To be honest, the one that catches my eye is the one with the LEAST blue, i.e. the first one, which has very strange, washed-out forewing lunules.

Re: jackz432r

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:34 PM GMT

I also have a soft spot for female Common Blues, Paul, and yours are a lovely selection. I don't think any two are the same. 😊

Dave

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-18 09:33 AM GMT

Thanks Janet, Goldie, Wurzel, David & Dave for your comments 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 03-Jun-18 05:13 PM GMT

Beautiful image of the Small White Paul! Couldn't be any more crisp and sharp!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 04-Jun-18 09:53 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊

Sunday 27.5.2018 & Friday 1.6.2018 White Letter Hairstreak

My searches for White Letter Hairstreak larvae are restricted to a couple of sites where there are low branches. After having some success at finding larvae recently I thought finding pupae would be similarly straightforward (not so!). As detailed in an earlier post, over 2 weekends I was able to locate a total of 15 larvae at my primary White Letter Hairstreak site and 2 at a completely new location. These larvae were all reaching maturity and 1 had changed colour ready for pupation. I marked all of these larvae for ease of relocation.



My larval search area. The branches shown here are between waist and head height and semi-shaded by higher branches and surrounding vegetation.



27.5.2018 Typical feeding damage and the culprit. This was the only larva I could find that was still green and feeding



Brimming with confidence, I returned to my prime site **27.5.2018** expecting to find pupae. After a lengthy search I was surprised to find that of the 15 larvae found previously I was only able to locate 2. One of these was still green and actively feeding. The other was suspended for pupation but had yet to shed its larval skin. This was located right at the tip of a branch at approximately chest height. I was also able to find 1 previously unseen larva which had changed colour. So where have all those larvae gone? Predation is, I suppose the most, likely reason they were not present or maybe pupae are just much more difficult to find than I was expecting.



27.5.2018 More typical feeding damage together with the larva which had now changed colour



I returned to the location again **1.6.2018** to check on progress. The previously seen suspended larva was now completely pupated but no further larvae/pupae could be found



27.5.2018 This larva was the only one I could find which was close to pupation together with the wider context of its location, right at the tip of a branch.



1.6.2018 The same individual now fully pupated.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-18 11:27 PM GMT

Interesting shots Paul, how much foliage do they get through? I guess it won't be long until the adults will be flying 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 05-Jun-18 06:38 AM GMT

Incredibly interesting observations Paul. You will remember (well, who could forget! 😊) that I have reared them and I am currently interested in comparing behaviour in captivity with that of the wild. Despite providing plenty of foliage, with the exception of one who pupated on a branch, the

others determinedly made their way down and buried in the earth to pupate. Do you think it is possible that this may be the case with some of your missing larva? Is it possible that their chosen location to pupate varies? I'm putting up a few shots but please feel free to delete as I don't want to clutter your diary:



Any chance of scabbling about in the earth??? 😊 Given their colouration it may also provide better camouflage than a leaf?

Re: jackz432r

by ernie f, 05-Jun-18 09:15 AM GMT

Paul, great series of WLH pre-butterfly shots. It will help me in my searches this year.

Re: jackz432r

by millerd, 05-Jun-18 11:58 AM GMT

Terrific shots of the WLH on the elm – very useful in spotting the feeding damage! 😊 They seem quite low down and accessible as well, so I shall have another look local to me and see what I can find.

Dave

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 05-Jun-18 10:14 PM GMT

Thanks Ernie, Dave and Wurzel for your comments 😊

Pauline wrote:

Incredibly interesting observations Paul. You will remember (well, who could forget! 😊) that I have reared them and I am currently interested in comparing behaviour in captivity with that of the wild. Despite providing plenty of foliage, with the exception of one who pupated on a branch, the others determinedly made their way down and buried in the earth to pupate. Do you think it is possible that this may be the case with some of your missing larva? Is it possible that their chosen location to pupate varies? I'm putting up a few shots but please feel free to delete as I don't want to clutter your diary: Any chance of scrabbling about in the earth??? 😊 Given their colouration it may also provide better camouflage than a leaf?

Thanks for the suggestion Pauline, it had occurred to me. I was hoping somebody else might suggest it. I can not find any references to this species pupating in the soil, but it would be a logical explanation. I was very surprised that I could not find more given the number of larvae found. It would also make sense given the Purple Hairstreaks pupating habits.

All I need to do is find some proof 😊. Luckily this location is quite secluded so some 'scrabbling around in the earth' might be in order. I have reared just 2 larvae this year and both have pupated on the side of the container containing cut foodplant! I will provide soil next time and see what happens.



Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 06-Jun-18 07:38 AM GMT

Well done with those WLH larvae, I've been looking on every Elm this year but I've yet to get lucky. The Elm at the main colony I visit is all protected by banks of Bramble otherwise I'm sure I'd found some by now. Still, can't really complain, it's that very Bramble that brings the adults down every year 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 06-Jun-18 07:48 AM GMT

If it helps in your search Paul, none of the larva strayed very far from the base of the plant and all pupated within 2" depth. I have a feeling you will find proof as I have been convinced since rearing them that this must happen in the wild too. I believe at the time I recorded it and posted it there were suggestions that I hadn't provided enough foliage (not true) or that perhaps it was the stress of being captive bred which I wasn't convinced about. I can't remember if I asked for experiences from others who had reared them (that was certainly my intention) but if I did, I didn't get any replies. Good Luck. 😊

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 06-Jun-18 11:38 PM GMT

Great larval images, Paul, and thanks too for the photos of feeding damage, which will prove to be a useful pointer when I'm out surveying local elms myself.

Re: jackz432r

by Pete Eeles, 07-Jun-18 07:08 PM GMT

Brilliant reports, Paul! I particularly appreciate the "context" shots, such as the larval feeding damage. Superb!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Jun-18 11:04 PM GMT

Thanks Pete, David, Pauline & Bugboy for your comments 😊

Recent Doings

In The Garden - I have a potted Wych Elm kindly donated by Pauline a couple of years ago. I was not totally happy with the outcome in 2017 for White Letter Hairstreak larvae I reared sleeved on this growing food. They seemed to do better on cut food in water. So this year I did not use the potted Wych Elm, but it has not gone to waste. My local Commas seem to find it very attractive. This year I have had up to 8 larvae munching away on it. They seem to have come on at a tremendous rate. I also watched as a bird took one the other morning. As of today I appear to be down to 3 which are nearing fully grown. Not far away another larvae is munching on my Buddleia Globosa.



