



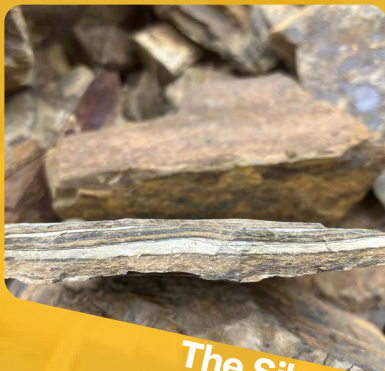
mud

in your

eye

AUTUMN 2025 EDITION #73

Inside:
HEAVENS ABOVE
BIODIVERSITY
SOAC



The Silurian



Wildlife Highlights



Volunteer Updates



Autumn 2025

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Editorial

The summer continued to be tough for wildlife with continued warm and dry weather. This has resulted in extremely low water levels showing a lack of invertebrates, such as dragonflies, on the wing. These continued extremes make life very hard for wildlife.

But autumn brings about change. Changes to the weather and changes to the wildlife that we see. This is a time of migration; some, such as swallows, head back to Africa for a more plentiful supply of insects. Others, such as whooper swans, arrive here seeking a warmer climate. Others, such as redwings, for the plentiful supply of berries.

Whatever the weather, there is always plenty to observe.



Redwing

HEAVENS ABOVE

by Roger Powell

Aurora borealis from Dunbar East Beach

It's officially Autumn, although it looks as though the summer heat may continue for some time yet. One positive is that the nights are getting longer giving better dark sky viewing. The Sun, however, is still at the peak of sunspot activity which means more frequent auroras if you are lucky enough to live somewhere dark enough to really appreciate them when they occur.

A more obvious event will happen in September. On the morning of the 7th there will be a total lunar eclipse. This is when the moon passes into the Earth's shadow. It will reach maximum just before 7.30am, but as it will be very near to the eastern horizon will only be visible just after that. Clearly you will need to find a high enough spot to get an uninterrupted view of the eastern horizon to appreciate it, so Dunbar would be a good place to go. The moon will appear red (known as a blood moon) due to a process of refraction of the light entering the Earth's atmosphere.



Blood moon - Photo credit Getty Images

On the 21st of September, Saturn reaches opposition and so will appear at its brightest. It will rise in the east just after sunset, reaching its highest point at about midnight. It will be the brightest object in that part of the sky. Its rings are nearly edge on so may be a little more difficult to make out without a telescope or a decent pair of binoculars.

The Orionid meteor shower will appear between Oct 2nd and Nov 7th. Its peak will be on Oct 22nd, when there may be up to 25 meteors per hour. There will be a new moon then, so the sky will be nice and dark, which should provide great viewing as long as there are no clouds! The meteors are debris from Halley's Comet that the Earth passes through once a year.



In November, Jupiter will be the brightest object in the evening sky. November also marks the time when the winter constellations begin to make an appearance. Orion is the most obvious of these, but the constellations in the story of Andromeda and Perseus all appear together. As well as these two, there are Cassiopeia and Cepheus, Andromeda's parents, Perseus the winged horse and Cetus the sea monster sent to devour Andromeda.

To make finding objects in the night sky easier there are a number of mobile apps available such as Star Walk which shows a map of the night sky in whichever direction you point your phone. Happy viewing.



THE SILURIAN

by Richard English

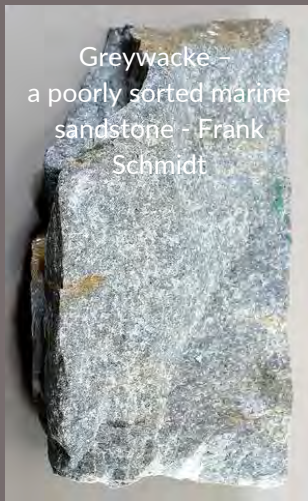
Thinly-bedded Silurian mudstones

In previous articles I've written about the two main geological periods in which most of East Lothian's rocks were formed – the Carboniferous and Devonian Periods. However, rocks of an older age can be found in the county, although not as easily or regularly.

