



Newsletter for East Lothian Countryside Volunteers

February 2018

Welcome to the first edition of BBF for 2018 and welcome to all our new volunteers! In return for all the hard work volunteers put in, we are keen to provide relevant training and activities to improve skills and knowledge (and to have fun). With this in mind, I would love to hear of any suggestions you have for this. From moth trapping to meadow making skills; talks to tool training ANYTHING is possible! We have one training session lined up at the moment (see below) and a couple of lunchtime talks in the pipeline. I am also always on the lookout for contributions to BBF. Words, quizzes, events, illustrations - anything you think might be of interest to fellow volunteers. Feel free to use this newsletter to promote yourselves too! And finally, feedback is always welcome and definitely encouraged. It is the only way I can improve what is on offer to vols. Have a good February ☺

Strimmer training: March 13th 10.00am venue tbc. Places limited. Ideal for path wardens but all welcome – if you are interested please email me kbaird@elothianmail.net and I'll put you on the list.

Conservation Volunteer tasks scheduled this month:

New faces always welcome! If you would like to join in with a group for the first time, please get in touch with the relevant ranger to confirm details.



Sun 11th & wed 22nd Feb Aberlady John; jharrison@eastlothian.gov.uk
Thurs 15th Feb Path Warden team task dpriddle@eastlothian.gov.uk
Tues 13th Feb North Berwick Sam; sranscombe@eastlothian.gov.uk
Tues 27th Feb Levenhall Nick; naitken1@eastlothian.gov.uk

What do YOU want? – Responses needed!

In recent years a number of events and training have been put on for Countryside volunteers. These have been generally well attended, and have hopefully been fun and useful for participants. To plan relevant events this year it would be helpful to know of your needs/wants/desires (in the conservation and wildlife training department only! Obviously.)

Tool training? Which tools.

Wildlife and surveying? Any particular plant, animal or habitat.

Indoor talks? Daytime or evening.

Social events? Active or not.

PLEASE email me with suggestions and if you are able to offer anything that might be of interest to fellow volunteers, I would love to hear from you too!

Please send in ideas, feedback or content for the next 'Best boot forward' to kbaird@elothianmail.net

Apologies for any omissions, inaccuracies and typos.

Volunteer activity



BBQ area titivation, Yellowcraig



Litter picking at Aberlady



Ranger-led hike



Tyne Team installing a bench



Path erosion control at North Berwick Law



Tree tube work by DCV



Junior Rangers bash buckthorn



Pirri pirri control at Yellowcraig (jan)



Pirri pirri control at Yellowcraig (feb)



EIDER MONITORING PROJECT 2017

Thank you to all our volunteers who helped with the Eider monitoring project in 2017 in the North Berwick area. This project is now in its 10th year with volunteers collecting data between April and July about eider populations and factors that may be causing declines including human disturbance, weather and nesting habitat.

The project started in 2007 in response to a Scottish Natural Heritage report about decreasing populations of some ground nesting bird species along the East Lothian coastline.

The 2017 project data suggests this year was a successful eider breeding season with high numbers of adult birds counted early in the season, 43 nesting attempts, low predation evidence and good numbers of ducklings recorded along the coastline.

The data collected for this project over the last 7 years has started to show fluctuating populations and shifting breeding times as shown in the table below. This may be related to changes in climate, food availability and increasing human disturbances on the coast.

The Eider monitoring project will continue in 2018 and always welcomes new volunteers with training and support provided. To find out more please contact Sam Ranscombe, Countryside Ranger at sranscombe@eastlothian.gov.uk or 01620 827847.

Year	Total males recorded	Total females recorded	Peak number of males seen at one time (date)	Peak number of females seen at one time (date)	Total ducklings recorded	First- Last ducklings seen	Eider nesting attempts
2011	574	466	69 (12 May)	34 (28 June)	28	25/05- 13/07	30
2012	1312	999	100 (11 May)	70 (11 May)	1	13/07- 13/07	12
2013	950	747	65 (6 May)	44 (10 June)	26	03/06 - 08/07	39
2014	1269	883	65 (13 May)	33 (10 June)	93	03/06 - 27/07	3
2015	1074	568	70 (11 May)	21 (16 and 26 June)	48	29/05 - 06/07	44
2016	2176	989	101 (3 May)	47 (15 June)	19	10/05 - 10/06	49
2017	2644	1052	88 (29 April)	41 (27 April)	13	22/05 - 26/06	43

