

Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation Annual Black Hairstreak Report 2015.

After 17 hours of searching over two weeks the first was seen on the 15th of June, a week later than in 2014. During the several visits prior to the first emergence we were successful in finding three pupae, one on the 1st of June and two on the 4th, the last one found was unusual in that it had chosen to pupate on a Hawthorn twig, Blackthorn was only about 18 inches away (see picture below).

No eggs were found during Brown Hairstreak egg searches the previous Winter. The pupae found were very conspicuous and regular observations found that the adult had emerged **from one** by 22nd. I was rather surprised that the pupal case was still to be seen on the 6th of July, the other two disappeared, so one cannot confirm if they eventually emerged as adult or not.

The overall average of Black Hairstreak sightings seen per hour for our 18 years of serious recording is 3.47. During the cool wet flight period of 2012 numbers dropped to just below one seen per hour, this was followed by two years of good weather probably the catalyst that brought numbers seen per hour up to 5.3 in 2015.

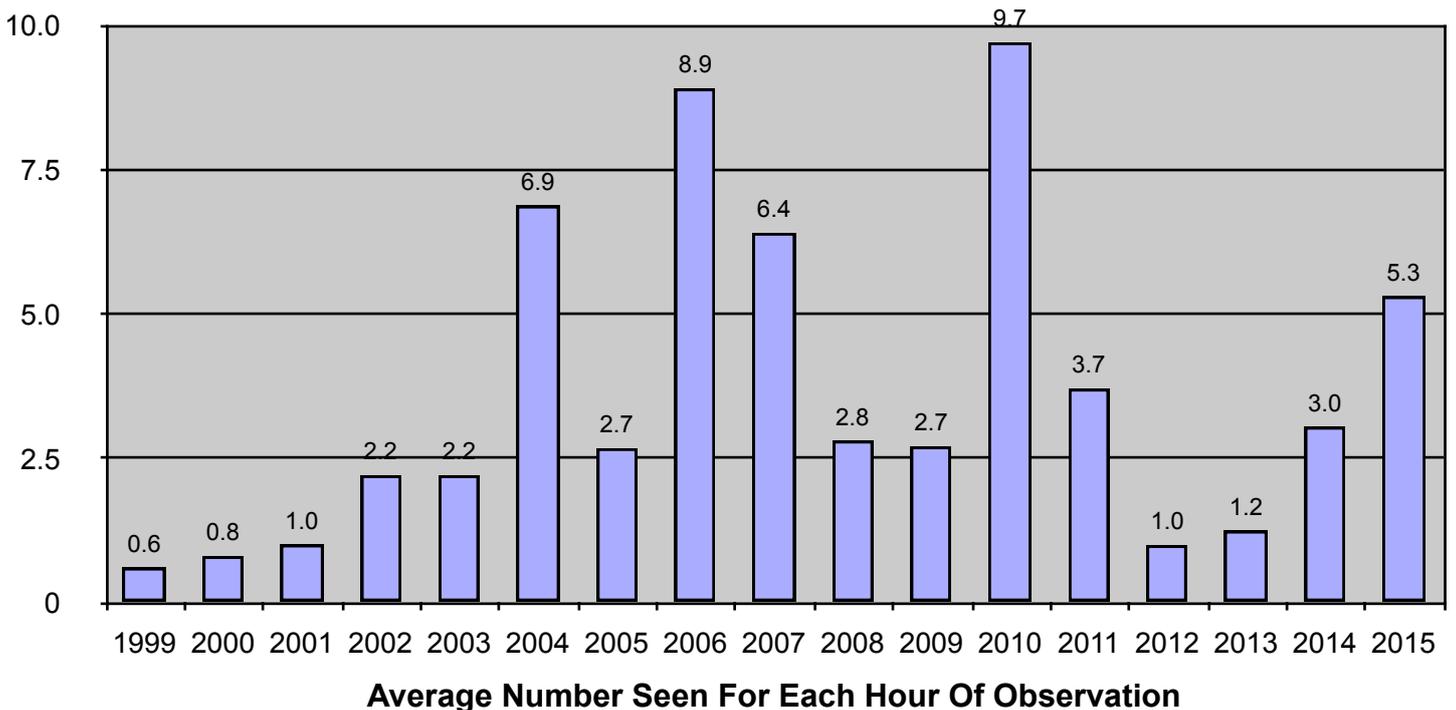
In the 2014 report we discussed the existence of many hedgerow colonies, in the evening off 27th of June 2015 my wife spotted a single Black Hairstreak which had most likely made its way from the nearest known colony three quarters of a mile along unsuitable arable field hedgerows to a more mature pasture field hedgerow with some mature Blackthorn, it appeared to be on a mission, settled for only a short while on a nettle leaf then moved on quite rapidly over an Ash tree and out of sight, indicating a female butterfly travelling to disperse its eggs.