The Silurian Period (419-444million years ago) was a time of great change for Scotland, although to be honest, it'd be surprising if twenty-five million years didn't produce a lot of change. The lump of rock that later became northern Scotland lay on the southern coast of a continent called Laurentia. To the south of this was an ocean called the Iapetus and other continents known as Avalonia (inc. modern day England and Wales) and Baltica. Long story short, and apologies for repeating myself, the Iapetus Ocean was busy closing, resulting in the three continents colliding (very slowly), which led to the creation of the Caledonian mountain range. Before this collision, sedimentary rocks were forming in the ocean as sand and silt were washed out from the coastal regions and deposited on the sea bed. It is these sediments that now make up the Silurian rocks of the Southern Uplands including the southern parts of East Lothian.



Continental positions during the Silurian/Ordovician Periods



Greywacke –
a poorly sorted marine
sandstone - Frank
Schmidt

The rocks in question are known as turbidites and were formed from flows of sediment called turbidity currents. These were carried by gravity down offshore slopes to be deposited on the lower sea floor. Turbidites can form in high or low energy environments, depending on the speed and intensity of the flow. The coarsest grained of these rocks commonly found in the county is greywacke (from the German 'grauwacke' – a grey, earthy rock). This is a poorly sorted (i.e. it includes grains of various sizes) sandstone, containing angular crystals of quartz and feldspar set in a finer clay-like matrix. These formed as a result of high energy turbidity currents – think of underwater avalanches flowing down submarine slopes. These greywackes are found interspersed with finer-grained siltstones and mudstones, formed in lower energy environments.



'Fossilised eurypterid'
Credit James St John

In terms of fossils, Silurian rocks have yielded assorted marine lifeforms, including jawless fish, trilobites and eurypterids (sea-scorpions). Of particular interest to us are a group of beasts known as graptolites. Graptolites have been found in fossil form in rocks from Cambrian age through to the Carboniferous.

They were exclusively marine creatures and came in two main forms – sessile, i.e. attached to the sea-bed, or planktonic (free-floating). They consisted of colonial organisms known as zooids, which were encased in a tube-like structures called thecae. Graptolites are thought to have been filter feeders, like their modern day relatives the Pterobranchs. They probably thrived in habitats close to the edge of continental shelves, where upwelling currents provided high levels of nutrients for them to feed on.



As fossils, they often appear as thin, shiny shapes within the rock resembling pencil marks, or even hieroglyphics – the name graptolite is derived from Greek, meaning 'written in the rocks.' Some almost have the appearance of small hacksaw blades, with each tooth representing an individual theca. Although they, and the Silurian sediments that bear them, are locally uncommon finds, they form a nice contrast to the more usual Carboniferous or Devonian rocks of East Lothian.

EAST LoTHIAN'S LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

A public consultation was launched on Monday, 1 September seeking views on East Lothian's new Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

The plan sets out objectives to tackle the nature emergency by improving the condition of habitats and protecting species while contributing to the restoration and enhancement of the landscape.

Produced by East Lothian Council on behalf of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership through work between a variety of partners, the LBAP aims to combat threats to biodiversity locally and empower residents to take part in conservation efforts on their doorstep.

The first East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan was produced in 2003. This updated plan outlines a vision for the next decade to regenerate biodiversity across land, freshwater, coast, and marine habitats while giving the community a vital role in their stewardship.

By setting out actions to be delivered by stakeholders in the Biodiversity Partnership, Government agencies such as NatureScot, NGOs, neighbouring local authorities, and community groups, the LBAP focuses on helping the natural environment, habitats, ecosystems, and species to be diverse, thriving, and adaptable to climate change. Developed with expertise from local specialists and community members, the plan identifies priorities for protecting and augmenting East Lothian's ecosystems and wildlife. The detailed guide covers biodiversity county-wide whether your interest in the subject is personal, professional or both, and outlines positive steps which can be taken to improve its conservation.



