



mud

in your

eye

WINTER 25/26 EDITION #74

Inside:

REEDMACE RECYCLING
AUTUMN WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS
VOLUNTEER TASKS



Heavens Above



The Garletons



Responsible Access

Photo: Abbie Marland



Winter 2025/2026

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Editorial

Despite the change in weather, there is still plenty to see and enjoy in the countryside at this time of year. Cold fresh breezes on sunny days and winter waders gathering on our shores. A lot of our resident bird species are joined by visitors from overseas - birds such as redwings and whooper swans.

So it might be colder outside, but get wrapped up and see what you can find in your local area, then you can return to the warmth of your house, sit back and relax reading some of the articles or tackle the quiz in this latest edition.

When the time comes, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Whooper swans © Abbie Marland

HEAVENS ABOVE

by Roger Powell

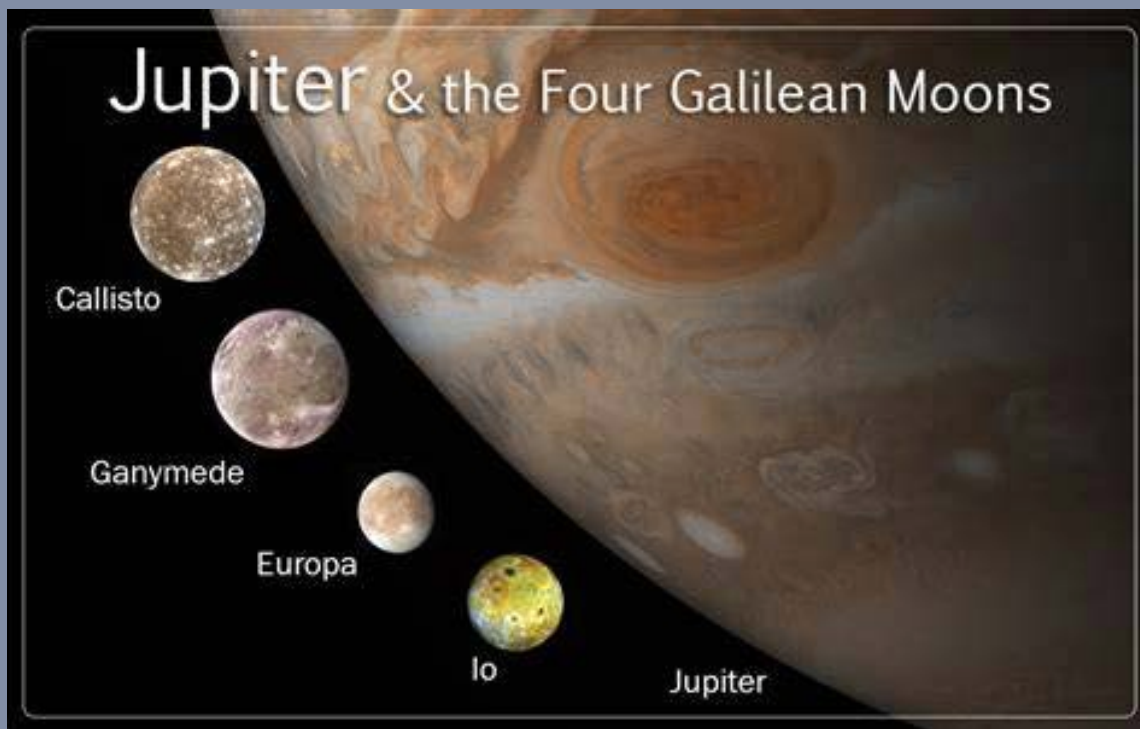
Pleiades star cluster

Here's a challenge. See if you can spot all six stars that form the Winter Hexagon asterism. First, what is an asterism? Well, it's a group of stars that form a pattern in the sky but are either only a part of a constellation or are made up of stars from different constellations. The most well-known of the former is The Plough which is part of the constellation Ursa Major or The Great Bear. The Winter Hexagon is an example of the latter with all the stars coming from six different constellations.



