

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 26-Feb-17 11:37 PM GMT

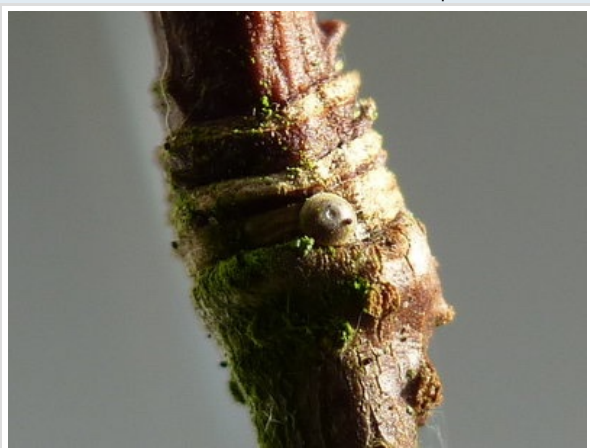
It has been a longer than intended break from UKB for no particular reason other than being busy with other things. My attempt at reliving some highlights and posting about things I missed out during 2016 before the new season starts seems to have fallen by the wayside 😞.

I saw my last butterfly of 2016 on the 22nd December and my first of 2017 last Saturday 18th February. Both just too far away for a positive id but probably Red Admirals. This is the first time I can recall seeing butterflies in February. Monday 20th February was apparently the warmest February day on record down here. I was sadly attending a funeral but at least 2 male Brimstones lifted the spirits in and around Southampton Crematorium. So it looks like the season has already started 😊.

I can not believe I have not posted anything since the beginning of December, So here goes with a few recent bits and bobs:-

Saturday 24.12.2016 Searching for Hairstreak Eggs

Given the choice of some late Christmas shopping or looking for White Letter Hairstreak eggs, I think you probably know how I chose to spend my Christmas Eve 😊 There had been some windy weather a couple of days previously, always a good time to look for Hairstreak eggs. I first headed for a new location, somewhere I have not actually seen any White Letter Hairstreak, but one that looked promising. Having already sought permission as it is on private land I spent an hour or so looking. Unfortunately my search here was unsuccessful. I then headed to another site where I know there are Hairstreaks. Half an hour at this site produced 3 White Letter Hairstreak eggs 😊.



White Letter Hairstreak eggs



Sunday 15.1.2017 Searching for Hairstreak Eggs

After high winds again I began my day just around the corner, in the rain looking for Purple Hairstreak eggs. Despite knowing there are Purple Hairstreaks here and a huge quantity of Oak twigs on the ground I did not find a single egg. My second location was another new one hoping for White Letter Hairstreak eggs. Unfortunately This site was also unproductive. I could not resist popping into The Lakeside complex at Cosham which has a good colony of White Letter Hairstreak. This site is very sheltered, so much so that I could not find any windblown twigs on the ground at all. Even more surprising here was that some of the Elm trees here were already coming into flower. One Elm in particular looked to be in full flower (remember this was 15thJan!)



This roadside Elm looked rather promising back in late summer.....



In Winter it all looks rather exposed
Winter 2016/2017 Red Admiral Larvae

I have several Red Admiral larvae developing through the winter. The temperatures have been as low as -6 degrees here on several occasions, this does not seem to have done them any harm at all. These all hatched during November and the first few days of December. They currently all seem to be still at the 2nd instar stage. A more detailed account of these will be in a later post when I will hopefully be able to report a positive outcome.



28.1.2017 Freshly moulted 2nd instar Red Admiral larva



3.12.2016 A heavy frost here but there is actually a 1st instar Red Admiral larva tucked away out of sight in the centre of this Nettle tip

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 27-Feb-17 12:01 AM GMT

Nice catch-up report Paul 😊 Hopefully the cold snap will have been of benefit to the butterfly cats you've got. I've yet to see Brimstones but I can appreciate they must have been a welcome sight.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 27-Feb-17 07:07 AM GMT

Good to see you back, Paul, and your butterfly-free hiatus is far shorter than that suffered by the rest of us, I'm sure.

I see you've still kept busy. The Red Admiral larvae are interesting and I'll look forward to further posts regarding these.

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 09-Mar-17 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David for your comments 😊😊

Thursday 9.3.2017 Knowle Village

Rather unusually the stars aligned for me today. I had taken the day off work to take my father to hospital, luckily his appointment was not until 3.15. This, together with beautifully warm sunny weather and some free time meant I was able to get out to a favourite local spot. Although I was there less than an hour I was able to notch up 5 species 😊.

