

East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers

March 2020



MUD in your EYE

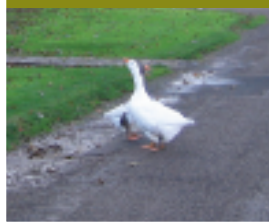


Wildlife

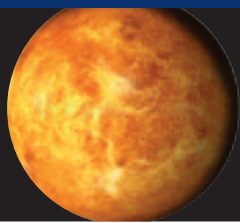
The Mad March Hares

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Out and about



Heavens above



Volunteers





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Welcome to the 44th Edition of
'Mud in Your Eye'

We'd love to hear from you!
Email: ranger@eastlothian.gov.uk
or follow us...

 @ELCrangers

 East Lothian Countryside
Ranger Service

Published by East Lothian Council's
Countryside Rangers

Book a **unique wildlife experience** to discover the best of East Lothian's coast & countryside; by **boot, bicycle or e.bus!**

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VISIT: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangers

BOOK: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerservice


East Lothian
Council

Dunglass to Oldhamstocks

- Start:** Dunglass A1 layby
- Finish:** Oldhamstocks
- Distance:** 4 km / 2½ miles
- Time:** 1 - 1½ hours
- Terrain:** Mostly farm tracks grass paths through fields.
- Directions:** Follow the signs for the John Muir Way from the layby, turning right in a short distance to go under the railway bridge. Continue to the public road and cross over, following signs for Dunglass Collegiate Church. Continue following the estate road round the right hand side of the ruins of the old church, passing a pond on your left after approximately 200m. Continue to the next junction where a sign for a public path points left towards Springfield Farm. Continue beyond Springfield Farm to emerge on the public road to the north of Oldhamstocks. Unless transport is pre-arranged retrace your steps to the start.
- Points of interest:**
- 1. Dunglass Collegiate Church** – 15th Century church.
 - 2. Dunglass** – a large Sycamore tree, close to the remains of the church, marks the centre of the ancient village.
 - 3. Oldhamstocks** – lovely village and architecture on the edge of the Lammermuir Hills.
- Public transport:** Bus service to Cockburnspath linking Edinburgh, Haddington, Dunbar and Berwick Upon Tweed.
- Local Services:** Cockburnspath in the Scottish Borders can be reached by following the signed path from the John Muir Way. There is a small shop in the village.



Oldhamstocks locals.

Tackling Climate Change in East Lothian

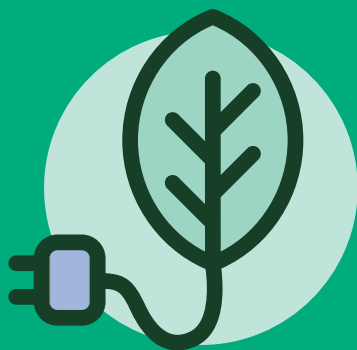
Jennifer Lothian, East Lothian Council's Sustainable Energy & Climate Change Officer, discusses natural solutions that will help us to tackle the climate crisis, and sets out the Council's vision and strategy to tackle climate change locally here in East Lothian, and how we can all make a difference.

We are facing a global climate emergency. The scientific evidence shows that the damage humans are causing to our planet is creating a climate and ecological crisis. We need to change our ways to tackle this crisis.

In East Lothian we are already being affected by climate change. Climate projections show that we can expect more severe weather events, milder wetter winters, hotter drier summers, and sea level rise impacting on us here in East Lothian. This will not only affect the people in our communities, our buildings, infrastructure and services, but is also affecting our precious natural environment. Already we are seeing evidence of changes in species' ranges and the arrival times of migratory wildlife. The risks of pests and non-native invasive species are likely to increase.

So what can be done?

The good news is that nature has many of the solutions. The natural world has adapted to changes in the climate over millennia. However, turning the tide on the current human-induced rate of change is hugely challenging. By working together with natural processes, we can find natural solutions to help tackle the climate and ecological crisis. Here in East Lothian, East Lothian Council's Countryside Service has been working for decades to conserve, protect and enhance our natural environment. This includes coastal mudflats and saltmarsh, which are not only hugely important habitats for a multitude of species, but also help us to adapt to climate change by dissipating tidal storm surges and acting as natural coastal protection.



The vision and overall aims of East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025 are:

East Lothian Council will take urgent action to make all our Council Services Net Zero as soon as reasonably practicable or in any case by 2045 and will lobby, support and work with government, all relevant agencies, partners and communities to fulfil this commitment.