2.6.2018 Several Comma larvae on Wych Elm in the garden



2.6.2018 Another larvae eating my Buddleia Globosa

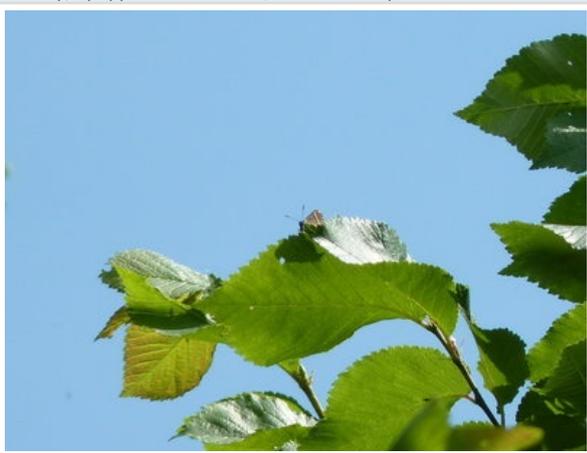
Silchester Common – I did not make it to Bramshott Common again this year. However, I happened to be working in Silchester on Friday afternoon so to avoid the rush hour, I popped in for a look around. I managed to locate just one Silver Studded Blue very late in the afternoon.



8.6.2018 – Silver Studded Blue – Silchester Common



White Letter Hairstreak – I have reared just two larvae this year. Both emerged this week the first on Wednesday 6th and the second on Friday 8th whilst I was having my breakfast! I released them back at their original site this morning. Although I could not locate any more there or at another site close by, I popped in to the IBM/Lakeside complex at Cosham and found at least four individuals very active in the sun.



9.6.2018 Distant record shot from IBM/Lakeside at Cosham today

I also took Pauline's advice and spent some time 'scrabbling around in the earth' 😊 Needle in a haystack comes to mind. Needless to say I did not find any White Letter Hairstreak Pupae buried in the ground or in leaf litter.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-18 11:09 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Paul, the circle is complete for another year 😊 Good to see you're already looking for next year's set 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 09-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

Nice stuff, Paul, and lovely reared WL Hairstreak. We have Mullion moth larvae on our Buddleia Globosa too 😊

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 12-Jun-18 10:20 PM GMT

Beautiful WLH images, Paul. The season is exploding and it's hard to know which species to concentrate on right now. Well done with your successful rearing exploits. That's two more individuals to assist with future generations!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Jul-18 12:54 PM GMT

White-Letter Hairstreak - 2018 - Part 1

It will be of no surprise to some that for the last 6 weeks or so I have devoted almost all of my butterfly time to the White-Letter Hairstreak. The flight season is the culmination of all the work I have put in during the rest of the year identifying suitable sites etc. Some might consider this quite obsessive, true but I think this hobby requires a certain degree of obsession. My self imposed task is to correct the 'under-recorded' tag which always accompanies any mention of this butterfly particularly in Hampshire. To do this my aim this year is to identify as many new Hampshire sites for this butterfly as possible and to try and keep tabs on those discoveries I have already made. I have also set myself the challenge to observe and record egg-laying behaviour in this butterfly.



Soberton. My newest Elm find, this one is probably for next year.



West End Football Fields. This was the only site I visited this year where there was nothing at all to report, but I was successful not very far away.

The fantastic weather together with being well organised has enabled me to visit 27 different sites throughout June and July. Nearly all of these sites are 'new' or revisits to last years 'new' sites. Of those 27 sites there were only 6 where I did not record any adult White-Letter Hairstreak activity, but on only 1 of those sites was there nothing at all to report. At 2 of those sites I had sightings which I was unable to confirm as White-Letter Hairstreak, 1 site I found eggs but saw no adults, bad timing of my visit within in the flight season accounted for another and Dutch Elm disease seems to have wiped out one of the sites I found last year. I still have a long and ever growing list of promising sites to visit. Next year I will either have to make some selective choices, enrol some help or give up work 😊.



and this one in the middle of the 'Merityres' roundabout in Andover

My earliest record this year (as previously posted) was on 9th June at the well known IBM/Lakeside site near Portsmouth. This is my indicator site as it is always an early one. However, I have not seen a confirmed adult since 8th July (in Winchester). I am sure there are still some about but they require a lot more effort/luck to find at this stage in the season. The extremely hot/dry weather throughout the flight period, which helps early in the season, must have shortened the flight period significantly. My count at each site is typically between 3 and 6 individuals with a few sites into double figures. However, when surveying a new site a singleton is a satisfactory result.



and this one on Hazel from Curdridge 24.6.2018

I have published a list of the majority of these sites on my BC Hants & IOW branch website news page giving a grid reference and a very brief location information. I do not think it necessary to publish the complete list here as it will only be of limited interest unless you live in Hampshire. If anybody does want specific information about a particular site then please PM me.

In the next post I will focus on a couple of the sites/areas which might be of more general interest or stand out for one reason or another.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-18 07:21 PM GMT

Sterling work Paul 😊 It was good to have your 'Hairstreak spotting eyes' at Shipton the other day 😊 I might have to tap you up for some info on any sites near to the Wiltshire border next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 29-Jul-18 07:43 PM GMT

You do realise don't you Paul that you'll not be able to stop now until you have covered every Elm in Hampshire 😊😊and then every couple of years you'll have to update that info 😊 Seriously, you're doing the work of a whole team of observers and I'm sure I'm not the only one who appreciates the info you are providing 😊

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 29-Jul-18 07:50 PM GMT

Great work Paul. It's amazing that in the 21st century there's still so much we don't know about some of our widespread species!

Re: jackz432r

by Pete Eeles, 31-Jul-18 09:11 AM GMT

Great stuff, Paul! And thanks for being so generous with the site listing on the Hants/IOW branch page ... I hope it generates some interest among the locals!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: jackz432r

by NickMorgan, 31-Jul-18 01:24 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

You do realise don't you Paul that you'll not be able to stop now until you have covered every Elm in Hampshire 😊😓and then every couple of years you'll have to update that info 😓 Seriously, you're doing the work of a whole team of observers and I'm sure I'm not the only one who appreciates the info you are providing 😊

Hear hear! The information yo9u give about White Letter Hairstreaks is really interesting and I have learned a lot. I am particularly interested since Iain Cowe has discovered them in South East Scotland, not far from our new house. I have been looking for the wrong sort of feeding damage on the leaves, so will have to start again!