Plenty of male Brimstones around today. At least 5 on the way and at least 5 more at destination. No females and no photos though. At least 3 each of Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell and a single Red Admiral. I can not remember ever reaching 5 species this early in March before. If this mildness continues I would not be surprised to see Small Whites and Speckled Wood at this location in a week or so.



Re: jackz432r

by David M, 09-Mar-17 10:07 PM GMT

It's been a good day almost everywhere, Paul, but I very much doubt anyone can top 5 species.

Well done.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-17 11:36 PM GMT

Crackings shots there Paul, especially the Comma 😊 I was only bale to get out for 20 minutes today but at least some made the most of the best day of the year so far 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 16-Mar-17 12:21 AM GMT

Thanks David & Wurzel

Wednesday 15.3.2017 Andover

At work today I noticed a Comma and a couple of very obliging male Brimstones bobbing about in the sunshine 😊. They seemed unusually keen to settle quite frequently. Luckily I had anticipated needing my camera. Unfortunately I was not as successful with my first Holly Blue and Small White of the year which also put in an appearance at the same location. I have never seen 7 species before the end of March before 😊.



Re: jackz432r

by trevor, 16-Mar-17 08:09 AM GMT

Well done with the Brimstone image.

I have seen quite a few recently, not one has stopped.

Also the Holly Blue sighting is quite remarkable, will have to watch my local hotspot more carefully !.

Have a great new season.

Trevor.

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 16-Mar-17 06:24 PM GMT

Paul Harfield wrote:

I have never seen 7 species before the end of March before 😊.P1120390.JPGP1120394.JPG

That is mightily impressive, I've barely scraped to 4 so far!

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-17 10:58 PM GMT

That is a pretty great tally for this time of year Paul, I do't think I've ever managed that amount 🍷🍷 Great stuff with the early Holly Blue as well, is that the first or second for the UK?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 19-Mar-17 11:41 AM GMT

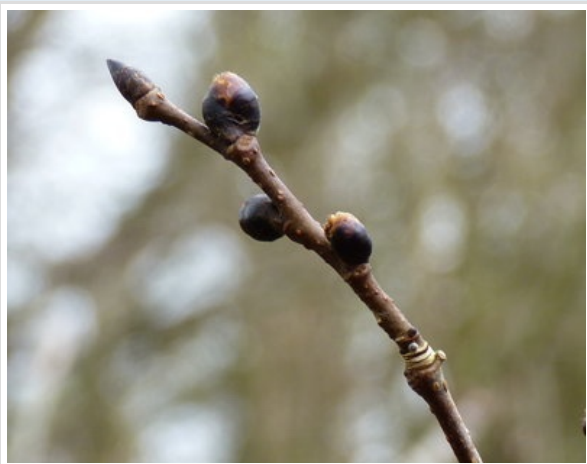
Thanks Trevor, Wurzel & Bugboy for your comments 😊😊😊

Sunday 5.3.2017 White Letter Hairstreak site

Further windy conditions had prompted me to return to my White Letter Hairstreak site the previous week (26th Feb) to see if I could rescue any more eggs. A short search found 2 more eggs on broken twigs. One of these looked like it was hatching as I found it. By the time I was home 40 minutes later, the tiny larva was out. Whilst there I also took some general photos of twigs and buds etc. It was not until I was looking through these photos later at home that I noticed another egg which I had managed to photograph but, embarrassingly not see at the time 😞. This was the first time I have managed to find one still attached to the tree.



This photo is the only time I have managed to find a White Letter Hairstreak egg still attached to the tree. It proves my observational skills are worse than I thought. For the record this egg was at eye level!



Today (5th March) I thought I would return to the site and mark the position of the egg I had inadvertently found last week and attempt to follow its development. I had quite a shock when I arrived 😱. My heart sank as I looked around at the newly created pathway around my secret location. The large Wych Elm here which was secluded now had a lovely pathway passing under it. Not only that but it now had its reachable lower branches removed (including the one with the egg 😞) Oh well never mind, hopefully this will all benefit the White Letter Hairstreak in the long term.



Big changes a week apart. 26th Feb above and 5th March below.



I already knew there were plans to turn this area into a small nature reserve by Hampshire County Council in conjunction with the local school and South Downs National Park. My last communication from them at the end of last summer said nothing would be happening in 2016. I had forgotten all of that of course. I am sure in the long term this will be a good thing, but just at the moment it looks very sparse and unfamiliar. If you can imagine visiting your favourite butterfly spot and then returning a week later to find the bulldozer has been in you can imagine how I felt 😞 .