We start with Sirius, the Dog Star, the brightest star in the night sky. It is very easy to find low in the south-east, between 9pm and midnight in December. Sirius is in Canis Major, the Big Dog. Above and to the left is Procyon in Canis Minor, the Little Dog. It does appear to sit on its own. The surrounding stars are very faint, particularly when viewed from areas with a degree of light pollution. Above Procyon is Pollux, sitting below and close to its companion in Gemini, Castor. Looking to the right from here is the constellation of Auriga and its brightest star Capella, the sixth brightest star in the night sky. Due south of Capella is the red giant Aldebaran, which forms the bright red eye of Taurus the Bull. South-east of Taurus is Orion the Hunter, probably the easiest constellation to find in the winter sky. The sixth star in the hexagon is Rigel at the bottom right of the main group of stars in Orion. It is supposed to represent Orion's foot. From here we return to Sirius. So, six stars found and six constellations visited. Locating each one of these stars is a good starting point to find other features of the night sky worth seeing, such as the Pleiades cluster near Taurus and the nebula in Orion, so happy hunting.

In terms of planets, Jupiter is at opposition and closest to Earth on the 9th of January and will be very bright in the night sky. It is worth looking at with a telescope or even a good pair of binoculars as you should be able to make out the four Galilean moons. Their position relative to the planet obviously changes as they orbit it so observing over a period of days will ensure that you see all four at some point.



For meteor shower fans, the Geminids peak on 14th of December. They appear to originate from the constellation of Gemini but could appear anywhere in the night sky. The best time to observe them is early morning before dawn, if you can bring yourself to get up that early!



THE GARLETONS

by Richard English

Skid Hill quarry and Hopetoun Monument

The landscape of East Lothian is full of evidence of igneous activity, often taking the form of very obvious hills rising suddenly from the surrounding countryside. Traprain Law and North Berwick Law both fall into this category and, looking a bit further afield, so too do the Bass Rock, Arthur's Seat and the Lomond Hills in Fife. The Garleton Hills are a little different. They too are formed from hard igneous rock, which is more resistant to erosion than the surrounding sedimentary strata – otherwise they wouldn't be hills. However, because these rocks cover a greater area, the Garletons arguably have less immediate visual impact.

Unlike the Laws, which are formed from isolated outcrops of igneous rock, the Garletons represent the result of extensive volcanic activity, creating massive outpourings of lava and ash. This activity took place between 340 and 350 million years ago, during the Lower Carboniferous Period. This must have been a very busy time for what is now central Scotland, as it seems to tie in with volcanic activity in the Edinburgh area and, in the west, lavas of nearly 1000m thickness known as the Clyde Valley Basalts. The rocks forming the Garletons aren't quite as extensive as this, but they do reach thicknesses of around 500m and are known (imaginatively) as the Garleton Hills Volcanic Formation.



Kae Heughs from Skid Hill, showing meltwater channel and trap scenery.
Richard West (geograph.org.uk)

The oldest of the rocks in this group are basaltic tuffs, a rock formed of consolidated volcanic ash. These are not easy to find in the Garletons themselves, but outcrop extensively along the coast at North Berwick. Overlying these are a series of lavas made up of assorted basalts and a rock known as mugearite. I'm hoping basalt will be familiar to most; a very common dark, fine-grained, crystalline rock. Mugearite is a bit more obscure – a rock similar to basalt in appearance, but with a few differences in terms of mineral composition.

The lavas and tuffs lying towards the top of the formation are maybe the most interesting, since they're the ones which outcrop across most of the Garleton Hills area and are therefore the ones we can see most easily. They're predominantly made of trachyte, another fine-grained volcanic rock with a higher silica content than basalt and often containing larger crystals (phenocrysts) within its finer matrix. It's generally a blue-grey colour, although exposed surfaces often weather to an orangey-brown. Many of the high points of the Garletons are formed of trachyte and, unsurprisingly, the hard and easily accessible rock has been widely exploited across the area, with quarries at Bangleigh, Byres Hill and Skid Hill.



Skid Hill trachyte with pale phenocrysts of feldspar



Lichen encrusted trachyte at Kae Heughs

The landscape of the Garletons shows several features of interest, including “trap” scenery, a terraced landform commonly associated with lava flows. Additionally, the whole area has been moulded by erosion associated with glaciation, perhaps most obviously in the form of a dramatic glacial meltwater channel running east from Skid Hill, below Kae Heughs.

It's perhaps too easy to think of the Garleton Hills as just somewhere to drive through on the way to the coast, but their geological and geomorphological importance can't be overstated – a fact recognised in the area's status as a SSSI.