I have noted for some time that the Elms only grow to a certain size and they then die off, presumably from DED. I had always imagined it was the width of the stem that was critical and that the Elm Beetles would only lay eggs on trunks of a certain width. However, I recently learned that it is the height of the tree that is critical, presumably because the Elm Beetles fly above a particular height. I may start trying to cut the taller branches on my Elm trees to ensure they survive a bit longer.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 04-Aug-18 11:32 PM GMT

Thanks all for your comments 😊

NickMorgan wrote:

Hear hear! The information yo9u give about White Letter Hairstreaks is really interesting and I have learned a lot. I am particularly interested since Iain Cowe has discovered them in South East Scotland, not far from our new house. I have been looking for the wrong sort of feeding damage on the leaves, so will have to start again!

It is fantastic news that the White-Letter Hairstreak has now appeared in Scotland, even better that you have them close to home. Lets hope that this delightful but elusive little butterfly continues to spread Northwards.

Nick do not be put off if your feeding damage does not look like the images I have posted because it does seem to vary. I have not yet looked into this very deeply but it would appear to differ according to a variety of factors ie type of Elm, whether the leaves are in sun or shade and also the relative stage of the leaves/larvae. When I posted those photos of feeding damage I was aware that they were considerably different to those posted by Jamie Burston who has also put a lot of time and effort into this species in Sussex.



27.5.2018 Recently posted image of larval feeding damage



6.5.2018 This image was taken in the same location 3 weeks earlier. It demonstrates that the leaves here were much more mature than those seen in the next image taken 11.5.2017

The pictures of feeding damage I posted recently are on Wych Elm. The particular branch shown is shaded for most of the day only getting sun for a very short period mid morning. Even on 6.5.2018 the leaves here were fully formed and already quite large and leathery when the larvae were present. By the 27.5.2018 most of the larvae had already dispersed for pupation.



11.5.2017 This image taken last year shows feeding damage on a much younger leaf and leaving a distinctive 'diamond' of untouched leaf at the tip. The last image was taken 11.5.2017. It again shows Wych Elm but the leaf is much younger and not fully unfurled. It was also located in a much sunnier position and is from an entirely different site though the larva was at a similar stage. It shows another quite distinctive type of feeding damage where a 'diamond' of untouched leaf is left at the tip. The flight period started at almost the same time in 2017 as it did in 2018 so there would seem to be several factors at work here. This is perhaps something that might make an interesting study next year.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-Aug-18 10:51 PM GMT

White-Letter Hairstreak - 2018 - Part 2

15.6.2018 A32 Warnford Park to Chawton Park - Nearly all of my Elm/White-Letter Hairstreak finds are roadside sites. The A32 has been a very productive route for finding suitable sites, both single trees and long stretches of Elm. This busy A road follows the Meon Valley from Gosport to Alton via Fareham and several well known picturesque Hampshire villages. I have yet to complete a study of the entire length, but the 20 mile stretch between Warnford and Chawton has so far been particularly productive. I have found White-Letter Hairstreak at Warnford Park (SU61962218), West Meon (SU64202369), Privett (SU66952827), East Tisted (SU70403337) and Chawton Park (SU705363-4) and there is plenty of scope for further discoveries in that section and elsewhere along the remaining length of this road.



Two images a year apart of the same isolated Wych Elm on the A32 at Privett. The first taken 18.6.2017 showing an apparently healthy tree...



....and this taken 15.6.2018 showing the same tree transformed into a very sad state. The loss of its associated White-Letter Hairstreak colony is sadly inevitable!

However, this area also provided bad news in 2018. The site at Privett near the junction of Fawley Lane and A32 (SU66952827) which I discovered last year appears to have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease. It is a single isolated roadside Wych Elm. Last year I recorded in my notebook that the tree appeared to have lost nearly all its leaves by 17th October, which was unusually early. This year my 29th April entry reads 'Hardly any flower/seed no leaf. Just 1 or 2 branches showing seed'. On 15th June 2018 it looked no different with just a couple of branches having very small leaves otherwise the tree appearing completely dead. Most importantly no White-Letter Hairstreak were evident. Sadly this was not the only place where Dutch Elm Disease was evident, hopefully the consequences in other locations will not be as dire.



...and from the convenient viewpoint in the University Sports Ground car park.

22.6.2018 Wide Lane, Southampton (SU44991734) - This was perhaps the most surprising site I discovered this year. Although it has been on my list for a while, it was not one I had planned to visit this year. As I drove from one planned stop to another I realised I would be driving right past. Somehow it looked more promising today so I decided to pop in for a 'quick' look. This small clump of Elms is on the roadside of Wide Lane near Lakeside Country Park and opposite Southampton Parkway Railway Station. It is also directly alongside 'Southampton University Wide Lane Sports Ground' overflow carpark which provides a conveniently secluded observation point away from the main road. As this was just a 'quick' look I stupidly decided to leave my kit in the car including my close up lens and just taking my camera and binoculars 😊.



22.6.2018 Not very good shots, but this was my first view of an egg-laying female White-Letter Hairstreak during 2018. I would be better equipped next time....



I arrived around 11.30 am and instantly I could see a lot of butterfly activity around this small group of Elms, quickly confirmed as White-Letter Hairstreak. In fact this site was to provide me with one of my highest counts this year with a total of 11 recorded. This site was also to give me my first glimpse of a female egg laying behaviour. At about 11.40 a female fluttered down in front of me to a shaded branch (that would later be in full sun) at about head height. Whilst she meandered in and out of the leaves constantly twisting and turning she was very difficult to keep in view. She was doing a lot of 'ovipositing', but I believe she laid just egg having spent several minutes finding the right spot. Having left my close up lens in the car with the rest of my kit I was frustratingly ill-prepared to capture this moment, I hoped I would get another chance. I will certainly return to this site as it is easily accessible, close to home and there is also an expanse of Thistles and Brambles close by though I did not see any nectaring at this visit.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-18 08:01 AM GMT

More really great work Paul 😊 Is there a particular size/age of tree that makes it suitable for colonisation? I ask because the Master tree in Bentley this year was not looking good but there are a few smaller suckers close by?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 07-Aug-18 09:53 PM GMT

Fabulous observations again, Paul. This species seems to turn up wherever there are elms and it's important that we all keep it on our radar during the flight period.

Better still would be to get a few larval images, although that's probably beyond the remit of most (including myself).

