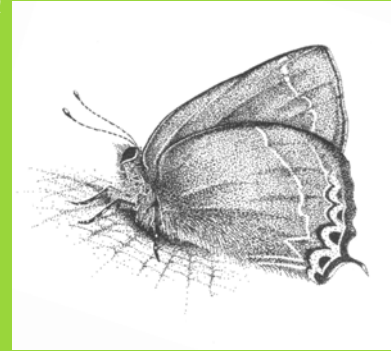


White-letter hairstreak *Strymonidia w-album*

STATUS

**Medium priority species regionally,
nationally important.**



WHAT IS THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK ?

The white-letter hairstreak is a woodland butterfly which favours sites where flowering elms occur. Various species of elm are used by larvae, but seemingly wych elm is preferred in the north east of England. Both sexes of this species are similar in appearance, although the female has longer tails on the hind wings. The upper wing surfaces which are hardly ever seen, are a dull black colour. The underside is dark brown with an orange fringe on the hind wing. Its name comes, not surprisingly, from the white 'W' shaped markings flashed across its underwings.

WHERE ARE THEY FOUND IN THE UK?

Due to its elusive habits the true range of the white-letter hairstreak is not known, although it is widespread through the midlands and southern England. It is currently absent from Cumbria but can be found in Lancashire.

WHY IS THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK OF CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

This species is expanding its range northwards, possibly due to climatic change, amongst other proposed reasons. The actual calculated rate of expansion over the last 25 years is 1750%. The species has been lost from five locations in the region in recent times, a considerable decline. It is locally very rare.

THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK IN THE DURHAM AREA

HOW HEALTHY ARE THE POPULATIONS OF THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK?

The white-letter hairstreak is afforded a medium regional priority by Butterfly Conservation and it has been expanding its range over the last ten years. Ten new colonies have been discovered throughout the county (except in the far west). These are discreet and sometimes very small, even based on a single tree.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

In the north of England the white-letter hairstreak first appeared in 1984 and is presently known from 19 tetrads in Durham. It is possible that some small colonies may have gone undetected.

WHERE HAS IT BEEN FOUND IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

Several years ago two colonies were found in County Durham with five new sites being identified in 1999. It

has been found at Hamsterly Forest, Chester-le-Street, and at Low Barns and Rosa Shafto nature reserves. The white-letter hairstreak has also been sighted along the Castle Eden walkway, along the Derwent Walk and at Castle Eden Dene NNR amongst others.

WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK IS AT RISK FROM:

Dutch elm disease: Larvae utilise various species of elm, Dutch elm disease has killed many elms and continues to do so. The sucker re-growth is used by the butterfly but after several more years this may also succumb.

WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK BENEFITS FROM:

Management of elms: This butterfly benefits from areas of elm, particularly sites containing wych elm at differing stages of tree development.

Woodland diversity: aphid honeydew provides the adult white-letter hairstreak with its principle food requirements-this is encouraged by species and structural diversity in woodland stands.

Availability of alternative food plants: Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is most favoured when this species occasionally visits flowers for nectar.

IMPORTANT HABITATS FOR THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK :

Deciduous woodlands with elm trees

Hedgerows (with elms)

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OTHER SPECIES ACTION PLANS COVERING ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK:

Lemon slug

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

THE WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK AND THE LAW:

The white-letter hairstreak is not protected.

White-letter hairstreak *Strymonidia w-album*

TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE WHITE-LETTER 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 white-letter hairstreak in County Durham.</i>	2005
Target 3 <i>Create suitable habitats for the white-letter hairstreak, to encourage range expansion.</i>	ONGOING

WHITE-LETTER 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, DBAP, FC, LAs, Site Owners	1
<u>SITE MANAGEMENT</u> 2. Encourage sympathetic woodland management by a) replacing diseased elms with wych elm saplings from local provenance seeds or cuttings. b) Using wych elm in woodland and hedgerow planting schemes.	ONGOING	EN, DBAP, FC, LAs, Site Owners	1, 2, 3
<u>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</u> 3. Survey work recording ova and adults to establish the white-letter hairstreak's current status in the region. 4. Establish a monitoring system to assess population size (timed counts) and management at colonies.	ONGOING 2002	BC BC, LAs	1, 2 1, 3
<u>ADVISORY</u> 5. Ensure land owners and managers are aware of the presence of the white-letter hairstreak and the importance of its conservation with appropriate methods of habitat management.	ONGOING	DBAP, EN, BC, LAs	1, 3
<u>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</u> 6. Produce butterfly factsheets (life history, management) and distribute to partners.	2005	BC, LA21, DBAP	1