

White M Hairstreak



Parrhasius m-album

Gray Hairstreak

Strymon melinus

Biology

The **White M Hairstreak** is a conspicuous butterfly due to its iridescent blue dorsal coloration. It is the only member of the genus *Parrhasius* in the United States, with most *Parrhasius* species occurring in South America. This species is found throughout Florida (with the exception of the Keys), and the eastern half of the United States all the way north to Ontario, Canada. Adult **White M Hairstreaks** feed on nectar from a variety of plants, whereas the caterpillars only feed on leaves of oaks. The butterfly lays flat, white eggs. The caterpillars are reddish-brown and blend well with the young foliage on which they feed. In Florida, the **White M Hairstreak** has 3 - 4 reproductive cycles a year and is known to overwinter as pupae. It differs from the **Gray Hairstreak** by the characteristic white M-shaped line found on the underside of the wing near the tail (→).

Host Plants

Sand Live Oak	<i>Quercus germinata</i>
Water Oak	<i>Quercus nigra</i>
Live Oak	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>



Biology

Despite often being confused with the **White M Hairstreak**, due to their similar underside coloration pattern, the **Gray Hairstreak** has a dark upperside, with an underside that is more silvery, with less of an M-shaped line than the **White M Hairstreak**. This butterfly is also very common throughout Florida and the eastern United States. Its caterpillars differ significantly from those of the **White M Hairstreak**, being variable in color and ranging from yellow to green to red with conspicuous markings. The caterpillars feed on leaves, flowers, and fruit and are potentially damaging to bean and cotton crops. Both species can be observed feeding together on white clover.

Host Plants

Clover	<i>Trifolium</i> spp.
Jointvetches	<i>Aeschynomene</i> spp.
Woodland Poppymallow	<i>Callirhoe papaver</i>

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