Re: jackz432r

by ernie f, 08-Aug-18 07:28 AM GMT

I had no idea a Wych Elm could be so devastated in such a short time, Paul. Thanks for the before and after pictures. It saddened me more than I can explain.

Re: jackz432r

by NickMorgan, 08-Aug-18 01:22 PM GMT

More brilliant information. Thank you Paul.

I have lost two elms this year to DED, sadly both in lovely sunny locations. I am wondering if I should start to coppice the remaining elms to try to ensure their survival. Of course the risk is that if there are any larvae they would be killed in the process!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-Aug-18 10:57 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 – The accepted view is that an Elm will not get colonised until it starts to flower (15yrs) assuming that there are already White-Letter Hairstreak close enough. However, this year I have had several instances when visiting new sites where the main Large tree has not been the centre of Hairstreak activity. Smaller, probably nonflowering trees have been the focus at least for the males. I think that the butterflies may use a non-flowering tree in desperation when the host tree becomes diseased and there are no other suitable trees close by. I have also come to realise this year that when I find Elms that are not quite 'ready' within a couple of years they may become ideal (as I suspect is the case with the Wide Lane site).

Thanks David 😊 – This year I have found larvae in numbers without too much trouble. Although well camouflaged I have found the mature larvae (in May) easier to locate than eggs. My advice is don't give up.

Thanks Ernie & Nick 😊😊 – Yes it is very sad when this happens. I am sure living where you are Ernie that you have driven past this tree many times. I am not sure of the best course of action where DED is concerned, perhaps this is something I should make myself expert in. I think that the recognised strategy in areas where it is managed well (Brighton & Hove for instance) is to remove the tree as soon as DED is apparent and burn it on site. Whilst this is ok where White-Letter Hairstreak is not an uncommon butterfly, I think that in most situations the priority is to plant disease resistant Elms as soon as possible to get them established so the butterflies have somewhere to go. I know the Sussex branch are active on this front. Just read Jamie Burstons informative pieces on the branch website and on his Personal Diary. I also know that Andrew Brookes from Hants & IOW branch is very active in this area.

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 12-Aug-18 07:26 PM GMT

Paul Harfield wrote:

Thanks David 😊 – This year I have found larvae in numbers without too much trouble. Although well camouflaged I have found the mature larvae (in May) easier to locate than eggs. My advice is don't give up.

My problem, Paul, is that I don't really have any local populations to study. Last year I found one about 15 miles away but I'm always out of the country for the latter third of May when the larvae will be reaching full maturity.

WLH really isn't a common species round the Swansea area, more's the pity. 😞

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 13-Oct-18 05:36 PM GMT

I have been rather caught up in life for the last few weeks, I am sure we have all been there. Although I have managed to get out and see butterflies, the one thing that has had to give was keeping my diary going. Hence why it appears I had curtailed my account of WLH doings mid flow. I shall shortly continue where I left off with hopefully some of the more interesting posts.

I now have a bit of a backlog of things to post about. So just to ease myself back in gently here is some of my more recent doings:

Sunday 30.9.2018 & 7.10.2018 Barton Meadows Nature Reserve. Nr Winchester

This site is on the outskirts of Winchester close to the controversial Barton Farm Housing development. It is a new site for me this year discovered whilst out searching for (and finding) White Letter Hairstreak. Back in July, as well as the Hairstreaks, I found several Clouded Yellows flying here. So for the last 2 sundays I have returned to see if I could find any offspring of those Clouded Yellows.



Part of the Barton Meadows Nature Reserve



30.9.2018 Painted Lady. Shortly before both my batteries gave out

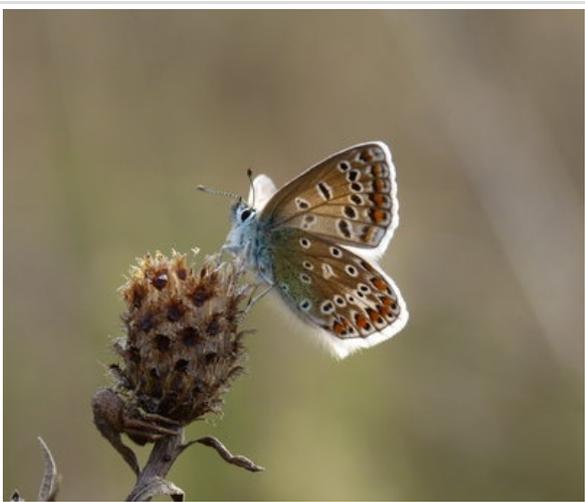


30.9.2018 Common Blue. I managed this on my phone, but it does not really convey the freshness of this individual.

On my first visit (30.9.2018) I arrived just as the sun disappeared. Don't you just hate it when that happens 😞. It was still a worthwhile visit though. No Clouded Yellows, but a single Painted Lady and several freshly emerged 3rd brood male Common Blues. Unfortunately, after getting a couple of shots of the Painted Lady both my camera batteries were flat 😞.



7.10.2018 This was the only Clouded Yellow shot I got



I did not notice when I posted this there is something lurking close by!



Last Sunday (7.10.2018) my timing was better, as were the weather conditions. At least 3 Clouded Yellows were seen which all seemed to be males.

True to form they were in view on many occasions but with very limited opportunity for photos (or maybe I am too slow 😊). I managed just one shot which luckily was in focus. Also seen were 2 very fresh looking Peacocks, 2 Red Admirals, 2 Small Whites, several 3rd brood Common Blues and a single Brown Argus.



7.10.2018 One of 2 very fresh looking Peacocks seen

I also popped in again earlier this afternoon, but conditions were not good for butterfly photography. It was very blustery but with some sun. The Clouded Yellows were still present as well as more fresh Peacocks and Common Blues.

Re: jackz432r

by trevor, 13-Oct-18 08:45 PM GMT

Some beautiful fresh specimens there, Paul. Particularly the female Common Blues. It is also good to see fresh Peacocks, Red Admirals etc. around at the moment after an almost absence of that family during the Summer. Looking forward to your WLH. report.

Great images,
Trevor.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 14-Oct-18 06:28 PM GMT

That is a brilliantly fresh Brown Argus Paul, a 3rd brooder? 🤔🌍 I know what you mean about Common Blue females – they've shown a brilliant range in variation this year, the last one you feature is a beaut 😊🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 17-Oct-18 07:04 AM GMT

Those are remarkably fresh specimens for the time of year, Paul. I assumed at first you were catching up with posts from August and was stunned to find you had seen these on 7th October!!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 20-Oct-18 12:31 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor, Wurzel & David 😊.
I will now continue from where I left off in August..