View from the Garletons looking east

The Biodiversity Partnership will review the plan and its progress annually to monitor that agreed targets are being met.

Councillor John McMillan, Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment, Economic Development and Tourism, said: “The LBAP recognises that biodiversity is under threat, both nationally and globally. I’m proud that East Lothian is doing its part to try and conserve and enhance important species and habitats through local action to help us tackle the interlinked climate and nature emergencies.

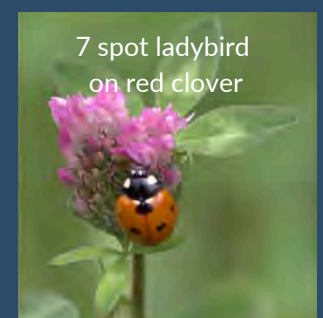
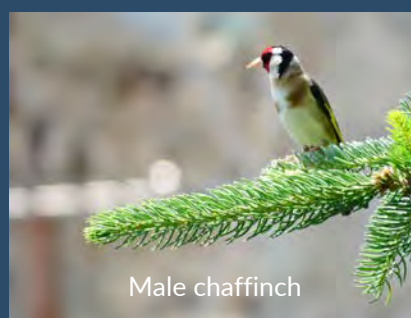
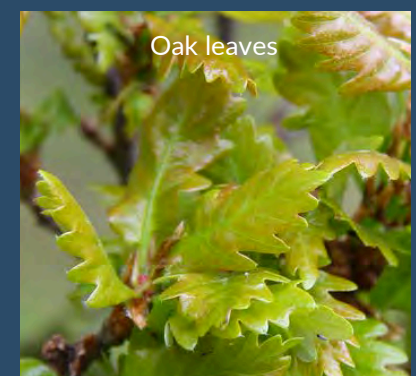
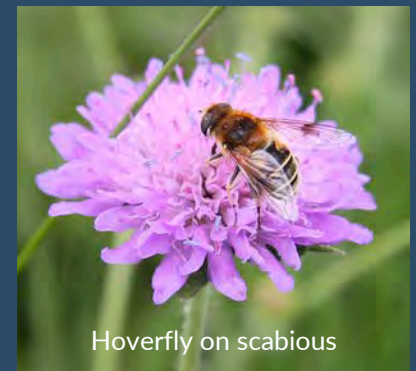
“The LBAP identifies ways we can contribute towards mitigating further biodiversity loss, making sure that our habitats and ecosystems are healthy and resilient. It will improve and support biodiversity along with benefitting the wellbeing and quality of life for people in East Lothian.

“Community action has long played an important role in delivering biodiversity projects in the county, and the new LBAP will continue to champion people’s voices. That’s why I would encourage anyone who wants to support this mission to take part in the consultation and give their feedback.”

The consultation will run until **Friday, 10 October** and anyone who wishes to share their views on the plan can visit CitizenSpace at: <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/infrastructure/east-lothian-local-biodiversity-action-plan/>

People can also attend pop-up events where council officers will share information on the LBAP at the following locations:

Tranent Library - 6th September (10am to 1pm)
Haddington Library - 9 September (2pm to 5pm)
North Berwick Library - 18 September (4pm to 7pm)
Longniddry Library - 19 September (2pm to 5pm)
Musselburgh Library - 29 September (4pm to 7pm)
Dunbar Library - 4 October (10am to 1pm)



WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

Pink-footed geese take flight

Autumn is usually a blustery season; good for blowing the cobwebs away, getting out in the fresh air and feeling bashed about by gusts and squalls. If the skies are clear, autumn can be a really exciting time of year.

I am not sure wildlife is quite so excited: there is a lot to be done if you are a hibernating animal. You need to find a suitable spot to hide for the winter, usually cool and sheltered, not too wet, not too dry. Food stores need to be stocked up with grasses, seeds, nuts or fungi, whatever is available and whatever is edible. Then you fall asleep. Other animals perish.

