

East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers

March/April 2022

MUD EYE

in your



At last.....

Spring Flowers – Pages 8/9

Poetry



Heavens above



Visit East Lothian



Cover: *Coltsfoot, welcome signs of Spring.*



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Welcome to the 56th Edition of
'Mud in Your Eye'

We'd love to hear from you!
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 @ELCrangers

 East Lothian Countryside
Ranger Service

Published by East Lothian Council's
Countryside Rangers

Editorial

Spring is in the air.

At least it was when I went out for a walk yesterday but today winter seems to have returned. March can be like that, but with new growth (my grass is already a couple of inches long) and spring flowers emerging, it seems as though we are leaving the dark winter days behind. Two of those early bloomers are described in one of the following articles.

We also look at ephemeral pools; those temporary puddles of water that can nevertheless harbour life for as long as they remain present.

There has been some increased aurora activity over the last few months, and March really marks the last month in which you are likely to see one. Read the Heavens Above article to find out more.

We also have some more serious articles relating to livestock worrying and the new legislation that comes into force. Finally, try the crossword sent in by one of our volunteers. I've had a quick look and it will keep you busy!



Aurora Borealis, available to view in East Lothian.

Coltsfoot

Confusion corner - Pool time

Rivers, lochs and ponds will immediately come to mind when mentioning East Lothian's freshwater habitats, but also of huge importance are the ephemeral pools that wax and wane over the course of a year.



The adaptable hoverfly and ivy.

Such pools can be large bodies of water such as ecologically sensitive dune slacks that are often rich in rare plant and animal life or seasonally flooded fields; but also the micro habitats of ditches, puddles, tractor tyre ruts or even tree holes high in the canopy. Even in the smallest and shortest lived of these habitats, a wide array of life can be supported.

Amphibians of course are well placed to take full advantage of such opportunities, with frog spawn in particular readily deposited in these temporary habitats. This is a risky strategy of course in a dry spring, but one that at least rules out the prospect of fish predating their offspring.

In the organically rich habitats of water filled tree holes and rotting stumps, an array of invertebrates will rapidly colonise when the opportunity presents itself. Joining species such as gnats and predatory flies, the hoverflies are a group that fall into this category. Many hoverfly species are adapted to surviving in these 'lagoons' where the young feed on decaying organic matter, including the rat-tailed maggots with their signature long breathing tubes. As adults these species become some of our most important and most numerous pollinators in our gardens and wild spaces, and an important part of the animal food chain. Of course, small pools may be more vulnerable to pollution, drainage and drying out but this is in part compensated for by sheer abundance in both urban and rural environments. Perhaps I'll think a bit harder before draining these miniature microcosms of life on the footpath next time!



Frogs and spawn.

Handy new tool to help visitors make the most of their visit to East Lothian

There is no doubt that East Lothian has some of the best beaches in Scotland. Several attract large crowds, putting pressure on the environment, facilities and services.

During the major surge in 'staycationing' East Lothian Council realised that action needed to be taken to protect fragile environments and to help those using the beaches to enjoy them in a safe and responsible manner.

The result? A new and practical APP, which allows users to check the 'busyness' of these beaches. The Visit East Lothian APP has a traffic light system. Users simply search for their preferred parking location – green means quiet, amber means getting busy and red means very busy and it is recommended you park elsewhere. The APP makes it easy to check other locations nearby and find a quieter spot. In addition users can see at a glance the main facilities and amenities at each beach and cafes or attractions in the local area they might also consider visiting. Those planning a longer trip can search for accommodation. East Lothian Council staff will have the ability to manually add and update information, so that those looking to visit the beach will have the most up to date and reliable intelligence on how busy the area is, and how and where to avoid adding to congestion, to help them and others have an enjoyable experience.

The FREE APP will be available on Android Handsets from the Google Play Store and for Apple handsets from The Apple App Store.

Get the **NEW** Visit East Lothian APP

Coming soon

Includes:

- Live updates of coastal car park spaces

at a glance information

- Beach facilities & amenities
- Things to do & see
- Food & drink
- Places to stay

Make the most of your East Lothian day out!

visiteastlothian.org

Available soon from

Google Play

Download on the App Store

East Lothian Council

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EDINA

Traveltech for Scotland

New Legislation protecting Scotland's livestock

East Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (ELPARC) welcomes a campaign to protect Scotland's livestock which has been launched following new legislation which, protects animals from dog attacks through various measures including additional animals classed as livestock, fines of up to £40,000 and prison sentences for dog owners who let their pets worry, kill or injure livestock.



Photo credit The British Horse Society & Police Scotland.