We will also work with our communities and partners towards making East Lothian a carbon neutral county, enabling the county to deliver its part of wider national and international commitments, and to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Tackling Climate Change – Continued

These habitats in good condition are also hugely significant in carbon capture and storage, by removing and ‘locking up’ carbon from the atmosphere. Peatland restoration locks up huge quantities of carbon. Reedbeds and marshland along rivers have roles in natural flood protection. Woodlands are one of the key habitats that are hugely significant for ‘carbon offsetting’. All of these natural habitats will help us to achieve a carbon neutral East Lothian. East Lothian Council sets out how we will achieve the outcome of “A Healthy and Resilient Natural Environment and the route to Carbon Neutral” in our recently approved Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025, which can be viewed at: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/climatechangestrategy. East Lothian Council is committed to tackling the Climate Emergency locally and doing all we can to achieve a Net Zero Council and a Carbon Neutral East Lothian, but we cannot do it alone.

By working together in partnership, and with all of us doing what we can as individuals, we can make a difference together.

By working together to restore and enhance our natural environment and conserve biodiversity, working in partnership with landowners and farmers, national agencies, East Lothian’s dedicated and committed local groups and voluntary organisations, and the people in our communities who are dedicated to looking after our local greenspaces and natural environment, we can all make a difference. Tree planting of native species in the right locations will make a difference – contact the Council’s Countryside Ranger Service to seek advice and get involved.

Further details of East Lothian Council’s Climate Change Strategy are given in the information box.



BIKE TOURS

Enjoy a ranger **guided wildlife journey** as we travel by bike through wildflower meadows, sand dunes and woodland. We will see amazing **wildlife**, while learning about the stories of the human **history**, and the remnants of this left behind in the landscape. Tours start and finish in **North Berwick** and run between **1.00pm - 4.00pm**. **Tours cost £25** if you bring your own bike. Bikes can be hired from Law Cycles (North Berwick) for an extra £25.



Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerservice for a full list of tour dates.

To book a place, or for more information, contact: Law Cycles on 01620 890643

Tackling Climate Change – Continued

Climate Change Strategy

Working together in East Lothian to tackle climate change



East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy can be viewed here:
www.eastlothian.gov.uk/climatechangestrategy
Email: climatechange@eastlothian.gov.uk

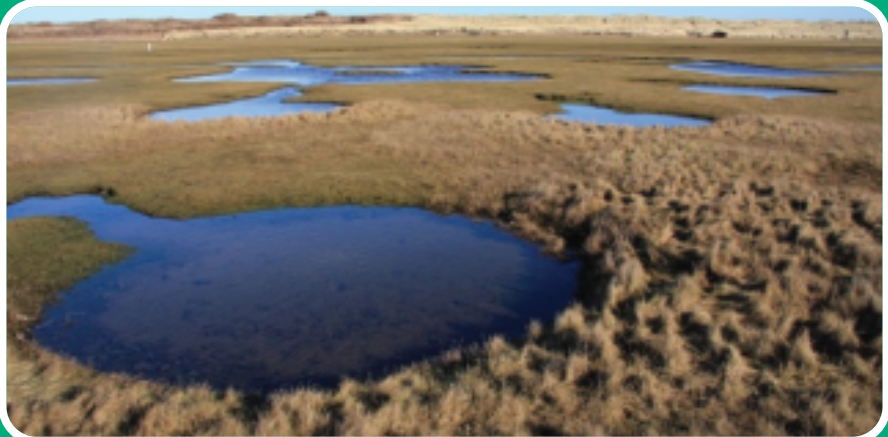
Tackling Climate Change – Continued

We can all reduce our own carbon footprint by:

- Improving the energy efficiency of our homes and businesses;
- Reducing, reusing, recycling our waste;
- Walking, cycling or using public transport instead of the car;
- Buying local food, or grow your own;
- Helping to improve local greenspaces for wildlife and people;
- Preparing for the impacts of climate change, such as severe weather events, flooding or heat waves.