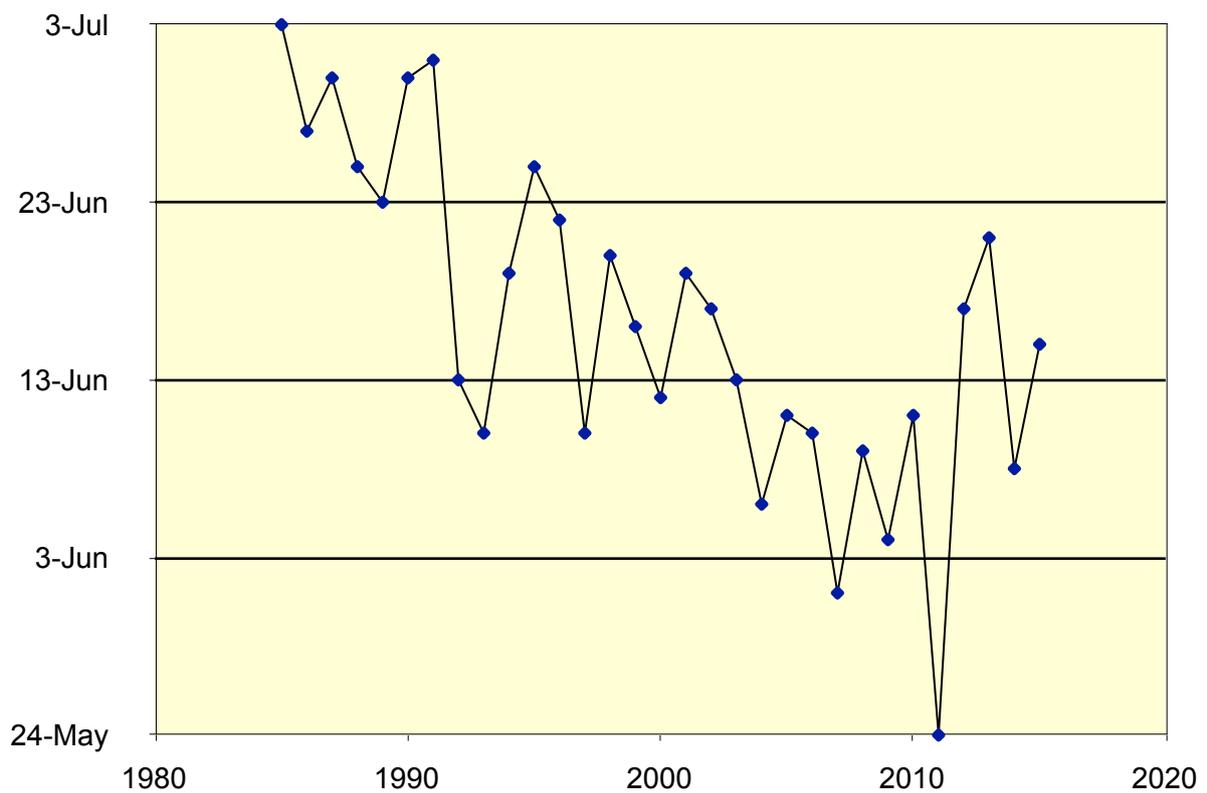


How to avoid getting eaten by a bird, look like a bird dropping, this is a picture of a Black Hairstreak Pupae, and a moth *Hedya pruniana* (the Plum Tortrix).

Year.	98	99	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
All time Total no of Bucks & Oxon Colonies, some are now extinct.																			100
Colonies visited																			
by the recording group		31	22	36	28	29	40	38	51	54	55	60	67	57	28	34	34	35	90
Colonies seen																			
by the recording group.	7	13	9	15	9	13	34	34	39	41	40	40	46	38	17	19	29	26	64
Colonies extant 1990 - 2013																			76
Colonies found since 1997.	2		1			2	2	1	6	4	3	1	4			1	1		28
Colonies re-discovered seen pre 1990.	1	5	2	4	1	1	2	1		2			2						21
Individual Butterflies seen	19	28	73	90	123	109	525	258	995	655	261	326	1095	586	118	132	263	418	
Hours Spent Looking for Black Hairstreak.				91	53	49	76	99	112	102	91	118	112	158	109	106	87	78	
People helping with the recording.	4	9	12	13	15	16	17	24	21	20	27	30	32	39	34	33	35	42	
Days with suitable weather for Black Hairstreak activity.			16	18	18	21	22	28	28	25	18	30	26	31	27	24	22	25	
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	
Average hours suitable for activity per day.												6.8	8.4	5	4.6	6.9	6.4	7.6	
Average no seen per hours observation.	1.4	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	3.47
Kilometre Squares where Black Hairstreak was seen.													60	52	18	21	40		
New Kilometre Squares.													8	2		2	2		
Total Kilometre Squares with BI H records																			120

Yearly Comparisons





Date of First Sighting 1985-2015.