With the weather getting better more horses and riders are likely to be out and about, Sophie Arnold

from the British Horse Society advises: 'In the Scottish horse world, incidents of dog attacks on equines- both ridden and driven, while grazing and even while stabled - are sadly not uncommon. Dog attacks have led to equine fatalities and caused serious injury to riders and handlers.

The problem for horse owners is: predator meets prey. It is that simple. Neither side (dog owners nor horse owners) think of our lovable companions as either predator or prey, but it is fact that dogs, by their very nature are predatory animals and equines are prey.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, instinct sometimes takes over both horses and dogs, resulting in unwanted behaviour. The consequences for both animals and their handlers or owners can be at best distressing and at worst fatal. Chasing is in a dog's instinct, just like flight is instinctive to horses.

New Legislation protecting Scotland's livestock - continued

It is how they have survived, passed on the genes, evolved, and come to exist today. Today's dogs may not chase with aggression or biting in mind, but the horse does not know this, and their reaction will be the same.

All dogs should be under control and supervision when in a public place and the fact that a dog is wearing a muzzle is no deterrent – the chased animals do not know that the dog cannot bite them and will still run with fear. We have received many distressing reports of horrendous injuries caused as a result of this type of incident.'

Also, with spring approaching many ewes will be pregnant, due to lamb. Countryside Ranger, Laura Douglas has offered some advice for dog owners:

'Sheep worrying doesn't exactly sound very serious but in fact it can be terrifying for the sheep and catastrophic for the farmer. Often the sheep suffer biting injuries which can be so serious they have to be put down. If the dog corners the sheep they can become caught in fences or crushed. But even if the dog doesn't make contact, the stress of being chased can kill them and pregnant ewes can abort. Not only is this horrific for the sheep, the financial implications can be disastrous for the farmer.

Even the most docile and obedient of dogs can end up chasing after sheep. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code says it's best to avoid going near sheep whenever possible. If you need to go into a field where there are sheep, keep your dog on a short lead or close at heel and well away from the sheep.

Out on the open hill with sheep around, dogs still need to be at heel and kept at a distance from the sheep. If you are not sure how your dog will react put it on a lead. It is important to be aware that farmers move sheep around and to be prepared for the unexpected. It is not worth the risk and if your dog was caught worrying sheep by a landowner, the landowner is within their rights to shoot your dog. Your dog doesn't know any better. Make sure you do.'

So please, if you are out and about take the lead and keep your dog under control.



Photo credit – Laura Douglas.

Sheep Worrying

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the unexpected. It is not worth the risk and if your dog was caught worrying sheep by a landowner, the landowner is within their rights to shoot your dog.

**Your dog doesn't know any better.
Make sure you do.**



Spring Flowers

The weather has been pretty ropey so far this year, what with assorted storms and the tree-based carnage that comes along with them. Let's hope that spring turns out to be a little better, although things can still turn nasty, even once winter has (theoretically) been and gone.



The hardy little snowdrop.

The hardiest of our wildflowers, like snowdrops, have already braved the elements and they'll be rapidly followed by other species in the coming weeks. One of these is a small, dandelion-like plant known as coltsfoot. Its name derives from the shape of its leaves, which (vaguely) resemble a horse's hoof. It is also known as "son-before-the-father" because its bright, yellow flowers appear in early spring, whilst the leaves do not turn up until much later, once flowering is all but over. Coltsfoot can be found in a range of habitats, often in places where the ground has been disturbed such as waste ground, spoil heaps and river banks. The plant produces seeds very similar to those of the dandelion, which are dispersed by the wind.



Coltsfoot

However, most coltsfoot grows from rhizomes – underground stems which spread from the parent plant and produce new growth every now and then. Herbalists used to use coltsfoot to cure coughs. The leaves were either made into a tea, or they could be dried and smoked. This seems like a strange way to cure a bad chest and it perhaps suggests why herbalism went out of fashion. Having said that, I've heard older family members telling of doctors prescribing cigarettes infused with menthol crystals, so sometimes orthodox medicine doesn't always hit the mark either. Admittedly, this was a wee while ago and is probably no longer NHS practice.

Spring Flowers Continued



Ramsons flower.

Although bluebells are top of most people's list of dramatic woodland wildflower extravaganzas, carpets of wild garlic or ramsons can be just as spectacular.

Ramsons can be found in damp woodland or along the banks of streams and rivers, and if you walk through a patch, there is a strong smell of garlic. This plant belongs to the Allium family, along with onions, leeks and cultivated garlic – indeed, allium is the Latin word for garlic.