In East Lothian, autumn winds bring in geese and other birds. They fly in from the uplands and the northern lands, to enjoy our relatively mild winters: roosting along the coast and feeding in the stubbles.

Sometimes we get the odd curiosity: the occasional blow-in from further afield. Birds that should have migrated south from Canada to Central America can be blown off course to follow a skein or two to our shores. This will attract a flock of twitchers to our coast. Once the rarity is spotted, the twitcher migrates back to its normal habitat. The refugee bird, however, may have no means of return, and must take its chances in a new homeland.



Fieldfares

Photo credit: Abbie Marland



Whooper swan

It is a busy time for plants also. Autumn can be quite mild and there is often an end of season sale of late blooms and a harvest of fresh wild flower seed. Woodland plants can have a second spring, with violets and primroses dappling the forest floor. Seeds that fell earlier in the year may have germinated and need to reach sufficient maturity to survive the rigours of winter.

Perhaps the most iconic totem of autumn is the tree, with its magical leaves that meld from green to every shade of orange. Leaves eventually fall from in a cascade of colour, finally resting on the ground in an upside-down canopy: an ever-pleasing random mosaic of tone and texture. This is the place for children, big and small, to play in the leaves and with the leaves; to collect chessies and play conkers; to look up and watch the silhouetted twigs and branches swimming in the sky.

Autumn is a time of abundance. Abundant air, abundant weather, abundant colour and abundant pleasure.



Autumn leaves



Ash twigs in silhouette



RESPONSIBLE HORSE RIDING

Access rights extend to horse riding. Riding on firm or hard surfaces, such as wide paths and tracks and well-drained ground, causes few problems. On narrow routes, horse riding may cause problems for other people, such as walkers and cyclists. If this occurs, take extra care by giving way to walkers where possible or by looking for an alternative route.

If you are riding off-path, particularly in winter, take care to avoid:

- going onto wet, boggy or soft ground, and
- churning up the surface.
- Take care not to alarm farm animals and wildlife, particularly if you go round a field margin. Do not go into fields where there are grazing horses or animals that might be a danger.
- Get permission if you wish to carry out repetitive schooling on other people's land or wish to use jumps or custom-made gallops when these are not in use.



Horse rider and cyclist
Photo Credit: Horse and Rider UK

WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS

Summer



Scarlet Pimpernel
© Ken Tippen



Vipers bugloss, Dunbar



Ladybirds emerging, Traprain



Dark-green fritillary
© Abbie Marland



Ruby-tailed wasp, Stenton



Hounds-tongue, Barns Ness



Quail
© Abbie Marland



Weld, JMCP



Dryad's saddle
© Sylvia Beaumont



White ermine moth, Dunbar



Rosemary beetle
© Abbie Marland



Brittle star
© Abbie Marland

RANGER LED VOLUNTEER TASKS

We have a variety of volunteer groups across the county, undertaking a variety of tasks. Here is just some of the work they have been doing over spring:



Dunbar Conservation Volunteers balsam bashing along the Dry Burn, Skateraw.



Way Out West cutting back a path in Macmerry.



North Berwick Conservation Volunteers covering grafitti on the WW1/2 shelter.



Friends of Yellowcraig sewing wildflower seeds and giving the new trees some TreeLC.



Path Wardens undertaking step repairs and path surfacing at Wallyford and Bilsdean.



Friends of Levenhall Links balsam bashing on the Esk.



VOLUNTEER TASK DATES

Volunteer Group	When	Time
Aberlady Volunteers	First Wednesday of the month	0930-1500
Friends of Yellowcraig	First Thursday of the month	0930-1500
North Berwick Conservation Volunteers	Second Thursday of the month	1000-1300
Longniddry & Gullane Volunteers	Third Tuesday of the month	1000-1300
Way Out West	Second last Wednesday of the month	1000-1300
Friends of Levenhall Links	Last Tuesday of the month	1000-1300
Dunbar Conservation Volunteers	Last Wednesday of the month	1000-1300

EAST LoTHIAN'S COUNTRYSIDE VOLUNTEERS



East Lothian Countryside Volunteers are a group of over 200 volunteers who help look after the countryside in East Lothian either independently or through ranger-led tasks.