RECYCLING REEDMACE

Reedmace Photo credit: A Sylvia Beaumont

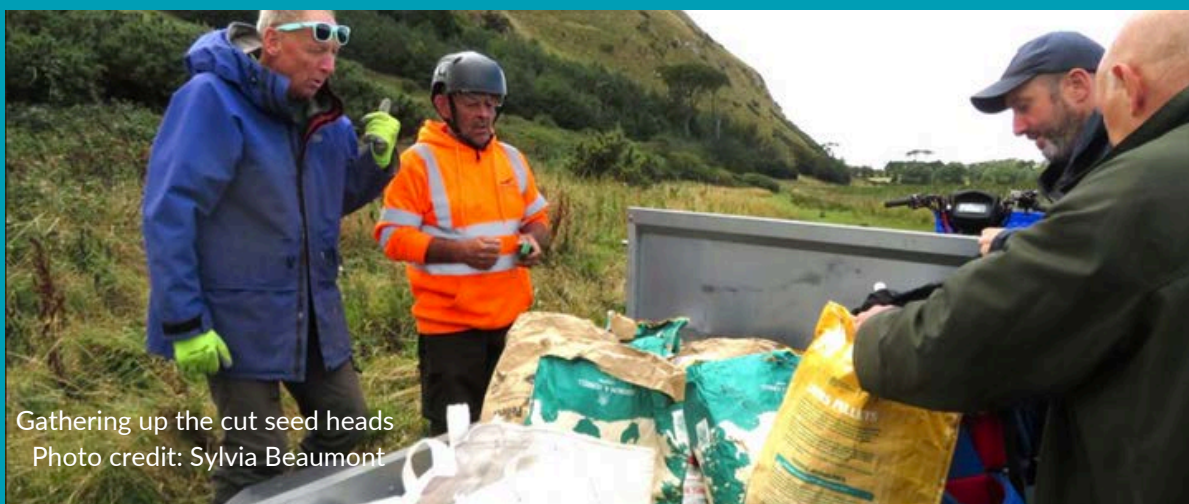
For the last three years, East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV) have been working with Ponda, collecting reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) seed heads.

Ponda (<https://www.ponda.bio>) partners with farmers and conservation groups to regenerate carbon-emitting wetlands by cultivating Reedmace. Some of the many benefits of typha are that it can grow quickly (sequestering lots of carbon), create habitats (uplifting biodiversity) whilst also providing a high-quality fibre for textile production. The seed heads collected by ELCV will be used as insulation in clothing. In return, ELCV receive £2 per KG collected.



Cutting the seed heads
Photo credit: Sylvia Beaumont

This year the total weight of came in at 790kg, raising a total of £1,580 for ELCV.



Gathering up the cut seed heads
Photo credit: Sylvia Beaumont

RESPONSIBLE ACCESS FARMS

ON FARMLAND

- Access rights don't usually apply to farmyards, but if a well-used path goes through a farmyard, you can follow this.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Keep to unsown ground, field edges or paths.
- Never let your dog worry or attack farm animals.
- Keep a safe distance from cattle. If they act aggressively, take the shortest safest route out of the field. If you have a dog, release it and let it find its own way to safety.

Access rights extend to fields with farm animals, but remember that some animals, particularly cows with calves but also horses, pigs and farmed deer, can react aggressively towards people. Before entering a field, check to see what alternatives there are. If you are in a field of farm animals, keep a safe distance and watch them carefully.

Many people work in the outdoors.

Respect all reasonable requests to avoid busy working areas.

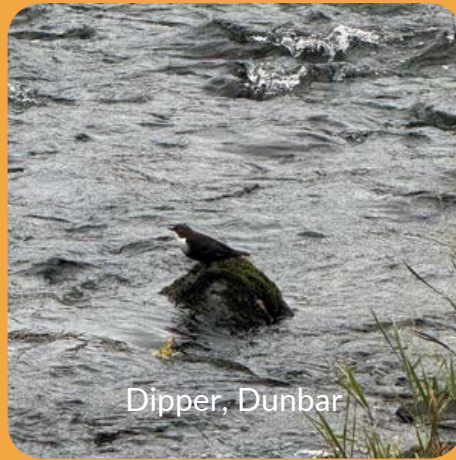


WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS

Autumn



Autumn mist
© Abbie Marland



Dipper, Dunbar



Fieldfare
© Abbie Marland



Golden Plover
© Abbie Marland



Snow bunting
© Abbie Marland



Teal
© Abbie Marland



14 spot ladybird
© Abbie Marland



Clouded Yellow JMCP



Brambling
© Abbie Marland



Grey heron, Dunbar



Red Admiral
© Abbie Marland



Pink-footed geese
© 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 undertaking tree maintenance.