What was previously dense shrubbery around the Wych Elm (just left of centre). Now a lovely gravel walkway!
Saturday 11.3.2017 White Letter Hairstreak

This will be my second attempt at rearing this species. It is certainly not the easiest, as Pauline and I found out last year. Hopefully I can achieve a positive result, three might not mean much in the grand scale of things, but I feel this particular site needs any bit of help it can get this year for reasons mentioned above. However, when the opportunity presents itself for photos I will be there. Today was the first time I have managed to photograph any of the larvae.



11 day old White Letter Hairstreak larva above and 14 day old larva below. Both 1st instar.



Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Mar-17 10:06 PM GMT

Saturday 25.3.2017 Hatch Farm, West End

I thought I was doing quite well with 7 species before the end of March, but with Orange Tips, Speckled Wood and even Clouded Yellow and Large Tortoiseshells appearing 😊 it would seem I am actually lagging behind somewhat 😊.



Commas were in plentiful supply. This one was first sighting of the day





Hatch Farm is one of my favourite early season local sites, as it is almost within walking distance from home. It has often provided early Speckled Wood, but unfortunately not today 😞. Commas seem to be very plentiful here today, as were male Brimstone. A single Peacock was seen on the outward journey and several more appeared on the return. A single Red Admiral together with a couple of Small Tortoiseshell completed the picture.



Just a single Red Admiral and less than half a dozen Peacocks.



As with a disappointingly large number of my other local spots at the moment, this one also seems to be undergoing some building development 😞.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-17 07:31 PM GMT

I too feel like I'm lagging behind Paul – but take heart as I've noticed that my neck of the woods is often 1–2 weeks behind, in fact the first Wiltshire Holly Blue and Orange-tip were only seen yesterday, so we'll soon catch up 😊 Great set of Comma shots by the way, the other Aristocrats are none too shabby either 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-May-17 11:30 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I have caught up a bit now 😊

Sunday 2.4.2017 – Saturday 29.4.2017 Various Sites

This season seems to be moving along quite quickly. So quick in fact that I have not had time to post for a while. I have visited quite a few of my local and not so local spots over the last few weeks. Here are few highlights:



Brimstone – Westbury Park – 2.4.2017



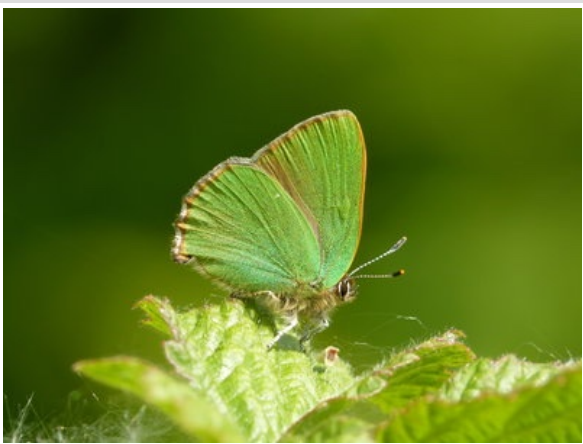
Holly Blue – Southwick – 7.4.2017



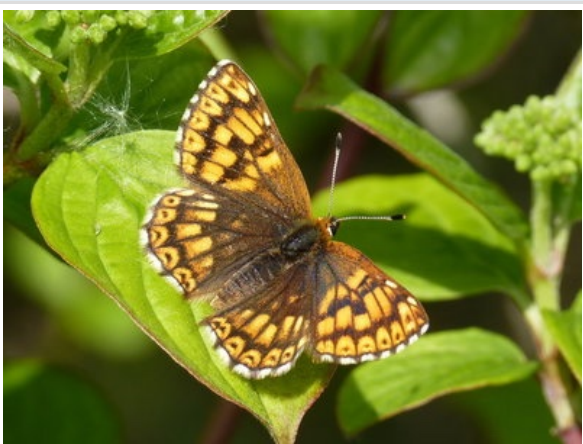
Speckled Wood – Hatch Farm – 8.4.2017



Orange Tip – Stephens Castle Down – 17.4.2017



Green Hairstreak – Stephens Castle Down – 23.4.2017



Duke of Burgundy – Stephens Castle Down – 23.4.2017

Saturday 29.4.2017 West Wood, Farley Mount. I went to West Wood specifically to see if I could find Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy after seeing both at this site last year. I saw just 2 butterflies here today in less than favourable conditions, amazingly this was one each of my target species.



