

## The initial development stages of a Brown Hairstreak larva.

Paul Meers

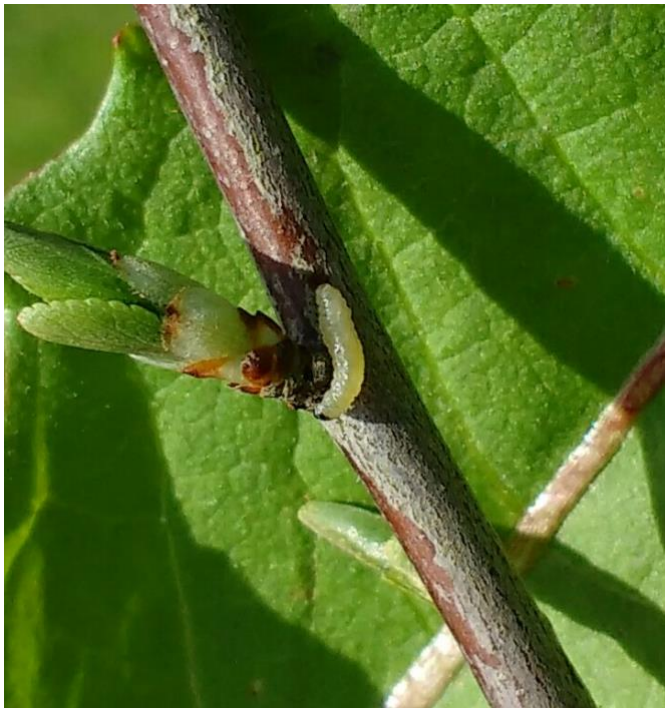
These photographs show the initial development of a Brown Hairstreak larva. They were all taken at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserve Feckenham Wyldes Moor.

The first (01) shows 1<sup>st</sup>. instar larva approximately 1mm in length, recently emerged from the egg. It looks like any other ordinary very small caterpillar. It burrows into an unopened Blackthorn leaf bud where it feeds on the newly forming leaf.

Around 10-14 days later, weather dependant, it emerges from the leaf bud still as a rather ordinary tiny caterpillar. It moults (02, 03), shedding its original skin to become the 2<sup>nd</sup>. instar larva about 3 mm long, now a distinctive Brown Hairstreak caterpillar (04).



03. 2<sup>nd</sup> instar Brown Hairstreak larva nearly out of the 1<sup>st</sup> instar skin. Paul Meers



01. Newly hatched 2 mm long Brown Hairstreak larva by the Blackthorn leaf bud. Paul Meers.



04. Fully emerged 2<sup>nd</sup> instar Brown Hairstreak larva. Paul Meers.



02. 2<sup>nd</sup> instar Brown Hairstreak larva starting to emerge from 1<sup>st</sup> instar skin. Paul Meers.

It will then grow, feeding on the Blackthorn leaves, until it is approximately 15-20mm in length. It moults twice more (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Instars) during growth and at around 40-60 days after hatching the caterpillar changes to a mottled purple colour and moves down the main stem of the Blackthorn to ground level to find a suitable pupation place, often in cracks in the ground or under leaf litter, where it will stay until the adult butterfly emerges in August or early September.



05. Brown Hairstreak larva around 30 days old c 6 mm. Paul Meers

#### Images

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- 03. 2nd instar Brown Hairstreak larva nearly out of the 1st instar skin. Paul Meers.
- 04. Fully emerged 2nd instar Brown Hairstreak larva. Paul Meers.
- 05. Brown Hairstreak larva around 30 days old c 6 mm. Paul Meers