Way Out West scything a section of the Haddington-Longniddry Railway Walk.



North Berwick Conservation Volunteers removing typha seed heads.



Friends of Yellowcraig finding, mapping and removing pirri-pirri bur.



Path Wardens litterpicking and graffiti removal at Wallyford Bing.



Friends of Levenhall Links clearing the hides of leaves and dead hedging.



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:

ELCV has received over £10,000 from BeGreen/Community Windpower to enable the construction of a ramp for less able to access the beach for recreation in and out of the sea. Naturescot have received the plans and we hope work can start soon.

Plans proceed for ELCV Charity to raise funds for renewal of information boards on the Tynninghame estuary (John Muir Country Park South side) and the Pencraig Hill viewpoint.

Approximately £1500 has been raised for the charity from the collection of typha reed mace by ELCV volunteers at Aberlady and North Berwick marsh. This material is used to provide the thermal filling for eco-friendly jackets.

ELCV trustees attended the first discussion meeting following the survey of erosion on the North Berwick law footpath and its likely repair and probable need for fundraising.

Discussions are taking place about a scheme to encourage good behaviour by dogs to prevent disturbance to breeding and feeding waders and wildfowl along the East Lothian coast. ELCV is joining up with the Balanced Horizon's project the Scottish seabird Centre the Scottish Ornithologists Club and the Scottish Coastal Cleanup to present a united front to the increasing threat.

ELCV Trustees are pleased to note that a new handrail has been installed on the steps at the Eastern end of the John Muir Way. This was funded by the Common Good fund for Dunbar.



CONTACT US

Email: contact@elcv.co.uk

Facebook: [ELCV](#)

Visit: www.elcv.org.uk/



WHERE IN EAST LoTHIAN?

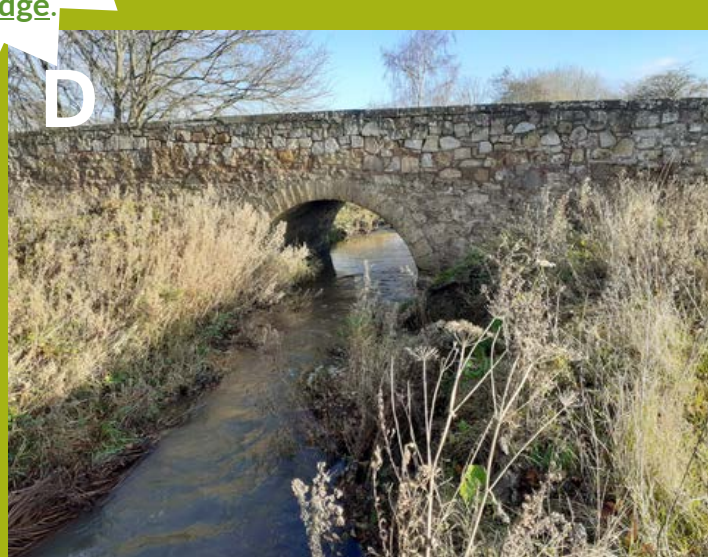
Can you work out where in East Lothian these bridges are over the river Tyne?

Answers on page 17.



Did you know...