White-Letter Hairstreak – 2018 – Part 3

24.6.2018 Curdridge B3035 Botley Road (SU53931562) – This site is the one that perhaps gave me most satisfaction this year. This was one of the first Elms to go on my list when I started looking several years ago. Even then I was convinced it looked ideal for White-Letter Hairstreak. However, it is an extremely awkward location to get to. The nearest place to park is half a mile away, but the the road is fast, winding and narrow with no verge to speak of and the walk along it is not for the feint hearted. I had previously walked from Bishops Waltham along a footpath, but that was in winter, was difficult to follow, involved crossing a river and took me an hour. This year I decided to grit my teeth, put on my Hi-Vis, take my life into my own hands and walk along the road. It was not quite as bad as I was expecting. It was well worth the effort and there is conveniently room to stand and observe off the road.



24.6.2018 This Elm that overhangs the road at Curdridge, has taken me while to get to. The picture below shows the smaller trees just out of frame on the far right of the first photo. That is where most of the Hairstreak activity seemed to be focused.



Once at the location I realised I was perhaps there a bit too early in the day, but eventually butterfly activity started to get going and my hunch had paid off. I spent 40 minutes here (11.10 –11.50) and recorded a total of 7 individuals including 1 egg-laying female. As with several other sites this year, the primary large tree that had initially got my attention was curiously not the focus of the Hairstreak activity. There seemed to be more action going on around smaller trees which, at this site, I had not been aware of.



24.6.2018 Curdridge – Another brief glimpse of a female White-Letter Hairstreak at work



22.6.2018 Stoneham Lane/Monks Brook playing fields (SU440167) – I have visited this site several times over the last few years and not seen White-Letter Hairstreak. To me it looked perfect for them which is why I have persisted in trying to find them here. Stoneham Lane is a winding, narrow road on the outskirts of Southampton close to Junction 6 of the M27. It is flanked with many small to medium sized Elms, but much of it is either shaded or inaccessible. However, at this particular location the sunny side of the trees is conveniently adjacent to some long since disused playing fields. This site took some effort, 2 visits in fact. The first on the 11.6.2018 was unproductive. I then returned on the 22.6.2018 (12.00 – 1.00) in fact I almost gave up on this occasion as well, but eventually a few brief flutterings were enough to confirm White Letter Hairstreak.



This is the depressing sight that greeted me when I drove past the same site a few days ago.

I have highlighted this site not because of what I saw in June, but because of what I spotted a couple of days ago as I drove past. My heart sank when I saw the unmistakable signs of 'development'. The site has sadly been completely cleared. It would appear that the Elms have been left, at least for the moment so hopefully the White-Letter Hairstreak will survive here. It does not look like I will be able to effectively monitor this site in the future. The most saddening aspect is all the other species that thrived here that will now be lost. There were good colonies of Small, Essex and Large Skipper, Marbled White, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper etc etc. I suppose this could loosely be described as a 'brownfield site' being previously used as playing fields which have been left to grow wild for some years though there has never been any buildings here as far as I know. Because I tend to prefer to find new locations which are often little oases of wildness rather than nature reserves, I run into this scenario all too often and I find it quite heartbreaking and frustrating.

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 20-Oct-18 09:09 AM GMT

Good report, Paul, and those sites **do** look appetising. Such a shame about the last one though. More concrete, less green space...how much longer can it be sustained?

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 28-Oct-18 12:30 AM GMT

White-Letter Hairstreak – 2018 – Part 4

Egglaying 23.6.2018

So having been totally unprepared for my first glimpse of egglaying at Wide Lane on 22.6.2018, I set off the following day specifically to record that one event. Having found so many larvae there earlier in the year, my main study site near Southwick was the obvious destination. Between 11.30 and 1.30 I was treated to a dazzling display. With my head nestled amongst the leaves I was able to watch at quite close quarters as each female fluttered down and started her routine. It was quite difficult to keep each butterfly in view as she went about her business and it was even more difficult to keep a camera focussed, but eventually I was able to capture the moment.



23.6.2018 *Oviposturing or ovipositing?*



23.6.2018

Each female would spend several minutes following what appeared to be a completely random, meandering route amongst the leaves, sometimes doubling back on herself, revisiting a spot several times and occasionally pausing for rest on a leaf. As with other species there seemed to be more oviposturing going on than ovipositing, but it was impossible to examine every spot without causing disturbance. In fact I witnessed several different females visiting this same group of branches on several different days. At one point I had 2 females down together just a few inches apart.



23.6.2018 Female White-Letter Hairstreak egglaying



23.6.2018 The resulting White-Letter Hairstreak ovum a few minutes old.



7.7.2018 and then there were 2



24.7.2018

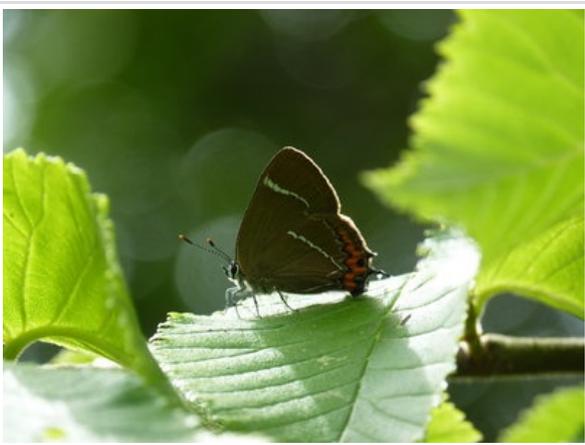
This particular location is interesting as the branches never really get full sun. It is fairly shaded by the upper branches of this and surrounding trees. Even on a day that was extremely hot in the midday sun my viewpoint as an observer was pleasantly shaded. At one point whilst I was observing the Hairstreaks another butterfly fluttered in, settled and stayed there out of the sun under a leaf for as long as I was there. Maybe these very things are an indication why this particular spot is attractive to the female WLH for egg-laying.



7.7.2018 2 weeks on egg-laying females were much more ragged but still busy on the same branch.