Duke of Burgundy - West Wood - 29.4.2017



Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 07-May-17 08:49 PM GMT

Nice PBF underside, Paul. Yet to find them @ West Wood (must be looking in the wrong place!). Found a few (along with Dukes) 'up the road', near Stockbridge Down. Will be looking for GH, adjacent to the folly @ Farley Mount, next week.

Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 07-May-17 10:56 PM GMT

That's must rate as the most successful 'unsuccessful' trip 😊 Only two butterflies seen but one was a Pearl the other a Duke 🤩 Brill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 10-May-17 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks Jon & Wurzel 😊 . Have sent you a PM Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 29-May-17 11:51 PM GMT

Happy Birthday Paul- 😊 sorry it was so late almost missed it:oops:

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 29-Jul-17 12:35 AM GMT

Finding The White Letter Hairstreak In Hampshire

I often see the White Letter Hairstreak described as 'under-recorded', particularly in Hampshire. I like a challenge, so I decided to take on the task of correcting that 'under-recorded' tag. Those that know me will be aware that I have put quite a bit of effort into this over the last couple of years. In the process I have become more than slightly obsessed with all things Elm and White Letter Hairstreak. This year everything seems to have come together, greatly helped by the weather of course. Over 2 weekends I have had 100% success at the 5 sites I visited. All of which I believe are previously unrecorded. Amazingly, I have visited all of these sites previously, some several times, all without anything definite to record.

Site 1 - Privett

I spotted this solitary roadside Wych Elm near Privett toward the end of last year. Two egg searches during the winter (including Christmas eve) were fruitless, but on the 11th May I found a single 4th instar larva. By the 18th June there was plenty of Hairstreak action around the canopy though I doubt this site will provide many sightings at low level as there are hardly any nectar sources.



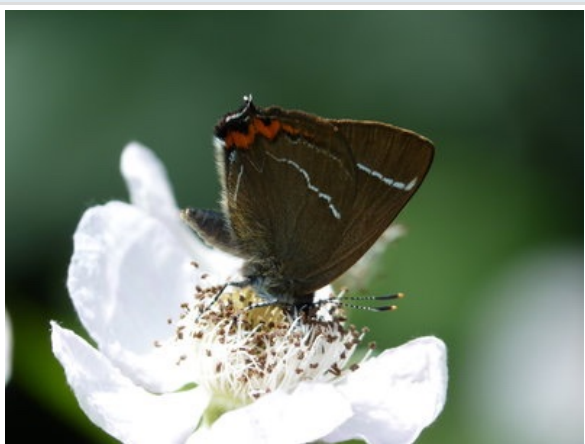
18.6.2017 White Letter Hairstreak

Site 2 - Broadmarsh

I found this Multi Wych Elm site about 3 miles east of Cosham in 2015. It looked so perfect for White Letter Hairstreak that I never gave up on it. I have not searched for eggs here but I visited several times during the flight season last year without any more than a faint glimmer of hope to report. This site lies at the busy intersection of two major roads and a railway line and one is always in close proximity to busy traffic here. In such an exposed position I am always slightly concerned about looking like a complete ##### 😊. Pete once told me that wearing a Hi-Vis and carrying a clipboard is quite effective, that certainly would not go amiss here 😊. I checked this site on 11th June after finding them already on the wing at Cosham. I found Hairstreak activity around all the Wych Elms and the butterflies were also noted to be quite mobile throughout this site and several were seen down nectaring on both Bramble and Thistle.



Site 2 Broadmarsh



11.6.2017 Male White Letter Hairstreak



19.6.2017 *Sheltering beneath a leaf from the hottest part of a very hot day*

Site 3 - Chawton

There is a lot of roadside Elm in this location near Chawton, but I was initially drawn to the spot by another single Wych Elm standing by a bus stop. Further investigation of the area was to reveal that there are Hairstreaks here, but they were using the roadside Elms that separate the road from fields in which sheep graze. Luckily the sunny side of the Elms is away from the road giving a relaxed viewpoint. Again there is not much nectar low down here but there were plenty of Hairstreaks around the half dozen or so Elms on the 18th June. Unfortunately the downside of wandering through a field of sheep without looking at the ground is the inevitable squelch 😊.



Site 3 Near Chawton



11.6.2017

Site 4 - Curdridge

This was another single roadside Elm (I think Wych Elm) discovered in 2015, handily just 10 minutes from home at Curdridge. It stands on private land but overhangs the road, I have yet to find out who owns the land but as soon as I do I will be seeking permission to get a better view. After looking here several times during 2016 I was not expecting much, but as things were going so well I checked it on the 19th June and was pleased and surprised to find Hairstreak action here.