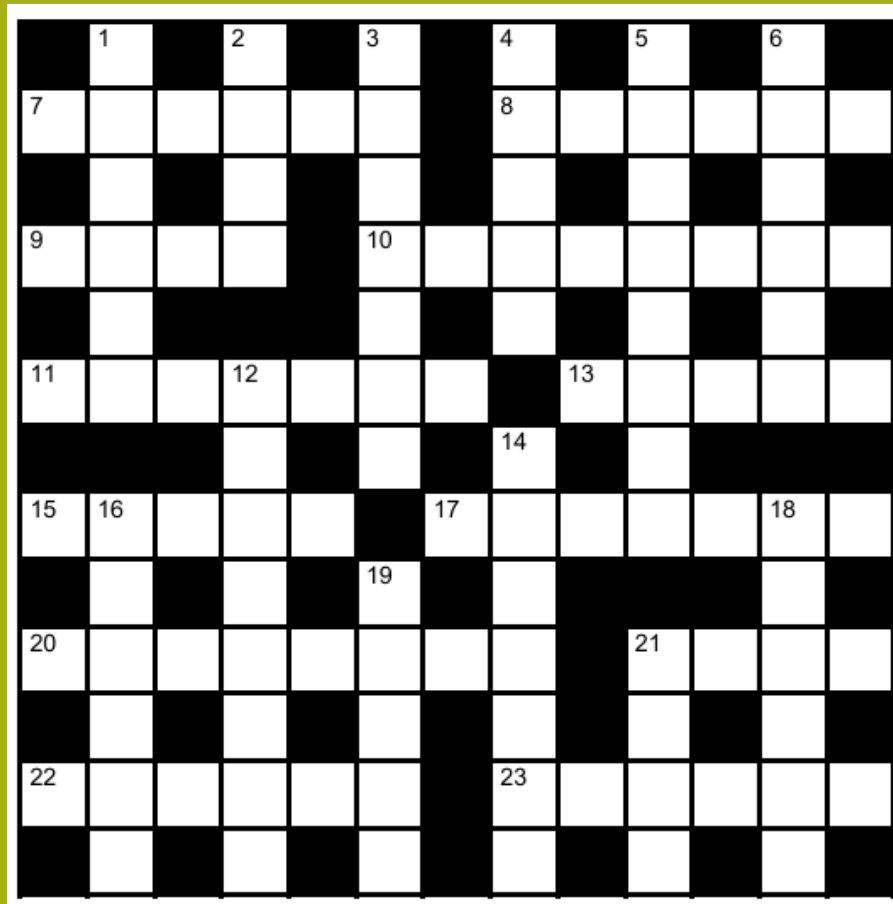
The Victoria Bridge was completed in 1900 as a modern replacement for the Nungate Bridge.



CROSSWORD

by Dave Quarendon

The answers are the same for each set of clues. Answers on page 16.



QUICK CLUES

Across

- 7 Controller (6)
- 8 Not run over! (6)
- 9 Feathers (4)
- 10/20 Ranger (8,8)
- 11 House, hedge or hawk (7)
- 13 Weed (5)
- 15 Helps animals (5)
- 17 Old science (7)
- 20 See 10
- 21 Castle (4)
- 22 Finger (6)
- 23 Type of clue (6)

Down

- 1 Recover (6)
- 2 Satellite (4)
- 3 Screen background (7)
- 4 Digital letter (5)
- 5 By the water (8)
- 6 Lots of them in a corolla (6)
- 12 Sweet but hard to eat! (4,4)
- 14 Various (7)
- 16 Dumb (6)
- 18 Grumble (6)
- 19 Heron? (5)
- 21 Uncommon (4)