You can find more information online at: Greener Scotland www.greenerscotland.org
This provides useful information and tips on

- Saving energy in your home
- Greener travel, including active and sustainable travel options
- Eating greener
- Reducing food waste
- Reduce, reuse, recycle your waste



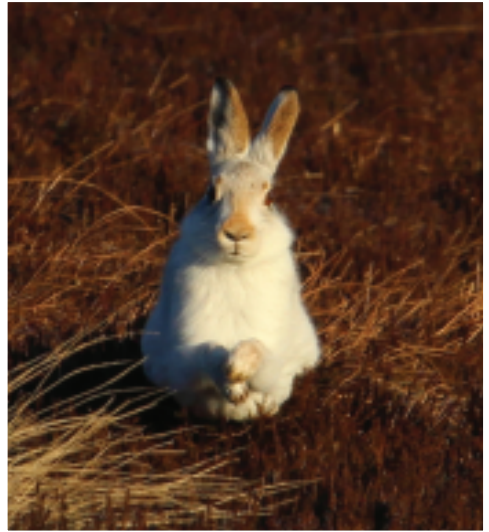
Saltmarsh at John Muir Country Park, an important habitat for carbon storage.

Mad March hares

The Mad March Hare, not just a character in *Alice in Wonderland*, but a term often given to brown hares at this time of year because of their strange antics. As a female becomes fertile, she begins to attract males who follow her around, often in quite big numbers. If they get a bit too close though, she will turn and fight them off. So, if you see two hares 'boxing', you are almost certainly watching a female and a male coming to blows and not two males fighting.



Brown hare.



Mountain hare.

Unlike rabbits, hares do not dig burrows. Instead, they scrape out a small depression, called a form, in which to squat, relying on their stillness to hide them from potential predators. They are one of the fastest land mammals too, their powerful hind legs allowing them to reach speeds of up to 45mph when needing to escape.

Hares are related to rabbits, both being lagamorphs, but hares are larger, with longer back legs and longer, black-tipped ears.



Mad March hares – Continued



Mountain hare on Lammermuir .

There are a number of myths associated with hares. It was thought that witches could turn into hares to roam around the countryside and to escape capture. There is an old legend of a man shooting and wounding a hare, then following the trail of blood, which led to a cottage and a woman with an injured arm. The hare was a symbol of the pagan goddess Eastre or Ostara (from which we get the word Easter), a goddess of the dawn, new birth and new beginnings. The Easter bunny is a modern day version of that symbol, so we really should be calling it the Easter hare! Seeing a moon gazing hare was once believed to

bring growth, new life and good fortune. It is interesting that the concept of moon gazing hares is seen in cultures across the world.

We actually have two species of hare in Scotland. The mountain hare, as its name suggests, prefers higher ground than its lowland cousin. It also tends to turn white in the winter, even in places such as the Lammermuir Hills, where the often lack of snow means that the mountain hare can be very obvious in its white coat against a dark background!

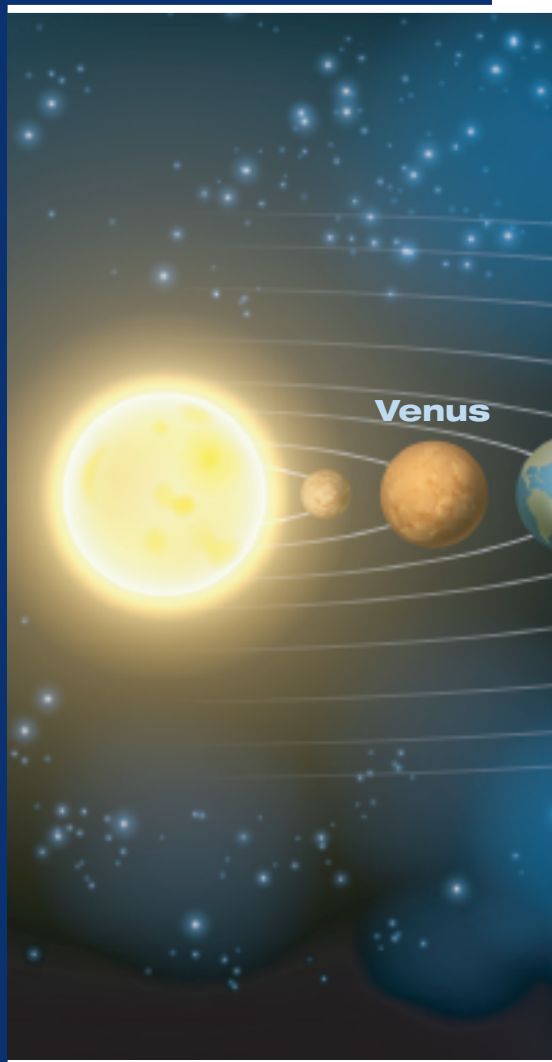
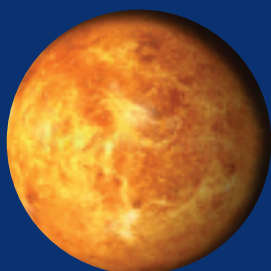
Heaven's Above – Venus