Recent updates:

- Priority for gaining funding for proposed less able ramp at **Whitesands**.
- Replacement of weathered notice board at Tynninghame estuary **John Muir Country Park** using ELCV Charity funds is imminent.
- We are hoping that the annual collection of heads of reed mace at **Aberlady Bay** and **North Berwick Law** will add to the charity funds.
- In order to **raise awareness of our charity**, we are considering taking publicity stalls at community or other public events (like Haddington farmers market).
- At the **Volly Jolly** on 25th of October in Cockenzie, our AGM takes place and we need to recruit trustees to replace some stalwarts who have served loyally as trustees but will soon step aside after their term of office.



CONTACT US

Email: contact@elcv.co.uk

Facebook: [ELCV](https://www.facebook.com/ELCV)

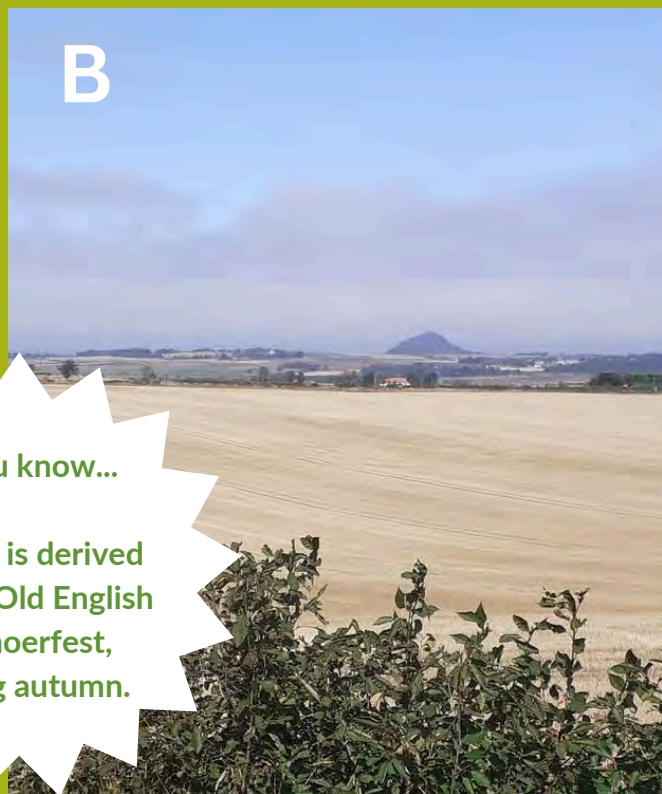
Visit: www.elcv.org.uk/



WHERE IN EAST LoTHIAN?

Can you work out where in East Lothian these photos were taken in harvest time?

Answers on page 18.



Did you know...

'Harvest' is derived from the Old English word hoerfest, meaning autumn.



Did you know...
East Lothian is one of the most prosperous and progressive farming counties in the country.



FUN FACT



Orange-clubbed sea slug

Nudibranchs, also known as sea slugs, are much like their land-based relatives. Their name means 'naked gill', referring to the breathing apparatus on the outside of their soft bodies.

But, unlike your regular garden slug, the nudibranch can incorporate the stinging cells from their prey into their own bodies – giving them a defence against predators!

ANSWERS TO 'WHERE IN EAST LOTHIAN'
A Doon Hill towards Fast Castle B From Athelstaneford to Bass Rock
C From Fa'side Castlelooking East D Looking through Hailes Castle

We'd love to hear from you!

Email us at ranger@eastlothian.gov.uk

Or follow us...



@ELCrangers



East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers

GET IN
Touch