

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Green Hairstreak Report 2011

Dave Turnbull

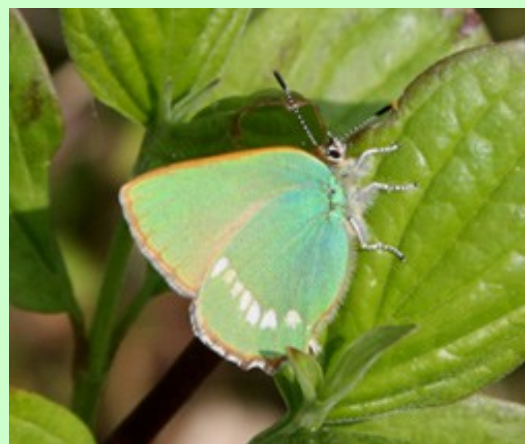


Photo © Dave Turnbull

With this year's warm dry Spring it was no surprise to see the Green Hairstreak early and sightings on April 8th at Yoesden Bank and Sands Bank were the earliest for UTB, certainly in the last seven years that my records cover.

April sightings were significantly up on last year's with Yoesden Bank, Ivinghoe Beacon, Aston Rowant, Steps Hill, Devil's Punchbowl and Sands Bank producing numbers in double figures. An interesting report came from someone who had been told by Gareth Davies, the site overseer at Charlbury Quarry, that he had seen 100+ Green Hairstreaks there in early May. This is an important record as, according to the Millennium Atlas, the last records in that 10k square were from 1970-82.

Being a great favourite of mine, whenever I am photographing Green Hairstreaks I tend to notice the number, or lack of, white spots on their underwings. Rarely do I find them where they are all present but often where they are nearly all absent. At a site in Bucks I was fortunate to find and photograph a well marked individual then later learned that at the same site Chris & Pat Dennis found an amazing aberration that, after extensive research, has been recognised as new to science (see photo right). Sadly I missed it!



Callophrys rubi ab. dennisorum
Photo © Chris Dennis

As is usual after making such a discovery you have the choice of having it named after you and it is now officially called **Callophrys rubi ab. dennisorum**. Congratulations to them on their great find and distinction.

May sightings were similar in number to last year and the Devil's Punchbowl featured a large colony again.

The last record sent to me was at Coombe Hill on the 4th June twelve days earlier than the last one in 2010. This year the flight period was just short of eight weeks with last year's a few days longer. As with a lot of butterflies this year, the Green Hairstreak's flight period started earlier and was over earlier than usual, probably brought on by a very warm spring which included the hottest April on record. The number of individuals seen did not give an indication as to whether they had a better year than last because of the huge numbers seen at the Devil's punchbowl in 2010. However the number of sightings were up and many people agreed that they had seen more of them so I am confident in saying that they have had a better year than last.

Thank you to all who sent in their sightings.

Dave Turnbull
December 2011