It is not often that you get a good view of the planet Venus. Its proximity to the sun means that our fiery star often obscures it. March 24th, however, will find Venus at its greatest eastern elongation, and at its highest point above the horizon in the evening sky.

Check low in the western sky just after sunset. When visible, Venus is the second brightest natural object in the night sky after the moon and can occasionally be seen to the naked eye in broad daylight. There are tales of train drivers being spooked by Venus rising above the horizon in the evening sky, thinking it to be the light from an oncoming train.

Venus is often described as Earth's sister planet, given its proximity to us and its similar size. Venus, however, behaves very strangely compared to the Earth. For a start, it rotates in the opposite direction, possibly because of a collision with an asteroid or other object in its past. Its day length is larger than the length of its year. It takes 243 Earth days to rotate once on its axis and 225 days to orbit the sun.

Although it is a rocky planet, a dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide, with traces of nitrogen and sulfur dioxide, obscures the surface of Venus. In fact, that dense atmosphere means that the atmospheric pressure on the surface of Venus is nearly 100 times that of the Earth.



Venus Continued

As a result you would be crushed the instant you set foot on the planet. Of course, you may fry first, given that the average surface temperature is 462 degrees Celsius! Scientists think that, in its past, Venus may have been more

hospitable, but it experienced a massive, runaway greenhouse effect that resulted in the hostile conditions now found there. A cautionary tale for our own planet perhaps?



The Wych Elm

It's worth keeping an eye on some of our trees at this time of year. Many will have leaf buds opening or indeed open, but some, including hazels and elms will be flowering this month. These tree species are easy to spot as the flowers emerge before the leaves, giving the tree a very distinctive appearance.



The Elm flower.

The wych elm is our only native species in that particular genus (*Ulmus*, if you're interested in taxonomy) and is the one you're most likely to see in this area. Despite the name, the English elm is now widely regarded as not native to the UK. In fact genetic evidence suggests that the English elm is a cloned cultivar of the European field elm. Populations of both wych and English elms have been devastated by Dutch elm disease, although the latter species seems to have fared worse. This may well be related to the fact that English elms spread via suckers, so each new tree is a clone of its parent. This results in a lack of genetic diversity and low disease resistance. Wych elm, on the other hand usually reproduce sexually, which gives them a more genetically varied

population, some of which will have greater resistance. At least that's the theory. Wych elms in the wild can reach heights of over twenty metres and often have a broad, spreading crown. When young, the bark is grey and smooth but will crack and darken with age. The leaves are rough to the touch – feeling rather like sandpaper in extreme cases. However, it's the flowers we're most interested in here. These grow in clusters of ten to twenty reddish-purple blooms, spaced out along the twigs. When first opening they appear almost as small starbursts of colour, but as they develop they become more spreading and drooping. The flowers will develop into bright green seeds, which are also very distinctive, but you'll have to wait for later in spring to see these.

The Wych Elm – Continued

Technically, these seeds are an example of a samara – a winged fruit which allows the seed to fall safely and at a distance from the parent tree. Ash keys and sycamore “helicopters” are other examples.

Elms are useful trees for a variety of wildlife, providing a habitat for many invertebrate and lichen species. Birds eat the seeds, whilst the leaves are food for a number of moths, including the light emerald and white-spotted pinion (don't you just love moth names?) The caterpillars of the white-letter hairstreak butterfly are almost wholly dependent on elms and these insects suffered greatly as Dutch elm disease spread. Sadly, this is not a butterfly we're likely to see this far north – although, with climate change, who knows what might turn up?