Site 4 Near Curdridge

Site 5 – Southwick

I was by now on a roll so on June 19th I headed for another promising site where there are several roadside Wych Elms near Southwick. This is a site I regularly visit for other species, but as I approached the Elms and saw numerous male White Letter Hairstreaks in aerial combat I let out an audible expression of astonishment. I was completely alone of course but I just could not believe my luck. This is perhaps my favourite of these 5 sites and is the one I have spent most time at.



Site 5 Near Southwick



2.7.2017 White Letter Hairstreak

I am certainly not an expert, but I think this shows that the White Letter Hairstreak is out there just waiting to be found. All you need is to put in some effort armed with a little knowledge, patience, luck and a bit of good weather. The White Letter Hairstreak season is now pretty much over all but a few stragglers, but I still have plenty of other sites earmarked that I am confident will come up with the goods, though these will have to wait until the winter and next year.

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 29-Jul-17 09:40 AM GMT

That's excellent, citizen science at its finest 😊! well done Paul

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 29-Jul-17 11:37 AM GMT

Great investigative work, Paul, and good to see that work paying dividends.

I too am always on the alert for elms as I believe this butterfly is a good bet anywhere if the foodplant is healthy.

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 29-Jul-17 04:24 PM GMT

Although you've already told me a lot of this Paul I think a public Well Done is in order. I know how much time and effort you have put in to this. Wish there was a Smilie for a round of applause 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 09:34 PM GMT

Fantastic work Paul and a great array of shots as a reward for your sterling work 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by jonhd, 02-Aug-17 01:10 AM GMT

Excellent detective work, Paul.

Jon

Re: jackz432r

by Pete Eeles, 02-Aug-17 07:23 AM GMT

I agree – great work, Paul! I'm always in admiration of people who find new sites, rather than relying on known areas!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 06-Aug-17 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks all for your comments 😊

Pete Eeles wrote:

I agree – great work, Paul! I'm always in admiration of people who find new sites, rather than relying on known areas!

Cheers,

– Pete

I am always looking Pete, but it is not quite as easy as it may appear from that last post 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 07-Aug-17 10:10 PM GMT

White Letter Hairstreak 2017 – Part 2

I was keen to rear this species again so I set off on several egg searches at various sites during the winter. I was eventually able to rescue 3x healthy eggs (several others were found to be unhealthy) by February 2017. These were located after strong winds on wind damaged twigs found on the ground. One of these eggs was actually hatching as I found it. The first two eggs hatched on the 25th & 26th of February respectively and the remaining one on the 1st March. This timing is almost exactly in line with those I reared in 2016 which were from the same location.



26.12.2016 ovum



5.4.2017 2nd instar larva

The young larvae of this species are extremely difficult to keep track of. The colouration, size and habit of the young larvae make them particularly difficult to locate, often seeming to disappear for a few days. They are often tucked in head first between the various parts of the Elm flowers.



Larvae remained quite active despite the cold snap at the end of April. By the 2nd week of April (3rd Instar) larvae seemed to be choosing leaves over seed pods to feed on. All 3 larvae had pupated by 22th May, but I was only successful with a single adult emergence on June 15th.



1.5.2017 4th Instar larva



Development overview (approximate timings taken as an average from 3 larvae):

1st Instar - 17 days
2nd Instar - 19 days
3rd Instar - 17 days
4th Instar - 26 days
Pupa - 25 days



17.6.2017 Adult White-Letter Hairstreak 2 days after emergence

Re: jackz432r

by Pauline, 08-Aug-17 06:24 AM GMT

We both know from past experience that this isn't an easy one to rear Paul. Well done on your success.

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 08-Aug-17 03:16 PM GMT

Superb larval images, Paul, and your gleaming adult specimen is a very beautiful and appropriate reward.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-17 09:47 PM GMT

A fantastic selection Paul 😊 You're become the 'go-to' man for Whitters 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 04-Nov-17 12:52 PM GMT

A belated thanks for those last few comments 😊. I seem to have neglected my diary a little this year. Lack of time has meant I have focused on being out in the field rather than in front of a screen. However, here are a few recent bits & bobs:

October 2017 - Elm Trees, Red Admirals & Storm Brian

My continued search for the White Letter Hairstreak in Hampshire has me out and about after any spell of windy weather. This is always a good time to look for eggs on wind damaged twigs both in new and existing locations. My list of new locations to check out gets ever larger, the more promising