23.6.2018 After egg-laying this female was noted to do a 'wing-roll' immediately before flying off



23.6.2018 Female White-Letter Hairstreak at rest

On successive visits I did quite a thorough search for eggs. This is of course much more difficult when the tree is in full leaf. I was surprised to find that the egg I had captured being laid on 23.6.2018 had now been joined by a second egg stacked adjacent. I was also able to locate a stack of 3 eggs close by as well as many singles. I have no idea whether these were laid by the same female or 3 different ones. Most of the eggs I found were on terminal buds which on Wych Elm are almost always concealed by the overlapping leaf edge. I did find one egg that was in neither of the normal locations but half way up a twig. All of the eggs I have found have been marked and were all still present the last time I checked on 19.9.2018. Time will tell if they all survive to next spring.



24.7.2018 3 White-Letter Hairstreak eggs stacked together



4.8.2018 White-Letter Hairstreak ovum in an atypical location



4.8.2018 Typical 'leaf-scar' location but this ovum is completely empty/infertile.

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 28-Oct-18 07:01 PM GMT

Some excellent observations there Paul 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-18 05:15 PM GMT

Fantastic observations Paul 😊 I wonder if the wing roll was the equivalent of a quick spruce up once the hard work was done? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 02-Nov-18 11:20 AM GMT

Thanks Bugboy and Wurzel for your comments 😊

So before my final White-Letter Hairstreak post here are a few bits and bobs from the last couple of weeks...

Sunday 21.10.2018 Nr Seafield Park, Hill Head

My brother and I walked from Gilkicker to Meon Shore on this beautiful October day. It really was a gorgeous with a temperature at midday of perhaps 20+ degrees. There were people with picnics on the beach, even swimming in the sea and the promenade was busy. I have always been completely mystified by the attraction of beach huts, but on a day like this the appeal was obvious.



Seafield Park itself was completely devoid of butterflies...



...but the scrubby area between Seafield Park and the beach was much more productive

We started a bit early for butterflies but by the time we neared the end of our walk I was starting to see the odd Red Admiral. as we walked along the promenade toward the end of our walk we were greeted by our parents who had come down to meet us and get some fresh air. Behind the promenade I spotted an interesting area of scrub with profuse Hawkweed growing, it looked ripe for investigation. We walked mum and dad back to the car and they took my brother back leaving me to my own devices. So before going home I popped back to the area I had seen earlier. It was not long before the half expected sight of at least 2 Clouded Yellows brought a smile to my face. There were also several small whites and at least one Small Copper present. Then a quick look across the road in Seafield Park nature area resulted in no butterflies at all. I always find it slightly amusing when the butterflies choose to avoid the nature reserve and occupy scrubby area next door. Butterflies having the last laugh maybe 😊



21.10.2018 One of at least 2 Clouded Yellows seen



21.10.2018 Red Admiral near the beach



21.10.2018 This Small Copper was the only one I saw
Saturday 27.10.2108 In The Garden

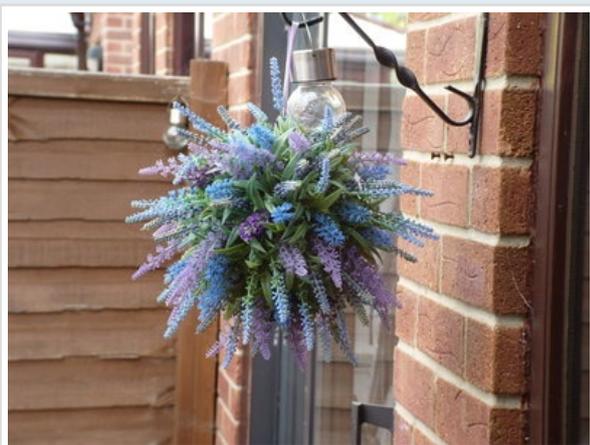
The last couple of days had seen a complete change in the weather. In fact it was 13–14 degrees cooler than it was the previous Sunday. However, at midday I was aware of a fluttering outside the window. To my great surprise there was a Red Admiral there. I watched as it nervously investigated various parts of the garden paying particular attention to my washing line full of dark washing and an artificial hanging basket in the coolest part of the garden. It did not take nectar or settle anywhere for long (just long enough to be photographed) and seemed very jittery and on edge seemingly not being able to decide what it wanted. Soon the temperature dropped and it was off fluttering around my wifes artificial hanging basket again, on which it eventually settled. It is still there as I write this! It is right outside my kitchen back door and lounge window so I can see it without going outside. I seem to recall reporting before of Red Admirals finding precarious spots to roost in my garden, I wonder how long this one will stay here.



27.10.2018 Red Admiral in the garden briefly settled



Red Admiral evolving to use plastic flowers as a roosting place! It is still there now but tucked right in



Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 02-Nov-18 06:34 PM GMT

Very interesting observations of White-letter Hairstreaks and their habitat, Paul 😊 you've obviously put in a lot of time and effort on this! Some nice late season finds too 😊 It's always sad when another site disappears under a housing estate – as per your previous post.

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-18 09:10 AM GMT

"I always find it slightly amusing when the butterflies choose to avoid the nature reserve and occupy scrubby area next door. Butterflies having the last laugh maybe 😊 "It's all a secret ploy by the butterflies to get us humans to expand the nature reserves – and a bloody good idea 😊😊 Great shots 😊 and the Red Admiral is showing a positive use of plastic 😊"

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 04-Nov-18 08:51 PM GMT

Interesting last couple of posts, Paul.

The WLH sequence is extremely informative. This is not a butterfly one normally sees indulging in such intimate behaviour.

Your more recent update is uplifting too, especially that Red Admiral who decided to make a roost in the artificial flowers. 😊 It reminded me of the Southern Comma I saw in France that kept alighting on artificial blooms in the doorway of one of the local residents!!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 07-Nov-18 11:22 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, Wurzel & David for your comments 😊 . That Red Admiral is still in there

Saturday 3.11.2018 Knowle Village

The tracks and field margins around Knowle Village have been one of my favourite butterfly spots over the last few years. Saturday midday was sunny with quite an increasingly stiff gusty breeze blowing, but I was still hopeful. The wind kept any butterfly activity to a minimum, but a couple of Red Admirals, a single Speckled Wood and a surprise Peacock made it all worthwhile. They were all either hunkered down out of the wind or battling against it in flight.