The tree has also been put to good use by humans, at least historically. The wood is strong and durable, but more easily worked than some and has been used to make boat parts, coffins, furniture and floorboards, as well as more decorative stuff. In addition, it's largely non-porous and was used to make water pipes. Indeed, several English cities, including Bristol and Liverpool had elm water mains back in the day. In folklore, elms were associated with death and melancholy. It was also said to give the power of prophetic dreams. It's not clear whether you were meant to somehow imbibe part of the tree for this, or if you could just have a kip underneath one. For those of you who like grisly tales, the village of Hagley in Worcestershire has, since the 1940s, seen sporadic outbursts of graffiti along the lines of “Who put Bella in the wych (or witch) elm”.



The Elm flower.

This dates back to the discovery of a woman's skeleton in a hollow tree trunk in 1943. The mystery of who Bella was, or even if she was actually called Bella, has never been solved, although various theories have been put forward. These include stories of witchcraft, prostitution and the timing of the find also inspired the idea that there might be a German spy-ring involved. Certainly, the fact that it was wartime meant that the job of identifying “Bella” was made more difficult by the number of missing people. Incidentally, and on a lighter note, the occasional spelling of the tree as witch elm doesn't signify an occult link. Rather, wych (or witch) derives from the Old English *wice*, meaning supple or pliant.

The East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime

It is a year since the East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (ELPARC) was launched in January 2019. Chaired by Derek Oliver (Service Manager- Protective Services, East Lothian Council), the partnership was formed in response to concerns from those who reside in East Lothian's many rural communities, regarding the occurrence and fear of the type of crime specifically affecting those areas.



The group has representation from, not only Police Scotland and East Lothian Council, but a number of key contributors including NFU Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland (NHWS), Scottish Land and Estates, Network Rail, British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Scottish Water, SEPA, Marine Scotland, RSPB, and SSPCA.

ELPARC began with a launch day at Adniston Farm, Macmerry.

This was attended by over 70 people, mostly from the East Lothian farming community, and included opening speeches by Derek Oliver of East Lothian Council and Chair of ELPARC, Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy, Chief Inspector Steven Duncan, East Lothian Area Commander and Willie Clark from Neighbourhood Watch Scotland. The launch event also featured a 'walk 'n talk' hosted by Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, on the subject of crime and fire prevention. Regular strategic meetings are held and these are based around the structure of a Rural Crime Plan devised by the partnership.



ELPARC – Continued



This plan is focused around priorities identified by both the representatives of the organisations, and by analysing rural incidents brought to the attention of the partners.

These include Rural theft, fly tipping, malicious fire-raising, hare coursing, poaching, livestock attack and distress and anti-social off road biking.

The plan allows the partnership to focus on the issues that are most prevalent in East Lothian, with the intention of delivering outcomes in reducing Rural Crime.

Each priority has a subgroup allocated to it and, by bringing specialist knowledge together from across the different partners, that sub group will be responsible for formulating a prevention and enforcement plan, to promote the prevention of incidents but also to deal more efficiently with them if or when they occur.

Operationally, there have been numerous successes throughout the year. One of the first plans to be implemented was relating to Hare Coursing. This activity can often go on 'in plain sight' and can simply appear as people exercising their dogs in fields. A lot of work has gone on to highlight this illegal and cruel activity through the partnership involving newspaper articles and placing signs up in public places to educate the general public. The aim is to highlight the problem and educate the public on what Hare Coursing actually is – a barbaric sport participated by serious and organised criminals.

This strategy was borne out with East Lothian seeing a rise in reports of Hare Coursing in the last 12 months. In one particular incident, four separate calls were received regarding one group of males and this enabled Police to pinpoint where the suspects were, and four arrests were made as a result.

ELPARC – Continued

Of course, there are occasions when Officers will be unable to attend. However, the increase in reports is forming a better intelligence picture of this activity.

There have been further successes in the form of joint reporting of fly-tipping cases between East Lothian Council and Police Scotland.

On the prevention front, ELPARC has attended many events throughout the year including the East Lothian Agricultural show, the East Lothian Partnership Forum, where it hosted a workshop and supporting the 16 days of action against violence against women. Further engagement sessions are planned for the coming year, including a series of road shows throughout the rural communities of the county.

ELPARC has been supported by Police Scotland's National Rural Crime Unit, which has described what ELPARC has achieved as 'trailblazing', with several other local authorities throughout Scotland replicating the ELPARC structure and rural crime plan in their own areas.

The success of the partnership has been without doubt, down to the individuals involved and a determination that each partner has a role and can contribute to delivering successful outcomes, improving the lives of those who live in rural East Lothian.





Dunbar Conservation Volunteers

Whilst pushing several wheelbarrow loads of whin dust for a new path, a volunteer was asked if they were doing community service! Quite tickled by the question, they answered "sort of"! Which I guess is true, but not because the courts ordered them to, but because they want to!

Liz Cunningham.



Putting up a tern fence at Spike Island.

There are a variety of volunteering opportunities within the Ranger Service from path wardening to pony checking, as well as several 'Friends of' groups. Dunbar Conservation Volunteers (DCV) is one of the more recent groups to form.



Sea buckthorn removal.



Dunbar Conservation Volunteers

Meeting on the last Wednesday of every month we have the luxury of working in the beautiful countryside sites in and around Dunbar, from John Muir Country Park to Barns Ness, and like the sites, the tasks that we undertake can be quite varied:

- Putting up the tern fence at Spike Island each Spring
- Creating a new path surface at John Muir Country Park
- Diverting water off an archaeologically sensitive section of path at Traprain Law
- Removing ragwort at Traprain Law
- Removing gorse at Barns Ness and Traprain Law
- Clearing paths and removing fire sites at Tynninghame
- Litter picking everywhere!
- Removing invasive species such as sea buckthorn, rhododendron and pirri-pirri bur
- Repairing fences and stiles
- Tree planting and beating up

We have a range of volunteers who work with us on either a regular or occasional basis to suit their interests and commitments. They each bring their own individual strengths and knowledge to the group, but thankfully every one of them gets something out of it whether it's a bit of fresh air, exercise, a sense of doing good or just socialising with like-minded individuals. For us, we get to work with a great group of people who can help tackle something that would otherwise take us a long time on our own, and we repay the favour with tea and biscuits!

Since its inception in October 2014, DCV have worked over 1500 volunteer hours and we cannot thank them enough for the time and effort that they have put in over the years.

If you would like to join us then please contact Jenny Hargreaves via jhargreaves@eastlothian.gov.uk for more information and to get signed up!



A selection of volunteers doing 'Community Service'.



EVENTS FOR ADULTS

A series of wildlife and history themed events and walks aimed at adults who are interested in learning more about the history and natural history of East Lothian. Costs are either £6.50 or £10 per person depending on the length of the event.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL via: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerservice

March 29th | 13:00-15:00 | Sun, Sea and Sandstone

Step back in time to uncover evidence of East Lothian's ancient past, recorded in the rocks and fossils.

April 26th | 07:00-09:00 | The Early Bird

Ever wondered how to tell a chiffchaff from a willow warbler? The secret lies in the wonderful world of birdsong.

May 24th | 10:30-12:00 | Secrets of the Seashore

A rock-pool and sandy shore ramble to discover some of the species that inhabit the seashore.

June 28th | 14:00-16:00 | Traprain Treasures

Join the Ranger on a gentle stroll to the top of Traprain Law to learn about importance of this iconic hill.

July 26th | 14:00-16:00 | Wonderful Wildflowers

A stroll around John Muir Country Park to learn about folklore and old uses of local flora.

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangers

Contact Centre T: 01620 827827 and ask for Countryside Rangers

volunteer diary dates

Where	Day	Date	Time	Action
Aberlady	Wed	04 Mar	09:30 - 15:00	Beach clean
Yellowcraig	Thu	05 Mar	09:45 - 15:00	Pirri-pirri removal
Aberlady	Sun	15 Mar	09:30 - 15:00	Beach clean
North Berwick	Tue	17 Mar	10:00 - 12:30	tbd
Levenhall Musselburgh	Tue	24 Mar	10:00 - 13:00	Hedge planting
Dunbar	Wed	25 Mar	10:00 - 12:30	tbd
Aberlady	Wed	25 Mar	09:30 - 15:00	Electric fence removal
Aberlady	Wed	01 Apr	09:30 - 15:00	Electric fence removal, and twine fence erection.
Yellowcraig	Thu	02 Apr	09:45 - 15:00	Tree planting and maintenance
North Berwick	Tue	21 Apr	10:00 - 12:30	tbd
Aberlady	Sun	19 Apr	09:30 - 15:00	Sea buckthorn control
Levenhall Musselburgh	Tue	28 Apr	10:00 - 13:00	Tree tube removal
Dunbar	Wed	29 Apr	10:00 - 12:30	tbd

For information on all events please contact ranger@eastlothian.gov.uk