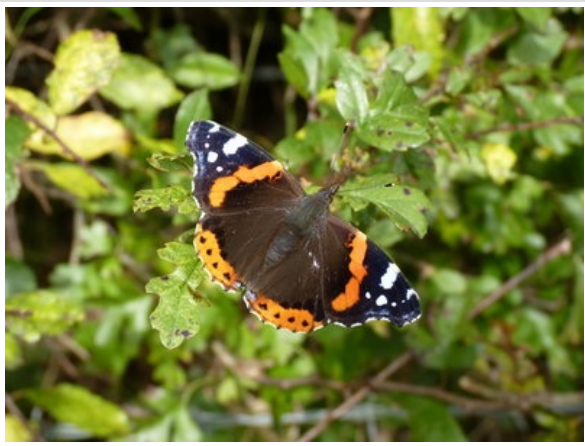
looking sites always taking priority. Subsequently, there are sites which I have known about for a few years which I have yet to study and others I have found more recently and visited several times.

One of these promising recent discoveries is a site close to Central Portsmouth. A single street planted Elm tree conveniently overhanging a carpark. On 1.10.2017 the discovery of twigs at this location with empty eggs on them, probably from last season, filled me with excitement. I was hoping for something more conclusive after storm Brian, but I unfortunately did not get it. This tree is in a hard landscaped area and nearly all wind blown debris is instantly blown away so I shall probably have to wait till next flight season to 100% confirm White Letter Hairstreak at this site. I am not aware of any known sites in central Portsmouth so hopefully this will be another new discovery for me.



20.10.2017 I spotted this Red Admiral in the garden during storm Brian!

The morning after storm Brian was a lovely sunny morning and I visited several other sites looking for eggs, some known and some not. The search for eggs was disappointing with nothing new to report, but at nearly every site I was accompanied by a Red Admiral or two. I even managed to spot one in the garden during storm Brian in a sheltered spot during a brief sunny interlude. It took to the air briefly several times but was buffeted so much by the wind that it soon settled back down.



Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-17 12:03 AM GMT

Good to see you're still hard at it Paul 😊😄 That's a really well marked bialbata you've got there 😊
Hope you can make it to the Social...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 06-Nov-17 11:05 PM GMT

Good to see you back, Paul, and even better that you're still in active pursuit of White Letter Hairstreaks, no matter what stage of development.

Nice Red Admirals by the way. I guess that's all most of us will see from here on in. 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 08-Nov-17 11:12 PM GMT

Thanks David & Wurzel for your comments 😊

Saturday 28.10.2017 – Southwick & more Red Admirals

As noted in several other diaries, we seem to be awash with Red Admirals at the moment. I set off to one of my Red Admiral 'hotspots' to get my fix. I was pleasantly surprised by the number of Red Admirals I saw, in excess of 23 together with a couple of Speckled Wood. However, I managed to leave

home without a memory card in my camera 😞 . (my apologies for the quality of some of these images taken on my phone)



Female Red Admiral at rest



Sheltered, sunny and south facing field margin....ideal conditions for Red Admirals.

As would seem to be the norm in recent years in suitable locations, profuse egg laying was taking place. At least 3x females were seen actively depositing eggs on new Nettle growth. A cursory examination of various Nettles revealed a plentiful supply of eggs at this sheltered, sunny location. The biggest surprise was to find a Red Admiral egg on, what I believe to be, Common Hogweed (*Heracleum spondylium*). Further searching turned up no more eggs on this unexpected foodplant so my guess is that this was an error of judgement on the part of one female Red Admiral. I have marked the location of this so I can check on it, but I would think any larva likely to find its way to the Nettles amongst which it is located. Although I had no memory card I was able to grab a couple of shots from a combination of my inbuilt memory and my phone.



Red Admiral egg found on Common Hogweed





Common Hogweed growing amongst Nettles

As in previous years I have retrieved a couple of these eggs to rear through the Winter. I will at some point post my report on Winter Red Admiral early stages from last Winter (sorry for the delay Vince 😊). It would be interesting to know how far North Red Admiral early stages are able to survive during the Winter months.

Re: jackz432r

by Andrew555, 09-Nov-17 09:18 AM GMT

Hi Paul, very interesting reading for me, as a relative newbie.

Cheers

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 09-Nov-17 05:35 PM GMT

Paul Harfield wrote:

..I was pleasantly surprised by the number of Red Admirals I saw, in excess of 23 together with a couple of Speckled Wood...