3.11.2018 This Peacock was an unexpected surprise



3.11.2018 Red Admiral doing its best to avoid the wind and my lens

Sunday 4.11.2018 Fareham

When I spoke to my Father a few days ago he was quite excited to tell me what he had found whilst cleaning out his log store. What he initially thought was fungus growing from a piece of plywood on closer inspection turned out to be three identical butterflies in a group. Unfortunately 2 had already gone before I had a chance to investigate. Whilst visiting on Sunday I thought I should check things out and sure enough one remaining Peacock was still in situ. A cursory inspection of another storage area close by revealed 2 more hibernating Peacocks. I am sure a more detailed inspection might have turned up more, but they have now been left not to be disturbed any further. Hopefully they will all survive till the spring.



4.11.2018 One hibernating Peacock from the group of three discovered in my fathers log store



4.11.2018 1 of 2 further hibernating Peacocks found in another storage area

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-18 12:17 AM GMT

That's great news Paul 🤞 fingers crossed they settle down and make it through to next season 😊 I'll have to take more care when I top my logs up next time just in case 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 09-Nov-18 08:07 PM GMT

Good to see a Peacock still active in the November sunshine, Paul. Perhaps even better to know that a few are safely hunkered down for the winter.

Personally, I'm concerned at how few vanessids will be on the wing next spring given their scant numbers during this late summer/autumn.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 21-Nov-18 11:49 AM GMT

Thanks David & Wurzel 😊

Wednesday 21.11.18 In The Garden

On the 27.10.2018 I reported that a Red Admiral had found an unlikely roosting spot in my garden, amongst plastic foliage. I have been keeping tabs on it and surprisingly it is still there 😊. At one point I thought it had gone, but then realised the following day that it had just adjusted its position and was tucked further in. I have no idea if it has been away and come back to the same spot of course. Even on those few sunny days recently this basket is in a very cold spot out of the sun.

When I checked yesterday I was amazed to find it had been joined by a second Red Admiral 🙄 😊



Re: jackz432r

by Old Wolf, 21-Nov-18 12:02 PM GMT

Hello Jackz432r,
Nice find on the hibernating Peacocks. I hope they make it through to Spring.

I love the Admirals in the plastic planter. You are getting quite a collection in there 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 21-Nov-18 08:45 PM GMT

Great find there Paul – the white legs, face and markings on the trailing edge of the wings really help to break up the outline, for a while I couldn't quite work out what I was seeing 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 23-Nov-18 11:44 PM GMT

An interesting post on the Red Admirals, Paul 😊 Were they still there after the heavy frost we had a couple of days ago?

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 24-Nov-18 06:28 PM GMT

An interesting find is that, Paul. I wonder whether they'll stick around for a while? I also wonder whether they are fooled into thinking the artificial blooms are real? I've noticed at this time of year that Red Admirals will make a beeline for any apparent nectar source, and those are usually late flowering garden plants or non-indigenous species, such as hebe, which is where I find them in Swansea between November and March, as we have quite a bit growing (and flowering) on the coast during this period.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 27-Nov-18 10:57 PM GMT

Thanks Old Wolf, Wurzel, Maximus & David for your comments 😊
Mike – As I write this both Red Admirals are still present!

All further updates on them will be here

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=8&p=139095#p139095>

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 02-Dec-18 08:58 PM GMT

So one last White-Letter Hairstreak post including a few random images before I look back at everything else I saw during 2018.

White-Letter Hairstreak – 2018 – Conclusions and Plans for Next Year

This year has been even more successful than last year in finding new sites. 100% good weather for the whole flight season, careful planning, some well chosen days off and an understanding family have all contributed to that. There was one weekend during the flight season that I did not spend looking for the White-Letter Hairstreak, so there is scope for fitting a bit more in 😊. However, my intention to continue to locate new sites as well as monitoring those already found will very quickly (has already?) reach saturation point. It could easily have been very unsuccessful if the weather had been poor. I am sure that will come at some point, but 'make hay while the sun shines' as they say.



I am now even more convinced than ever that this butterfly is very much more widespread than is generally reported. I have found White-Letter Hairstreak at 3 locations this year by making completely unplanned stops at places that just looked promising on the spur of the moment. I also now have 7 or 8 locations within 3 miles of where I live where I can reliably see White-Letter Hairstreak. I don't believe I live anywhere out of the ordinary so I have to believe that the story would be much the same wherever I lived (within its distribution).



A rare find particularly in Hampshire. I believe this to be English Elm. A mature tree next to the A32 at East Tisted. There are White-Letter Hairstreak not far away but I was not able to spot any on this tree as yet

I have been informed that eastern Hampshire and The New Forest are areas where the White-Letter Hairstreak has its weakest counts. Those are areas I shall focus on next year. I already have some locations in mind. This year I have also found Elms in locations which are already well known butterfly spots, but where White-Letter Hairstreak never features in any species list. I am always up for a challenge, so it will be interesting to see if I can find the butterfly in these locations.



The site I reported in my previous post which was under development is apparently to be a football hub for the local area. My enquiry with the local council as to the future of the Elms there was met with an encouraging response:

Dear Mr Harfield,

Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

I have passed this query over to one of our colleagues at Natural England and to one of our Enforcement Officers to investigate. The elm trees - and a number of others - in this area appear to be subject to a large Area TPO (Tree Preservation Order) and the butterfly species are registered as "Conservation Priority: High," as well. While the Area TPO will have been considered in details in the initial application for North Stoneham Park, we are grateful that you have brought the presence of this rare butterfly colony to our attention.

The Public Register links for the planning application is [O/15/76023](#), which you can use to search at this link for all public documents pertaining to the Major Planning Application known as North Stoneham Park. You are free to view these in the intervening time it takes for us to investigate.

Kind regards,

Eastleigh Parklife Football Hub gets go ahead



Local footballers of all ages and abilities are set to benefit from the construction of a new £8 million state-of-the-art football hub that is underway at Monks plus players and coaches into our new home where all of our teams will train.

The line of trees slightly right of centre in this image along Old Stoneham Lane is the area where the Elms are located. Hopefully they will be unaffected by this development

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 03-Dec-18 11:00 PM GMT

The feedback does look encouraging Paul especially as they already have the trees covered by a TPO, fingers crossed that it all pans out 😊 It was good meeting again at the Social perhaps we'll catch up in the field again – Shipton maybe? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 04-Dec-18 05:45 PM GMT

Excellent report, Paul. Well done for eliciting the (ostensibly) positive response from the authorities and I sincerely hope there IS a TPO on those elms.

