

Green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

STATUS

**National priority low,
Regional priority medium.**



WHAT IS THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK?

This smallish butterfly is the only green British butterfly and characteristically it never lands with its wings open. It occurs on moorland and heathland where bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), the food plant of its larvae, occurs. Adult butterflies can also feed on hawkweeds. There is no difference in appearance between the male and female butterflies. It is by far the most common and widespread member of the hairstreak family in Britain.

WHERE IS IT FOUND IN THE UK?

Nationally, the larvae of the green hairstreak utilise over a dozen foodplants, which is why it is the most common hairstreak. Because of this fact the species can be found on calcareous, acidic and neutral based habitats. Invariably there will be some light scrub present within the area in which it is found. It occurs in southern and western England, Wales and is more localised elsewhere in the U.K.

WHY IS THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK OF CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

The green hairstreak has been lost from ten locations in Durham in recent years, a significant decline of previously recorded sites. Colonies have been largely lost because of agricultural changes.

THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK IN THE DURHAM AREA

HOW HEALTHY ARE THE POPULATIONS OF THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK?

The green hairstreak has shown a rate of decline of 56% in Northumberland and Durham over the last 25 years. A new large colony at Hamsterley Forest has been discovered in recent years.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK IN THE DURHAM AREA?

Locally, it seems to follow a pattern of local extinctions and colonisations. This pattern is currently poorly understood but it may be a reflection of fragmentation, loss or deterioration of favoured habitat and associated food plants. No specific survey has been carried out in the North-East for this butterfly, although informal searches by local experts are carried out regularly. A transect has been run by Butterfly Conservation at Hamsterley Forest since 1997.

WHERE HAS IT BEEN FOUND IN THE DURHAM AREA?

The green hairstreak was first recorded at Walldridge Fell in County Durham and this colony remains the strongest in the region. Another colony has been recorded at Stuartsfield Plantation near West Buttsfield although four hectares of this site were ploughed in 1995, leaving an area of suitable habitat of less than 0.25 hectares. Large populations also exist at Hedley Fell and at Hamsterley Forest.

GREEN HAIRSTREAK IS AT RISK FROM:

Loss of suitable habitat containing the butterfly's larval foodplant (bilberry), this leads to isolation of populations.

Changes in agricultural practice, leading to scrub invasion, over-grazing or the ploughing up of suitable habitat to grow arable crops.

GREEN HAIRSTREAK BENEFITS FROM:

Management which maintains open areas of woodland, moorland and heathland where bilberry grows, alongside light scrub.

IMPORTANT HABITATS FOR THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK:

Lowland heathland	**
Upland oakwood	**

OTHER SPECIES ACTION PLANS COVERING ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK:

Dark green fritillary	*
Small pearl-bordered fritillary	**

N.B. ** indicates action plan produced in 1998.
* indicates action plan produced in 2000.

THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK AND THE LAW

The green hairstreak is not protected.

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TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE GREEN HAIRSTREAK IN THE DURHAM AREA:

	DATE
Target 1 <i>Maintain all currently known populations above current level.</i>	ONGOING
Target 2 <i>Carry out baseline survey to discover the status of the green hairstreak in County Durham.</i>	2002
Target 3 <i>Create suitable habitats for the green hairstreak, to encourage recolonisation / expansion.</i>	ONGOING

GREEN HAIRSTREAK ACTIONS			
ACTION	DATE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	MEETS TARGET NO.
<u>SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION</u>			
1. Protect colonies threatened by habitat loss or change.	ONGOING	EN, DWT, FC, LAs, Site owners.	1
<u>SITE MANAGEMENT</u>			
2. Continue to implement or encourage implementation of WES and RES management regimes on SSSIs supporting the green hairstreak and seek opportunities to extend habitat patches within existing sites.	2008	EN, DWT, FC, LAs, Site owners.	1, 3
3. Encourage implementation of appropriate management schemes (e.g. Countryside stewardship) on County Wildlife Sites and other sites supporting the green hairstreak.	2008	DBAP, DWT, EN, FC, FWAG, MAFF, Site owners.	1, 3
<u>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</u>			
4. Survey work to establish current status in the region.	2003	BC	1, 2
5. Encourage or undertake ecological research, which assists the conservation of the green hairstreak: population structure, habitat requirements and habitat management.	2008	EN, BC	1, 3
<u>ADVISORY</u>			
6. Ensure land owners and managers are aware of the presence of the green hairstreak and the importance of it's conservation with appropriate methods of habitat management.	ONGOING	DBAP, EN, BC, LA's, DWT	1, 3
<u>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</u>			
7. In environmental interpretation and education, raise the profile of the green hairstreak as one of the top priority butterflies in the North East.	2005	BC, DBAP, EN, LA's	1, 3