



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Early Hairstreak  
*Erora laeta***

State Status: **Threatened**  
Federal Status: **None**

**DESCRIPTION:** The Early Hairstreak (*Erora laeta*) is a lycaenid butterfly with a wingspan of 23-31 mm. Like most gossamer-wings, the Early Hairstreak rests with wings folded above its back. The upper side of the wings, hidden in this position, are iridescent blue with black margins in the female; they are mostly black in the male, with blue only at the outer angle of the hind wing. The underside of the wings are lime green with bright orange spots and margins. Unlike many other hairstreaks, the hind wing has no tail.

**HABITAT:** The Early Hairstreak inhabits mature northern hardwood forest with beech trees, and associated openings such as roadsides and field margins.

**LIFE HISTORY:** In Massachusetts, adult Early Hairstreak butterflies fly from mid-May to mid-June, occasionally into late June. Massachusetts records in July and early August may represent a partial second brood, but these records are very few in number. Adult butterflies are most readily observed while “puddling” on bare ground along dirt roads, paths, and ridge tops. In Massachusetts, the Early Hairstreak has been observed nectaring at flowers of blackberry (*Rubus*) (Leahy et al. 2006), as well as strawberry (*Fragaria*) and black cherry

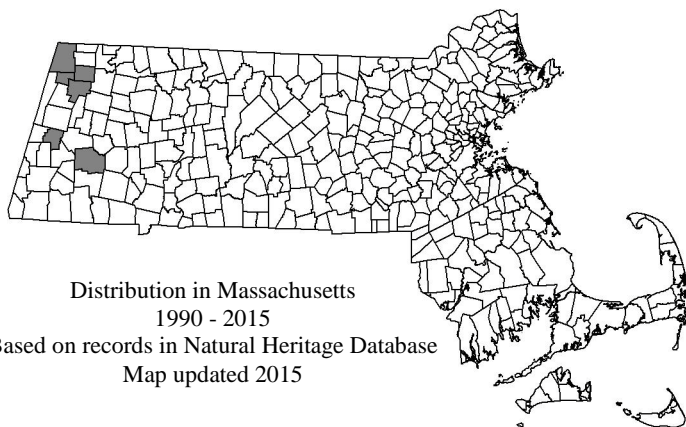


*Erora laeta*, ventral • MA: Berkshire Co., Williamstown • 4 Jun 2005 • Photo by M.W. Nelson



*Erora laeta*, dorsal, female • MA: Berkshire Co., Williamstown • 4 Jun 2005 • Photo by M.W. Nelson

*Erora laeta*, dorsal, male • MA: Berkshire Co., Williamstown • 4 Jun 2005 • Photo by M.W. Nelson



Distribution in Massachusetts  
1990 - 2015

Based on records in Natural Heritage Database  
Map updated 2015

**A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan**

**Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife**

1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581; tel: 508-389-6300; fax: 508-389-7890; [www.mass.gov/dfw](http://www.mass.gov/dfw)

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(*Prunus serotina*) (M. Thomas, pers. comm.). Larvae feed on the flowers, developing fruits, and leaves of beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*). The pupa overwinters.

**Adult Flight Period in Massachusetts**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

**GEOGRAPHIC RANGE:** The Early Hairstreak ranges from Nova Scotia south to northern New Jersey, and west to northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio, also extending south in the Appalachian Mountains to northern Georgia (Opler 1998). In Massachusetts, the Early Hairstreak is known from Berkshire and Franklin Counties.

**STATUS AND THREATS:** The Early Hairstreak is threatened by loss and fragmentation of mature northern hardwood forest as a result of development and clear-cut timber harvest. Loss of mature beech trees to beech bark disease is a growing threat. Beech bark disease occurs when bark damaged by the introduced beech scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) subsequently becomes infected with fungi (*Nectria* spp.). Other potential threats include introduced generalist parasitoids and aerial insecticide spraying.

**Literature Cited**

Leahy, C.W., B. Cassie, and R.K. Walton (eds.). 2006. Massachusetts Butterfly Atlas 1986-1990. Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts. [www.massaudubon.org/butterflyatlas](http://www.massaudubon.org/butterflyatlas).  
 Opler, P.A. 1998. *A Field Guide to Eastern Butterflies*. Peterson Field Guide Series. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Massachusetts. 486 pp.

Authored by M.W. Nelson, NHESP Invertebrate Zoologist, May 2015

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