That's quite a haul for November, Paul. I'd be happy to see that number on a July day!!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 12-Nov-17 09:09 AM GMT

Thanks both for your comments 😊. Yes David I was very pleased with that Red Admiral count, but it was in fact 28th October.

Re: jackz432r

by trevor, 12-Nov-17 05:21 PM GMT

I once got all the way over to Chiddingfold forest before realising that my memory card was still in my lap top, at a distance of 54 miles from home all I could do was curse. 😞. Fortunately the Purple Emperor did not show that day, so my frustration was not compounded.

Hope you have had a great season,
Trevor.

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 12-Nov-17 05:47 PM GMT

23 that late in the season is mighty impressive 🤩 – it looks like 2017 really is the year of the Red Admiral 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 14-Nov-17 05:46 PM GMT

Paul Harfield wrote:

Thanks both for your comments 😊 . Yes David I was very pleased with that Red Admiral count, but it was in fact 28th October.

Thanks for clarifying, Paul, although it's still notable for the back end of October!

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 14-Nov-17 10:56 PM GMT

Thanks all again for your comments 😊 . I managed to remember my memory card this weekend 😊

Saturday 11.11.2017 Knowle Village

I had some spare time on Saturday so I thought I would check out my other primary Red Admiral site, I had an hour before it started to rain heavily. This is the location where I have recorded Winter Red Admiral egg laying most frequently. It is a similar location to Southwick being field margins and is similarly sunny and sheltered. The favoured spots for egg laying seem to vary slightly from year to year.



This small area of Nettles was peppered with Red Admiral eggs



There are 10 Red Admiral eggs on this single Nettle shoot



In one small patch of new Nettle growth I counted nearly 30 eggs including one shoot which had 10 eggs on it. This was a new spot where I have not seen eggs before. In areas where I have seen profuse egg laying in previous years I was only able to locate 1 or 2 eggs. I was unable to locate any larvae at this visit. Despite the weather at least one Red Admiral was seen. This may have been the same one that briefly joined me when I took shelter from the rain in an empty farm building. It fluttered around in the entrance for a while before disappearing off out into the rain again.

Sunday 12.11.2017 Southwick

Back at Southwick, 2 weeks on since my last visit. I was able to locate 2 larvae (2nd instar I think) which I will endeavour to keep track of during the winter. The egg laid on Common Hogweed was no longer present. No Egg laying was observed during this visit, in fact I was unable to find any eggs at all today, I guess they have either hatched or been predated.



Wild 2nd instar? Red Admiral larva



This photo shows where the youngest larvae are likely to be found within the very youngest leaves at the growing tip bound together with silk. Despite the much cooler temps I was still able to locate 13 adult Red Admirals covering the whole spectrum of condition from very fresh to very worn. I will try and visit this site regularly over the winter to monitor what is going on Red Admiral wise here.



This stretch of south facing wall is a reliable source of winter Red Admiral activity of all types

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 19-Nov-17 08:29 AM GMT

Three out of four life stages in a couple of days is a great haul Paul 😊 Those Red Admirals are really having a great year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 19-Nov-17 10:18 AM GMT

Thanks for the image putting the habitat in context, Paul. At this time of year, those butterflies that are still active DO tend to keep to these

microclimates.

Re: jackz432r

by Andrew555, 20-Nov-17 01:21 PM GMT

Glad you had your memory card this time Paul. I now keep a spare card and camera battery permanently in my backpack after a couple of 'incidents' 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 01-Dec-17 12:33 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew, David & Wurzel for your comments 😊

Saturday 25.11.2017 - Thursday 30.11.2017 More Red Admirals In The Garden

Just before I set off to join the others at the Winter Social last Saturday I spotted some fluttering in the sunny corner of the garden 😊. I was delighted to see a Red Admiral there so I dashed off to grab my camera. At 1.30pm I was already too late to grab a shot of this butterfly spending the briefest of moments settled open winged on the fence. It then settled on the bottom of an empty bird feeder and there it stayed.



Red Admiral in the garden 25.11.2017



Early morning 26.11.2017 and that Red Admiral is still clinging on
I checked the bottom of the bird feeder in the frost the following morning and was surprised to see the Red Admiral still clinging on. Most days this week have been sunny, but cold but that Red Admiral is still there as I write this (in bed with a bad back 😊). I know it is still alive because it has changed its position several times. There is a slight recess in the bottom of this feeder but I would think this a rather precarious place for a Red Admiral to spend the Winter, I will keep you posted on its wellbeing.