The flowers form rounded clusters of white six-petalled blooms, which are carried on leafless stalks. Whilst these produce the characteristic smell, it's the fleshy, oval-shaped leaves that really whiff. In some places, few-flowered leek may also be present, adding to the whole olfactory

experience. However, few-flowered leek is a rather invasive non-native species, which can out compete species such as ramsons and primrose.

The various wild alliums have been used in cooking and folk medicine for hundreds of years. Wild garlic can be used in salads, sauces, on pizzas – or pretty much anywhere, assuming you like garlic that is. It has a reputation for being able to treat cardiovascular conditions, and as an antiseptic treatment for wounds. It's also a popular ingredient in homeopathic "remedies" (i.e. water), but frankly you're probably better off sticking with the pizza.

Heavens Above – Aurora Borealis.

We often think of the sun as a uniform yellow ball, but it is actually made up of a plasma of electrically charged particles of hydrogen and helium gas. The surface is a bit like a pan of boiling water, with hot material welling up and cooling material sinking down. In addition, this all gets stirred up as the sun rotates. This seething hot mass generates magnetic fields and often results in some of the plasma being released into space. The charged particles then race towards the Earth in what is known as the solar wind. Upon reaching the Earth, they interact with the Earth's magnetic field causing the coloured light displays which make up an aurora. The aurora tends to happen in rings around the Earth's poles, most often between latitudes 65 and 75 degrees, known as the oval of activity. Edinburgh sits at about latitude 59 degrees, so we are mostly too far south to see an aurora. Sun activity has been increasing recently however, with stronger solar winds, meaning that the oval of activity expands further south allowing us to glimpse an aurora even here in East Lothian. The aurora tends to be visible this far south as a thin green band just above the horizon. For the spectacular forms known as curtains and veils you really need to travel further north and find truly dark skies away from light pollution. This next month marks the end of the best times to see these aurorae, as lengthening daylight hours gradually make it too light for them to be observed.

For those of you really interested, there is an app you can download called AuroraWatch UK. This will alert you to any solar activity likely to cause a visible aurora. Let's also be grateful for the Earth's magnetic field. If it wasn't there, not only would we not see these wonderful aurorae, all these particles would bombard the Earth making the planet uninhabitable.



Heavens Above – Aurora Borealis

– Continued

Another form of display should be visible in April with the return of the Lyrid meteor shower. It will peak on the evening of April 21st into the early hours of April 22nd. The constellation of Lyra should be visible above the north-east horizon by 10pm.

The meteor shower appears to radiate from it, although meteors can be observed anywhere in the night sky. With the moon not rising until 3.30am, the sky will be dark enough for a decent display, as long as the clouds don't spoil it! The shower is caused by dust left behind by Comet Thatcher, which orbits the sun once every 415 years.

Aurora Borealis from East Lothian.



Wild Garlic -

by Sean Hewitt

Out in the copse after rain
(too late after dark to be here).
Warm soil, woodlice dripping
from the underside of leaves.

I root down to the tender stalks
and twist them free, soaked petals
dip and touch my arm, kernels
of bud, itch of foliage, of wildness
on my skin.

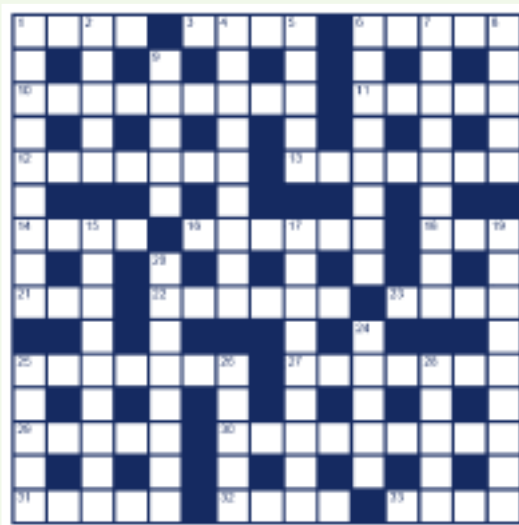
The wood is carrying
the smell, earth-rich, too heavy
to lift above head-height, and my boots
and jeans are bleached with it.

I turn home, and all across the floor
the spiked white flowers
light the way. The world is dark
but the wood is full of stars.



Crossword corner – Quick(ish) version

Choose either the Quick clues (page 13) or the Cryptic (page 14). The answers to both are the same. If you're trying the Cryptic and get stuck on a clue you could try the Quick. But the Quick is not that easy either!



