

## Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*)

**Areas and status:** Scattered distribution throughout southern England, East and West Midlands and south-west Wales. Significant declines in distribution (-49%) 1976-2014.

**Woodland type:** Lowland Broadleaved Woodland, Scrub.

**Preferred habitat niches:** Glades, rides, edge and scrub mosaic. Brown Hairstreaks breed on Blackthorn, usually less than 1.5m, but up to 2m above the ground on younger shoots growing in sheltered but sunny situations. Blackthorn suckers are especially favoured.

### Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

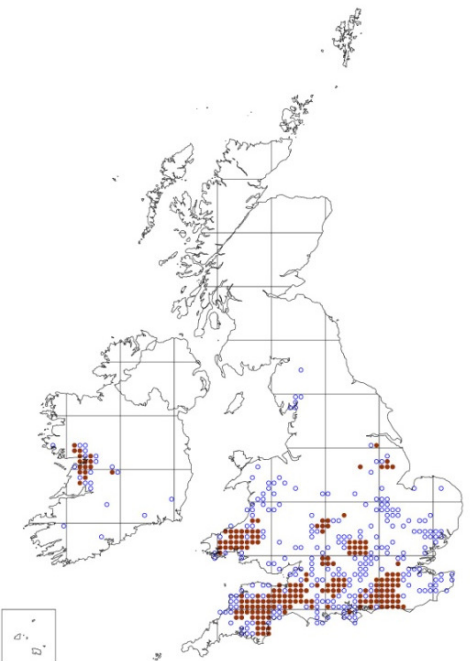
- Shading and mismanagement of areas containing Blackthorn
- Failure of Blackthorn regeneration due to deer browsing
- Unsympathetic management of hedgerows growing in vicinity of woodland, e.g. frequent flailing and spraying herbicides close to hedgerows
- Habitat fragmentation and loss of connectivity leading to isolation of surviving populations



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### Potential habitat management solutions:

Prescription	Comment
Scrub, Woodland creation (natural regeneration/colonisation)	Retain and enhance Blackthorn thickets within woodlands, especially in sunny, sheltered areas. Blackthorn >20 years old or >4m high will require management. Divide area and coppice on a 4-5 yr rotation aim for bushes 1-4m high. Create new areas of Blackthorn where opportunities allow both within woodland (e.g. rides, glades, edges and in scrub mosaic) or within the wider countryside (e.g. abandoned quarries, disused railway lines, field corners, road verges and brownfield sites).
Rides, Glades	Widen and enlarge if necessary; widths should be >1.5 times the height of nearby trees; scallop ride edges (but retain Blackthorn) to create sheltered conditions. Cut in 3 zones: 1 regularly for access, 2 on a 4-7 yr rotation & 3 on an 8-20 yr rotation. Identify and retain 'master or assembly trees' usually prominent Ashes close to the wood edge or in nearby hedgerows. Retain nectar species in sunny, sheltered situations close to breeding areas.
Connectivity	Ensure hedgerows close to the woodland edge are managed to avoid annual trimming, cut ideally on a 3-4 year rotation. Cutting in the first half of August will minimise the loss of Brown Hairstreak eggs. Managing hedgerows on a longer rotation involving hedge laying or coppicing can also provide suitable habitat. If landscape has few hedges, create a linking network of good habitats by planting hedgerows, shelterbelts and scrub mosaic along an east-west alignment to create sunny, south-facing aspects which Brown Hairstreaks favour for egg laying. If possible, leave a field margin alongside the hedge to enable sucker growth to develop and protect suckers against browsing.



○ Pre 2005  
● 2005 – 2014  
Source: Butterfly Conservation