I don't think I should refill this birdfeeder just yet!

Yesterday I had the day off and was able to keep an eye on the Garden during another sunny but cold day. The butterfly above remained on the base of the feeder but it was joined by another more active individual between midday and 1.30. This one briefly settled on the bird feeder and several other positions on the fence. It was also seen nectaring briefly on my Hebe and occasionally disappearing over the fence on both sides of the garden, always returning to my sunny corner 😊. I was hoping to see where it went to roost but got distracted and last saw it about 1.35.



Another Red Admiral in the garden 30.11.2017 (just below the birdfeeder)

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 03-Dec-17 09:59 AM GMT

Fingers crossed your roosting Red Admiral makes it – it does seem very well camouflaged though not that sheltered 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 05-Dec-17 07:40 PM GMT

Incredible camouflage in the Red Admiral image. I confess I had to maximise it to find the butterfly and was quite embarrassed when I saw how much of the screen it took up! 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Paul Harfield, 31-Dec-17 03:48 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel & David. That Red Admiral only stayed another couple of days before it disappeared unseen by me. Hopefully it has found somewhere more appropriate where, if it is lucky, it may survive till the spring.

Winter Activities 2017

I have nothing much to report in the butterfly department recently other than my postings on overwintering Red Admiral early stages here <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=9581&p=127082#p127082>.

That and my continued search for the White Letter Hairstreak keeps me occupied. I am always on the look out for promising looking Elm trees and ready for action when windy weather strikes. We have had quite a lot of windy weather recently but this has not resulted in much. In fact I have searched several bags full of Elm twigs from various locations over the last few weeks. These various locations produce quite an assortment of different results.



Typical bag of Elm twigs collected after a windy day. This bag collected over 2 days at West Meon Christmas Eve and Boxing Day! This lot resulted in a single egg.



Rescued White Letter Hairstreak egg from the above site at West Meon

My first White Letter Hairstreak discovery back in 2014 was at West Meon. It is a mature Wych Elm sheltered on 3 sides by other trees which are in close proximity. This tree has been the most reliable source of eggs to rescue. It seems a very healthy tree that keeps its leaves long after some of the other trees I visit have lost all theirs. It always sheds a high volume of 'live' twigs after windy weather. I can only assume it is the interaction of the branches with the surrounding trees that causes it to lose so many live twigs. Although a reliable source of eggs, curiously this site also provided the lowest number of adults recorded during the flight season.



Hairstreak? egg found on old, dead shrivelled twig at the above site close to central Portsmouth



Typical wind damaged twigs 'live' from West Meon on the left and 'dead' from Central Portsmouth on the right

I have spent a lot of time visiting a tree near central Portsmouth this winter. I am not sure what variety of Elm this is but it is not Wych Elm. As mentioned in my diary previously I found 2 hatched eggs here back in October. These eggs were on rather shrivelled, old twigs and for all I know they could be 3 or more years old, but they definitely look like Hairstreak eggs (right size, shape and position). Although in my experience most old egg cases tend to disappear the following winter. Whilst this is encouraging it is not conclusive enough to say there is a live colony on this tree. Several further visits to this location have not produced any further results. This tree, unlike the one at West Meon seems only to shed dead twigs. Although conveniently overhanging a carpark it also sits annoyingly at another busy road junction. On one of my recent visits I was there at midday and unfortunately I ended up collecting twigs in the road whilst a queue of traffic waited at the traffic lights. The nearest vehicle to me was of course a police van full of policeman 😊😂 They gave me plenty of funny looks as if to say 'What the hell is this idiot doing?'. I made a quick exit of course and thankfully they did not choose to stop and question me.



😊 HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL 😊

Re: jackz432r

by bugboy, 31-Dec-17 06:18 PM GMT

Loving your dedication Paul! Maybe you should don a high viz vest next time you're collecting twigs on the road so people just assume you're a road sweeper to save your blushes 😊

Re: jackz432r

by Wurzel, 31-Dec-17 06:38 PM GMT

I think you West Meon site is the most attractive looking –I'm sure about the others especially if the Rozzers start paying an interest in you 😊😂😂 We're set for some more gales over the enxt few days aren't we so good luck if you manage to make it back out 😊 Happy New Year!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: jackz432r

by David M, 31-Dec-17 09:41 PM GMT

Fascinating observations, Paul, and well done for putting all that effort into a butterfly that is, by its nature, abnormally tricky to observe.

I wish you all the best for 2018.