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

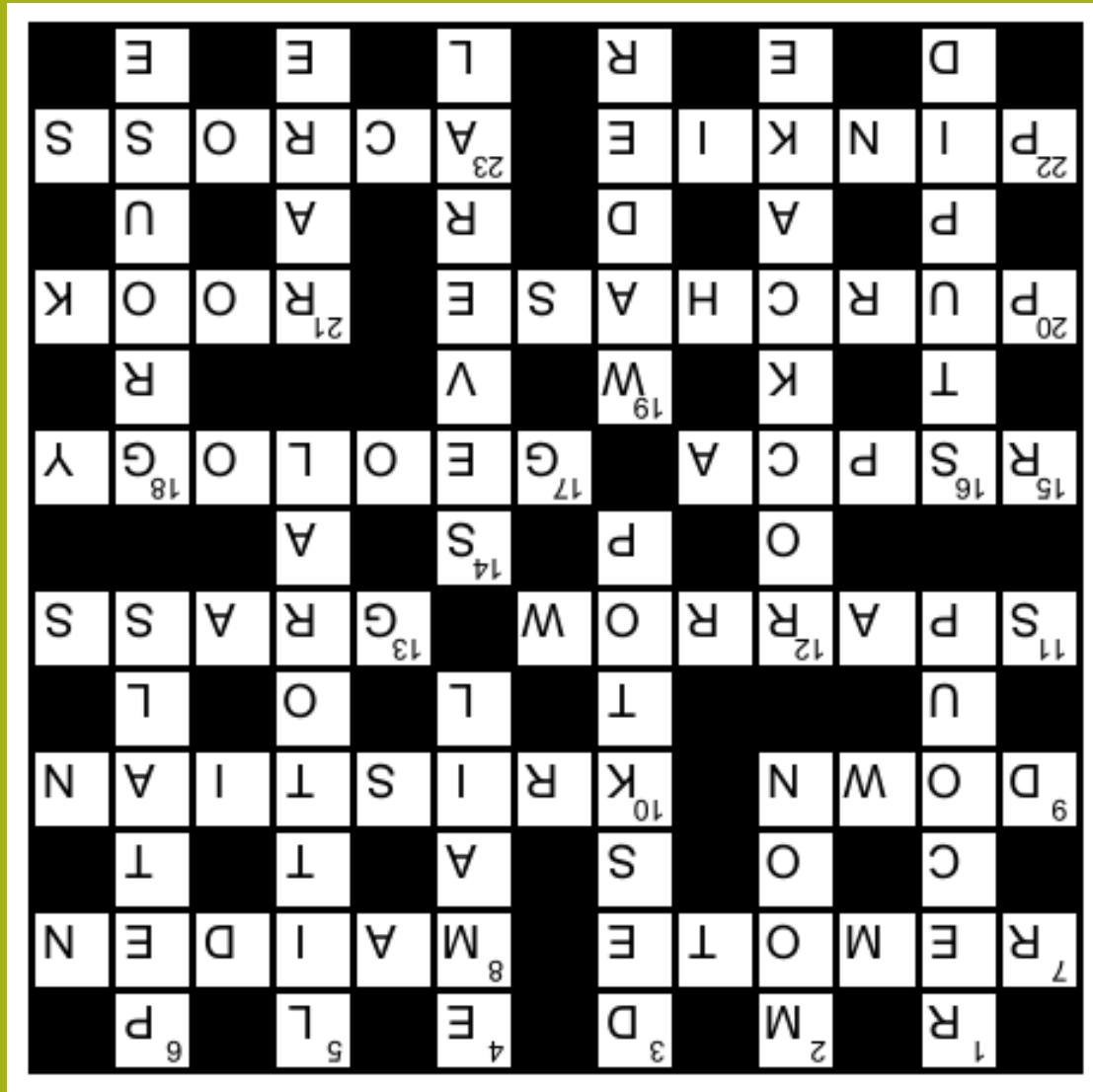
- 7 Please make sure motel has a TV controller (6)
- 8 Not run over? That's a first! (6)
- 9 Not up to the hair of the dog? That's fine! (4)
- 10/20 Ranger's parachutes in risk of entanglement (8,8)
- 11 Takes flight after fight after fight (7)
- 13 Grown regularly as soft surface topping (5)
- 15 Policeman in South Africa helps animals (5)
- 17 Unhappily, Google is the end of veterinary science (7)
- 20 See 10
- 21 Castle criminal gets beheaded (4)
- 22 Dianthus that is digital (6)
- 23 Half the clues are a hybrid (6)

Down

- 1 Get back love: cup-holder gets Queen's backing (6)
- 2 Motion-less, it circumnavigates the globe (4)
- 3 Computer background DOS kept in order (7)
- 4 She female? Sounds like the opposite message! (5)
- 5 Genuine sound by the sea (8)
- 6 They make flowers pastel-coloured (6)
- 12 Food studied in 17 bar (4,4)
- 14 Many could hack off a Labour leader (7)
- 16 Endless dispute about nothing is silly (6)
- 18 Grumble about game (6)
- 19 Whimbrel, avocet, dunlin, egret, redshank - prime examples! (5)
- 21 Uncommon but regularly pre-agreed (4)

CROSSWORD

ANSWERS



The crosswords can also be found online:

Quick clues: <https://crossword.info/daveq/MIYE2025WinterQuick>
 Cryptic clues: <https://crossword.info/daveq/MIYE2025WinterCryptic>

FUN FACT



To survive winter, hedgehogs become immobile, their bodies cool and their normal physiological activities are slowed down.

Their heart rate decreases considerably from approximately 190 per minute to a faint 20 per minute, the body temperature, which is normally 35°C drops to 10°C or less and respiration almost stops (they will breath about once every few minutes).

ANSWERS TO 'WHERE IN EAST LOTHIAN'
A Abbey Bridge, Haddington B East Linton C Waterloo Bridge, Haddington D Ormiston
E Pencaitland F Spilmersford

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