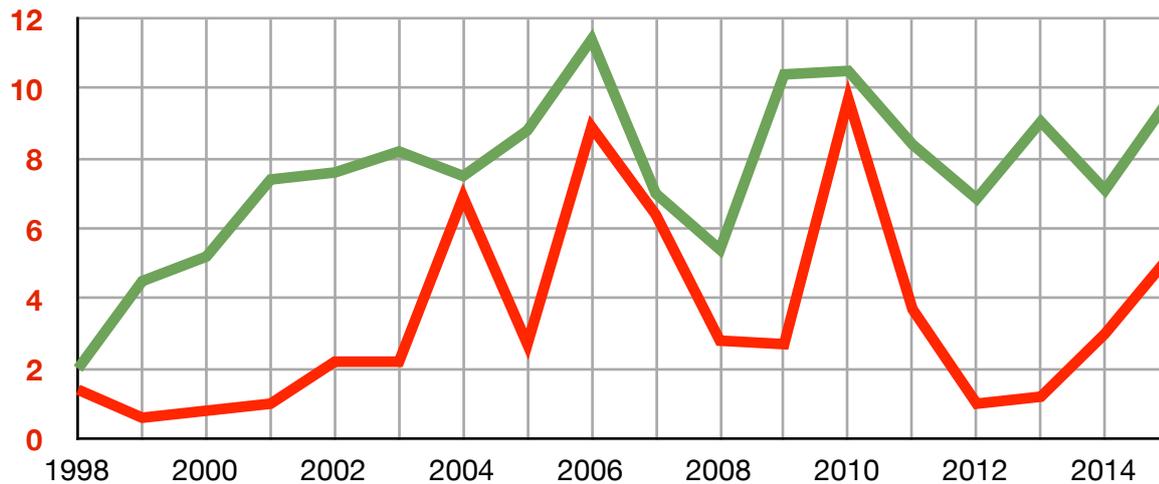
We supported ecologists working on the East West Rail development, informing of known sites, identify possible sites along the disused section of the line, spending half a day advising on how and where to observe. They had three groups of ecologists searching for the butterfly, to the East of its known range, over three suitable days during the flight period, but no further colonies were found.

Using fourteen years of our records, Butterfly Conservation employed a student to collate the information from them in the Spring of 2015. Whilst the details are the property of head office, it does show that our extensive way of monitoring gives a more exact indication of trends than transect recording, the elusive nature of Hairstreaks in general results in them being largely overlooked on transects, the results also indicate that this butterflies numbers have remained fairly stable long term, the wet Summer of 2012 had a very negative effect but numbers are now recovering, these 2015 results further confirm this.

The Regional Action Plan for priority species is currently being updated at Head Office, our records are being used, without the recording effort by many of you, many of the colonies we know of today would have remained undiscovered, thanks for providing your site visit details.

There is a number of sites where we need to re-establish that the colony is still in existence, many are confirmed with only a few individual Butterflies being seen, quite a few have been visited on less than five occasions.

There is considerable pleasure in confirming the existence of a colony that has remained unseen for many many years.



The Red line on the chart above is the average number seen per hours observation, the Green line is my own weather observations of the number of hours suitable for Butterfly activity from the first to the last being seen, but divided by 20 to adjust it to fit in the graph.

The current number of known colonies in Bucks and Oxon.*	63
Colonies within Woodland.	8
Colonies in Woodland edge sites.	26
Colonies at Hedgerow Thicket and Copse Sites.	32
Some of the features of these colonies.	
Hedgerow Colonies at Roadside sites.	11
Colonies Associated with Bridleways and Footpaths.	10
Colonies alongside Railways both Used and Disused.	9
Colonies with Private Landowners.	30
*With the more extensive searching over recent years it has been found that the colonies are more dispersed than originally thought, so this can only be an estimate.	

Colony Site Information.

Many thanks to all who spent so much time looking for the Black Hairstreak, thanks also for keeping me up-to-date with your records, including all the sites visited whether or not the butterfly was actually seen.
 Stuart Hodges. Black Hairstreak Champion. Butterfly Conservation, Upper Thames Branch.