Across

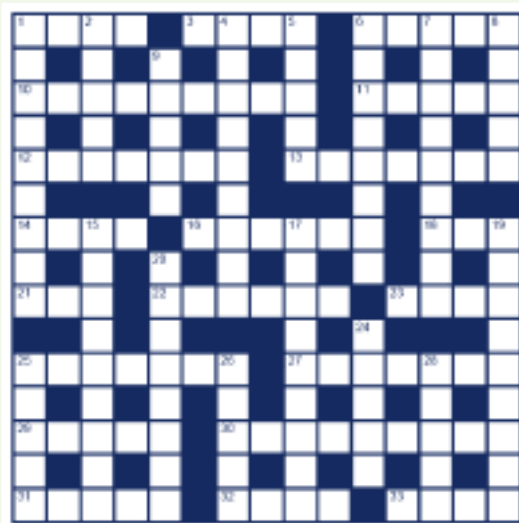
- 1 Striped flyer (4)
- 3 Local Charity (4)
- 6 Semi-precious stone (5)
- 10 Like some plane tickets (5.4)
- 11 What volunteers need to do (5)
- 12 Speeds up (7)
- 13 Linked, in a way (7)
- 14/25 Volunteers cover this (4.7)
- 16 Golden (6)
- 18 See 6 Down
- 21 “_ Loves You” (3)
- 22 Help (6)
- 23 Small dam (4)
- 25 See 14
- 27 Pony _ (7)
- 29 A nut (5)
- 30 Pizza topping (9)
- 31 Burns food (5)
- 32 Tall story (4)
- 33 Animal mouth (4)

Down

- 1 Of no value (9)
- 2 Shell-less snails (5)
- 4 How to address judges (9)
- 5 Snake (5)
- 6/18 Nature Reserve (8,3)
- 7 Food Platform (4,5)
- 8 Annoyed (5)
- 9 Snake (5)
- 15 One of your glasses? (9)
- 17 Animal disease (9)
- 19 Can't quite measure a metre with this (9)
- 20 Doctors have these (8)
- 24 Fast; drug (5)
- 25 Purplish-blue flower (5)
- 26 Quite cold (5)
- 28 Rivers do to banks (5)

Crossword corner – Cryptic version

Choose either the Quick clues (page 13) or the Cryptic (page 14). The answers to both are the same. If you're trying the Cryptic and get stuck on a clue you could try the Quick. But the Quick is not that easy either!



Across

- 1 Like a bee in a hive it was probably buzzing (4)
- 3 Resume following the Spanish local charity (4)
- 6 Gemstone found in Morham, Berwick etc (5)
- 10 Dip or turn makes for a circular journey (5,4)
- 7 Loner? Join up! (5)
- 12 Bicycle has ten speeds? In that case it goes faster (7)
- 13 Told it's past it in colour (7)
- 14/25 Better isolate than go to area volunteers cover (4, 7)
- 16 Gold-tinted but glided away (6)
- 18 See 6 Down
- 21 He's trans! (3)
- 22 Help from a compass is the best way (6)
- 23 Dam strange there's no end to it (4)
- 25 See 14
- 27 Extract from former journalist (7)
- 29 Physical education is able to make a tough nut (5)
- 30 Processed meat has some pepper on it (9)
- 31 Born in France, Paul Sartre is Swede in England (5)
- 32 Thread of a long story (4)
- 33 Bake, bake, and get the bill (4)

Down

- 1 Of no value or not so much? (9)
- 2 Punches shell-less snails (5)
- 4 Judges address cricket ground over joints (9)
- 5 Six for each snake (5)
- 6/18 Reserve? - Abby already has done! (8,3)
- 7 Do prison list for food platform (4,5)
- 8 Raucous over upmarket shop - get annoyed (5)
- 9 You can take nothing away from this calculator (5)
- 15 Show single glasses? (9)
- 17 Policemen rage about animal disease (9)
- 19 Can't quite measure a metre with this (9)
- 20 Sounds like doctors need this for long consultations with these (8)
- 24 Travel fast over oceans (5)
- 25 Flower like a wolf with no tail (5)
- 26 Quite fast and cold (5)
- 28 Deer love munching - eat away (5)



volunteer diary dates

Where	Day	Date	Time	Action
Yellowcraig	Thu	03 Mar	10:00-15:00	Path maintenance
North Berwick	Tue	15 Mar	10:00-12:30	tbd
Levenhall Links	Tue	29 Mar	10:00-13:00	Hedge planting
Dunbar	Wed	30 Mar	09:00-12:30	Tern fence
Yellowcraig	Thu	07 Apr	10:00-15:00	Privet removal
North Berwick	Tue	19 Apr	10:00-12:30	tbd
Levenhall Links	Tue	26 Apr	10:00-1300	Site maintenance
Dunbar	Wed	27 Apr	10:00-12:30	tbd

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