I'd like to think you are right too regarding how much commoner WLH is than we think. It's possibly the most inconspicuous species in Britain but even here in the Swansea area, I have found quite a few in the only location I know which harbours multiple elms.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Dec-18 10:58 PM GMT

Thanks David & Wurzel for the coments 😊

There is a bit of a backlog of stuff I did not have time to post about during the year. So here goes in no particular order:

Silver-Washed Fritillary

I had reasonably good year with this species and saw it 5 different locations. I saw my first on the 24th June at Curdridge. I saw my first mating pairs and also my first Valezina during an evening visit to West Wood in July (sadly no photo of that).



8.7.2018 – One of several mating pairs – West Wood

I also saw several at West Meon. This was notable as it is the first time I have seen this species at this location. As well as a couple of males, I watched an egg-laying female. Thankfully this is a secluded location, I spent some time on all fours trying to locate the eggs she had laid 😊. The position where these eggs were laid seemed less shady than I have seen previously and I was able to capture the moment.



28.7.2018 - Female Silver Washed Fritillary at rest between egg laying - West Meon



The same female in action, the resulting egg and the context of the location.



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Dec-18 06:18 PM GMT

Great news that you got to see a Valesina Paul 😊 - they're cracking looking butterflies - when I've seen them they are often more in the shade just wondering if yours was as well? You did better than me with the egg-laying female as well 🍷 she's got her abdomen right round 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 10-Dec-18 08:11 PM GMT

Hi Paul,

Have you any idea that mature English Elm has survived at East Tisted? Do you think it's due to it's isolation, or it's resistance to DED?

Mike

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 10-Dec-18 10:58 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel – My first Valesina was seen early evening gone 7pm. Most of the wood was in shade at that time but the Valesina was on Bramble in a pool of sunlight with several other Silver-Washed Fritillary 😊

Hi Mike – I have just noticed I had described that Elm as an Oak! At least you knew what I meant 😊 I have edited it accordingly. There is plenty of other Elm close by so I guess it is just a resistant individual (they do exist) 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Maximus, 10-Dec-18 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks, Paul, I knew what you meant, my question was not well worded either 😊

Mike.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-Dec-18 05:36 PM GMT

Holly Blue

I don't profess to be able to compete with Dave Miller (can anybody 🤔 🇮🇪), but nevertheless I had a reasonably good year with this species. At least at the sites I visit regularly, I do not really notice the supposed cycles this species goes through due to parasitism, every year seems like a good one. Though looking back I did not manage any open wing shots this year.



25.8.2018 – One of several Holly Blue seen whilst looking at a possible new site for Brown Hairstreak – Dean Lane, Nr Bishops Waltham

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-18 05:52 PM GMT

I agree with you about Shipton Bellinger and Holly Blues – there are always loads there every year. I've found quite a few Brostreaks by watching the Holly Blues and then they spook or irritate a Brostreak 😊 Can you imagine what would happen if Dave Miller with his HB Whispering ways was to visit this site 🤔 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 19-Dec-18 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊

So for probably my last post before Christmas. Something bright and cheerful.....

Orange Tip

I reared Orange tip for the first time during the 2017–2018 season. I retrieved 2 eggs back in April 2017, one laid on BitterCress and the other on Cuckoo Flower. I had intended for each larva to go all the way through on its respective foodplant just to compare development. Needless to say I lost one larva quite early on during a skin change. The remaining larva was on Bittercress, but I struggled to find enough of that particular plant. So it completed its development on Garlic Mustard. I was delighted with at least one positive outcome in April 2018 😊 .



3.6.2017 – Reared Orange Tip pupa newly formed...



2.4.2018



12.4.2018 – and a day before emergence



13.4.2018 - Male Orange Tip newly emerged and ...



14.4.2018 - just after release

Out and about they were as plentiful as ever and always a joy to see. Southwick being one of my best sites for this species.



6.5.2018 - Orange Tip Heaven - Southwick, Hampshire



🎄 MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL ON UKB 🎄

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 19-Dec-18 11:49 PM GMT

Definitely some much needed colour in this post Paul – but also with a slightly Christmas-y feel – whites and greens with the odd Tangerine at the end of the stocking 😊 I hope you and your family have a cracking Christmas 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 22-Dec-18 12:54 PM GMT

Beautiful images, Paul, and yes...that habitat looks heavenly (for we humans as well as Orange Tips!) Roll on next April when they emerge once more!

All the best for the New Year!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 24-Dec-18 09:23 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel & David 😊. Christmas Wishes to you both

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Dec-18 06:14 PM GMT

Brown Hairstreak

From 2nd July to 5th August this year I had camera problems. Well to be more precise, I was suffering from camera operator incompetence 😞 I had inadvertently changed the resolution setting on my camera which I did not realise until I came to download after quite a few site visits. Nowhere was the disappointment felt more than after my visit to Shipton Bellinger on the 26th July for Brown Hairstreak which was otherwise a very memorable visit.



Although I did not come away with any open wing shots, it was perhaps my best ever day at this site for Brown Hairstreak numbers low down. Plenty to go round and all individuals being very accommodating both males and females. Though this was a very hot day and that was having an affect on butterfly behaviour particularly the females which were staying in the shade. There were also plenty of familiar faces there on this particular day. I spent nearly all day on site and experienced Hairstreak activity in a variety of locations from early morning till late afternoon.



26.7.2018 – The final male of the day. This one looking particularly battered

It has been a pretty encouraging year generally for Brown Hairstreak in Hampshire. It is normally only seen in 2 distinct locations, but this year it has been spotted in several new locations. In fact I am convinced I saw it close to home near Bishops Waltham, but subsequent return visits to that location have so far not provided me with confirmation.



Hopefully this is a possible new location for Brown Hairstreak nr Bishops Waltham

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 29-Dec-18 07:29 PM GMT

"camera operator incompetence", something you're not alone in suffering, the main symptom for me is inadvertently knocking the AF point selection, leading to much cursing as the camera innocently focuses on leaves and twigs next to the subject until I realise my mistake, invariably when said subject has gone on its way 😊

Good to see you had a good Brown Hairstreak season though, it seems like my nearest BH site at Bookham was almost unique this year in being nearly impossible to pin the little blighters down!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-18 06:11 PM GMT

That was a great day at Shipton – it rarely fails to deliver at least some Hairstreak action 😊 Your site from Bishops Waltham looks very similar to the hedge at Shipton on the journey up from the Recycling Centre/Car Park so definitely worth a punt next season 😊 Speaking of which – have a Happy New Year! 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel