



East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers

MUD in your EYE

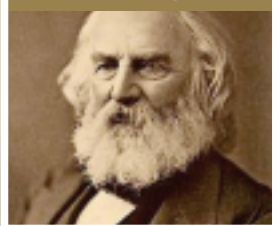
Sept/Oct 2021



Community

**The East Lothian Partnership
Against Rural Crime Pages 6/7**

Poetry



Heavens above



Seaweed





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Welcome to the 53rd 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

Editorial

Autumn is upon us, and for me at least that means a welcome return to darker evenings and better opportunities to observe the night sky. See the Heaven's Above article for things to look out for this autumn.

Summer can be a relatively quiet time wildlife wise, but autumn sees a rush of activity, with winter visitors returning, the leaves changing colour on the trees, fruits and berries in abundance and nectar feeding insects actively looking for the last of the flowers to bloom before winter. One of these plants is meadowsweet, and you can read about its importance to wildlife, and indeed us, here. Another plant steeped in folklore is the hawthorn, from the flowers to the fruits to the thorny branches, there is a myth surrounding every part of this hedgerow shrub. On a culinary note, try out our hawthorn berry recipe.

The autumn storms bring in a variety of seaweeds to our beaches so this is a good time to see if you can pick out some of the different species that end up on the strandline. Read the article to get an insight into this group of algae. Our poem in this issue by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is also on the theme of seaweeds. We continue to work with the East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (ELPARC) and you can read all about the work they do in our guest article.



In praise of Meadowsweet

As we head towards late summer and autumn, there will be fewer wildflowers in bloom. Those that do remain become increasingly important to late-flying insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies which depend on nectar for food. One such plant is meadowsweet, which can be found flowering into September and occasionally October.



Meadowsweet - delicate sprays of creamy-white flowers.

Meadowsweet is a common plant of damp grassland, ditches and bogs. It's a member of the rose family; and is a medium to tall plant with delicate sprays of creamy-white flowers and dark green leaves. It is very much a feature of meadows, but its name is thought to derive from its use as a flavouring in mead. In many older works it's known as meadsweet, or meadwort, with the reference to meadows only appearing later. In fact, it has had a number of uses associated with its taste and smell. Not only can it be added to stewed fruits and jams, historically it was also strewn across floors to give rooms a pleasant smell and has been included in pot pourri.

This wildflower has also been extensively used in folk medicines, mainly to treat pains, hangovers and fevers. It was also

highly prized by the druids for its medicinal value. Whilst it's always worth viewing traditional remedies with a healthy scepticism, this is one where folklore and science are in agreement. Meadowsweet contains a chemical called salicylic acid, which is also found in willow bark – the chemical's name is derived from *Salix*, the genus containing willows. In the 1890s German chemists, using meadowsweet, synthesised a substance which they named salicin. This chemical went on to become one of the most commonly used painkillers in the world, and has made a lot of money for Bayer AG pharmaceutical company. Its commercial name, Aspirin, is derived from the old scientific name for meadowsweet – *Spiraea ulmaria*.

In praise of Meadowsweet – Continued



Meadowsweet - a member of the rose family.

The modern scientific name for meadowsweet is *Filipendula ulmaria*. The genus name comes from the Latin words *filum*, or thread, and *pendulus*, meaning hanging. The latter term refers to the way that the plant's underground tubers hang on fibrous roots. *Ulmaria* means elm-like and may refer to the leaves (passing) resemblance to those of the elm. Meadowsweet is known by a number of other, quirkier, names, including the Queen of the Meadow. One of the most entertaining, and cynical, is "courtship and matrimony". The smell of the freshly cut flowers is sweet, with hints of honey – this represents the sweetness of courtship and falling in love. Over time, the flowers and especially the leaves give off a sharper, more bitter scent – indicating the souring of a relationship over the years. I told you it was cynical. The smell of the crushed

leaves can be bitter, although it's not necessarily unpleasant, having an antiseptic aroma which many people find rather nice.

In addition to providing nectar for insects, meadowsweet is also the food plant for several species of moth caterpillar, including the emperor moth, grey pug and mottled beauty. It forms an integral part of the floral community of damp grasslands and, as such, is a valuable species in the East Lothian countryside. Furthermore, meadowsweet leaves can often be found with galls formed by the orange rust fungus *Triphragium ulmariae*. This might not sound that important, but even rust fungi have to live somewhere.

Confusion Corner - Seaweed

Although the economic contribution of seaweed may not be news to East Lothian's farming community who historically made full use of this washed up 'ware', seaweed is currently headline news, from being the next superfood, to a plastic replacement and much in between.



Sea lettuce and kelp.



Dulse.

The 600 or so native species that make up our underwater rainforests are home to an abundance of wildlife, from tiny sea squirts to patrolling seals. They also provide a crucial indicator in determining the health of our seas.

Identifying some of the intimidating diversity can be challenging, but helped hugely by their habit of zoning into distinct communities on our rocky shores. In the frequently dry, rain and frost battered reaches of the 'splash zone' and upper rocky shore, hardy green seaweeds such as sea lettuce and intestine-like gutweed, dominate.

Confusion Corner - Seaweed

Continued

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Laminaria Digitata.

Descending from this 'greenbelt', you are quickly into the 'wracks' which, like gutweed, possess channels or spiral adaptations to avoid drying out. Wracks are common, being found on more sheltered shores and larger pools, above the intricate coralline seaweeds and other colourful species.

Only certain wavelengths of sunlight make it through the water as it deepens, and so seaweed colour changes to adapt, or in the case of bladder wrack also float with the incoming tide. In the depths, red seaweeds are well placed to utilise the energy in the blue-green light spectrum that penetrates through.

Waves also pose a challenge to some species, and on more exposed coasts long-fronded kelps use a root like 'holdfast' to survive wave action, but being an algae



Bladder wrack.

these have no function in transporting nutrients, unlike the root systems of land plants.

Whether you ramble the rockpools or bide time on the beaches waiting for the treasures brought by the first autumn swells, there is loads to discover. Why not bring along this cheap and handy guide from the FSC to get you started (Seaweeds guide – Field Studies Council (field-studies-council.org)).

Seaweed -

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

When descends on the Atlantic
The gigantic
Storm-wind of the equinox,
Landward in his wrath he scourges
The toiling surges,
Laden with seaweed from the rocks:

From Bermuda's reefs; from edges
Of sunken ledges,
In some far-off, bright Azore;
From Bahama, and the dashing,
Silver-flashing
Surges of San Salvador;

From the tumbling surf, that buries
The Orkneyan skerries,
Answering the hoarse Hebrides;
And from wrecks of ships, and drifting
Spars, uplifting
On the desolate, rainy seas; —

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless main;
Till in sheltered coves, and reaches
Of sandy beaches,
All have found repose again.

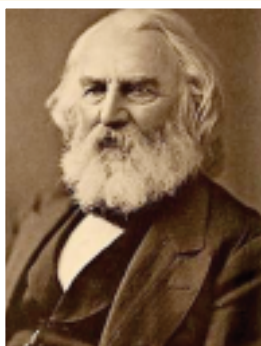
So when storms of wild emotion
Strike the ocean
Of the poet's soul, erelong

From each cave and rocky fastness,
In its vastness,
Floats some fragment of a song:

From the far-off isles enchanted,
Heaven has planted
With the golden fruit of Truth;
From the flashing surf, whose vision
Gleams Elysian
In the tropic clime of Youth;

From the strong Will, and the Endeavor
That forever
Wrestle with the tides of Fate;
From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,
Tempest-shattered,
Floating waste and desolate; —

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart;
Till at length in books recorded,
They, like hoarded
Household words, no more depart.



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime

The East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (ELPARC) was launched in January 2019 and has representation from Police Scotland and East Lothian Council, as well 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.



The East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime - a strategic approach.

Rural Crime is one which affects any person living, working or visiting a Rural Area. This is any geographic area located outside a town or city or any area within a small town or village with a population of less than 3000, and includes farms, businesses, private dwellings, country estates, and woodland or forestry areas. The ELPARC have regular meetings based around the structure of a Rural Crime Plan devised by the partnership. This plan is focused around priorities identified by the 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. More recently following the rise in 'staycations', water safety has been added as a priority, and an event was held at North Berwick by Police Scotland in partnership with the RNLI, Fire Service and the Coastguard to highlight the dangers of being in the water.

The East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime – Continued



The plan allows the partnership to focus on the issues that are most prevalent in East Lothian.

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.

Following the implications of Covid-19, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire & Rescue service held a small relaunch of ELPARC at Haddington Farmer's market to raise awareness and reintroduce the partnership to the public, and days of action around hare coursing are in the process of being organised.



We would urge anybody who witnesses suspicious activity in our rural areas to report these to Police or the relevant partners for investigation.



Maintaining a presence in our community.

Autumn Night Sky Watching

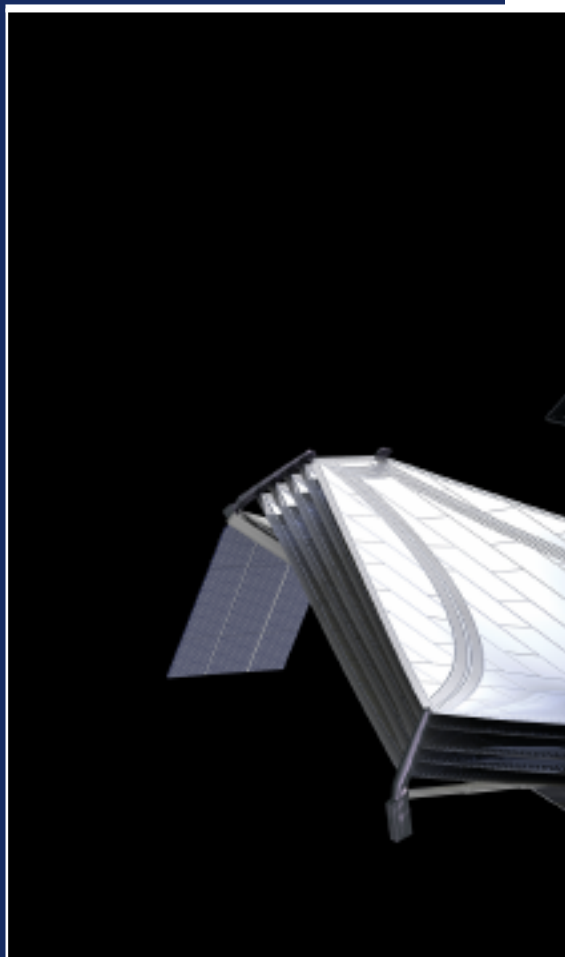
There are a number of things that you can look for in the night sky this autumn.

Five of the seven planets in our solar system will be observable. Venus will appear in the evening sky just after sunset. It will be second only to the moon in brightness, but will be low in the western sky, so you will need an uninterrupted view of the horizon to see it. Jupiter and Saturn will both be visible low in the southern sky throughout autumn. On the 18th September, Jupiter will be just to the right of the moon at about 11pm. On the 24th September at 11pm Uranus can be seen right next to the moon in the eastern sky. Uranus is the furthest away planet that can be seen with the naked eye, although binoculars will help to identify it as a planet. Neptune is also visible in the night sky for the whole of autumn, but is too far away to be seen without binoculars or a telescope. If you do want to try and find it though, it will be just to the right of the moon at 11pm on October 17th.

As the nights get longer, it is a good time to try and spot the Milky Way. You will need a dark sky to do this, as street lighting prevents this faint object from being seen. In really dark areas it will be obvious, but you can work out where it is in more light polluted areas by using the constellations. The W-shaped Cassiopeia sits across the Milky Way, as does the cross-shaped Cygnus the swan, which appears to be flying along its length. The Milky Way is actually the light from millions of stars that make up the galaxy of which we are a part. It is a barred-spiral galaxy, with a central bar and four main spiral arms. Our solar system lies in between two of the spiral arms about one third of the way out from the central disc. When looking at the Milky Way, you

should notice that large parts of it appear to be obscured by long dark lines.

These lines, known as the Great Rift, are vast clouds of gas and dust located between us and the middle of the Milky Way. These clouds absorb most of the visible light trying to reach us from the billions of stars in the centre of our galaxy.

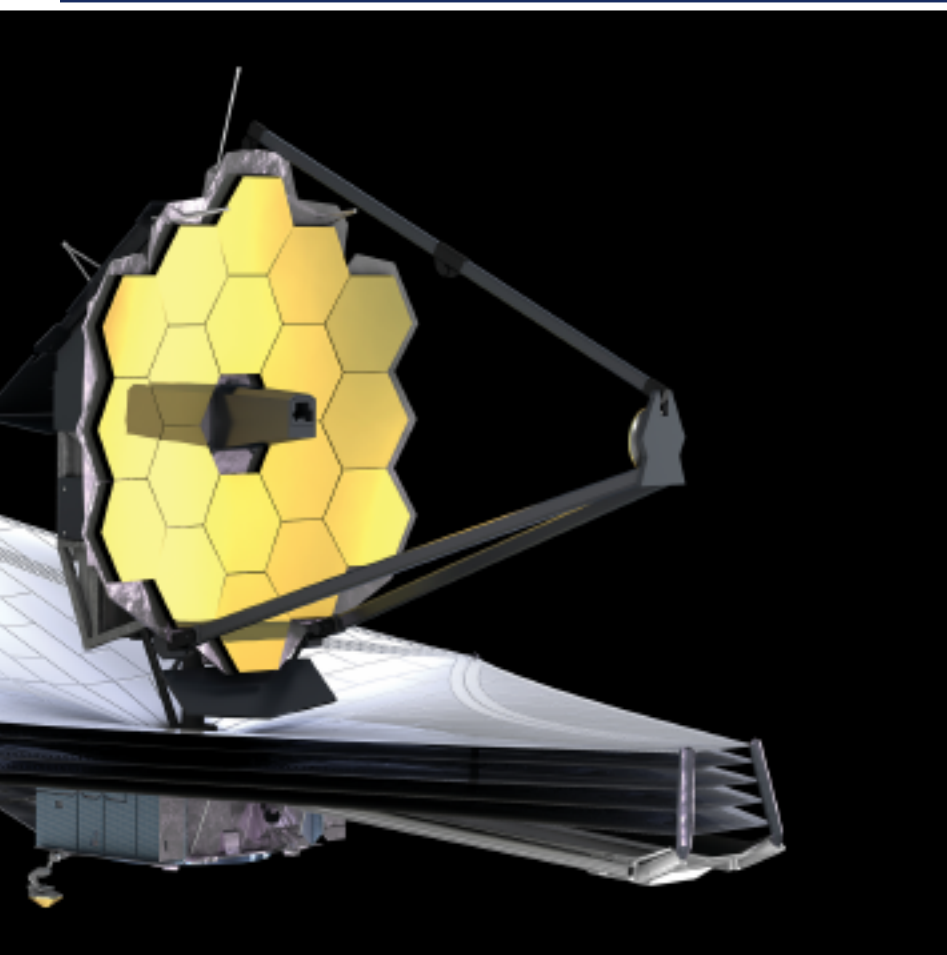


Autumn Night Sky Watching – Continued

As mentioned last year, the Andromeda galaxy is also a spiral galaxy which is moving towards us. It will collide with the Milky Way in about four billion years. It can be seen as a pale smudge just below Cassiopeia.

The Orionid meteor shower will peak on October 21st. It doesn't last long, but at its peak can generate up to 70 meteors an hour in the early hours of the morning.

Finally, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is due to be launched on October 13th. It will have a mirror capable of collecting over six times the amount of light than the Hubble Space Telescope. This means it will be able to see more and further. The Hubble has given us some fantastic images, so I am really looking forward to see what the JWST can do.



By Oak, Ash and Thorn – an ode to the Haw.

You might be forgiven in thinking autumn is a bit of a frugal time for wild foods, but despair not! There is plenty around if you know where to look. This season, we want to draw your attention to an often-overlooked species – the hawthorn...



The understated, but beautiful hawthorn blossom.

Hawthorn, or *Crataegus monogyna* is a member of the rose family, and an easily identifiable species most often found in hedgerows. Its leaves are small, deeply lobed and roughly as broad as they are long and at this time of year the berries are red and slightly shiny. A word of caution: hawthorns have sharp thorns along their branches, so be aware when you are picking the berries, and avoid foraging from trees that are close to roads due to risk of pollutants.

The hawthorn can support over 300 insects, and the dense thorny foliage makes an excellent nesting habitat for many species of bird. Its flowers are eaten by dormice and provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. Hawthorn is a pagan symbol of fertility, and has ancient associations with May Day celebrations – its leaves and flowers were

used in garlands and villagers would be sent out to gather a live hawthorn to bring back for the may pole.

Hawthorn blossoms were never allowed in the home as it is thought that they brought sickness and death. In medieval times, hawthorn blossom was said to smell of the Great Plague and some believe that the crown of thorns worn by Jesus was made of hawthorn. We now know that one of the chemicals in hawthorn trymethyamine is one of the first chemicals which forms in decaying animal flesh, so it is hardly surprising that the flowers were so often associated with death. Next spring, give the blossoms a sniff and see what you think! This chemical attracts flies which are one of the key pollinators of hawthorn.

By Oak, Ash and Thorn – an ode to the Haw. – Continued

Since the Middle-Ages, hawthorn has been used by herbalists to regulate blood pressure, stabilise an irregular heartbeat, strengthen the muscle of the heart and improve hardening of the arteries. This is now well documented and backed up by hard science – if you're interested a quick google will bring up dozens of journal papers on the subject.

Below is a simple recipe for you to try. It's a spicy ketchup you can use in place of normal ketchup and it's totally delicious!

Spicy haw ketchup

500g fresh hawthorn berries
300ml cider vinegar
300ml water
1 or 2 fresh chillies (depends how much you like your spice!)
170g soft light brown sugar
½ tsp salt
Tsp peppercorns

1. Wash berries well then add to large pan with the chillies, water and vinegar. Simmer for half an hour until the skins of the berries start to burst open.
2. Remove from the heat and pour the contents through a sieve to remove any stones or bits of skin. Use the back of a wooden spoon to press as much liquid out as possible.
3. Transfer liquid to a clean pan. Add sugar, salt and peppercorns and cook over a low heat, stirring often until the sugar dissolves.
4. Once dissolved, bring to the boil and simmer for around 10 minutes more until the sauce is thickened.
5. Transfer to sterilised bottles or jars. You can eat straight away, but it will also keep for a year.