Not all wasps are stripy

Wasps, along with bees, ants and sawflies belong to a huge insect group called the Hymenoptera. This group is characterised by adults with two pairs of wings which are joined by small hooks, and forewings larger than hindwings. Ants, bees and wasps have noticeably pinched 'waists' and usually quite long antennae. This can help tell them apart from other insect groups such as flies. There are several thousand different species of wasp in the UK, some only a millimetre or two long! Their habits are varied but many of the solitary wasps are parasitoids, laying their eggs inside another insect. The wasp larvae hatches inside its host and proceeds to consume it, the host often remaining alive for much of the experience. Finally, when fully grown the wasp larvae pupates and an adult will emerge from the now dead host to do it all over again!



The wasp pictured is called *Diphys quadripunctorius*. She mated late last summer before seeking out a cave in which to pass the winter (the males all die, having done their bit). She will emerge in spring to lay her eggs. Her preferred host is the caterpillar of the Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing moth.

Seasonal wildlife: The Fieldfare



Take a walk to where berry-laden bushes are plentiful and you may well come across large, noisy chuckling flocks of Fieldfare, a delightful and attractive part of the winter scene.

Fieldfares are large thrushes. They spend summer months breeding in Scandinavia and continental Europe but once autumn berry crops have been exhausted there (late September onward), they head to the UK to make the most of our milder winters.

Many people think of Fieldfares as fruit-eaters but this is not the case, they much prefer grubs and worms, only switching to windfall apples and berries when the coldest weather makes invertebrates hard to come by.

'Fieldfare', our common name for these birds comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'feldware' which means 'traveller of the fields.' In Latin they go by the name *Turdus pilaris* which means 'the hairy thrush'. Apparently, back in the day, there was a misreading of the Greek trikhas, meaning thrush, for trikhos, meaning hair!

Windhover

by Abbie Marland



Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote his famous sonnet *The Windhover* in 1877, but it wasn't published until 1918. As a small child in primary school, I was lucky enough to hear it read by an inspiring teacher. I still recall her pacing our class room whilst the phrases flowed. None of us truly understood the whole gorgeous, mysterious and lilting piece, nor did I learn about its theological imagery until I was much older. But this was my first and favourite poem, and I knew it by heart. By ear, to be precise. Later we struggled a little in reconciling the sound of "dauphin" with the written word, let alone shéer plód and billion. Billion was a banned concept, courtesy of my terrifying arithmetic teacher.

Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) are small falcons, the epitome of grace. Once the most common bird of prey in Scotland, BTO studies show a drastic decline of 67% since 1995. This is partly due to loss of habitat which supports their prey of small mammals (Kestrel breeding success is closely related to the 3-year cycle of short-tailed field vole populations), but probably also climate change, such as wetter Springs. Added to possible secondary rodenticide poisoning or niche competition with Sparrowhawks and Buzzards, the Kestrel is under pressure.

So we are lucky to have Kestrels still breeding in East Lothian. They are cavity nesters, and favour holes in trees or cliff faces, sometimes opting for nest boxes or spots in built structures. At this time of year, they are spread out, roving and hungry. Look out for them soaring over the Laws, round Byres Hill, perched on a telegraph pole along grassy verges or hovering on the wind. Listen for their calls of "kee-kee" as they chase a crow. And fingers crossed for plentiful prey and good Spring weather. Research trapping by Graeme Wilson (from Lothian and Borders Mammal Group (LaBMaG) and TWIC) late last year produced very few Field Vole records, so a cyclical increase this spring is likely. The snow this winter will have helped Voles, as they can make feeding tunnels underneath, away from avian predators. Swings and roundabouts for Kestrels!

On the 100th anniversary of *The Windhover's* publication, 2018 is a great opportunity to celebrate Kestrels. Let us work towards improving their outlook in whatever ways we can.



© Darren Woodhead. With many thanks for permission to reproduce here

The Windhover *by* Gerard Manley Hopkins

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

Who's who

This month another ELCV Trustee, Anne Pearson

Name: Anne Pearson

Group(s) you volunteer for: North Berwick Countryside Volunteers (CV), Dunbar CV, Tyne Team

Background: I am retired, but used to work mainly overseas where I ran research and development projects on tropical livestock, mainly with working animals. So although I have lived in East Lothian in theory since 1993 I have spent less than half that time in the county. Now I have retired I am enjoying getting to know the place I live in and volunteering is a great way to meet likeminded people and see out of the way places in East Lothian. I first volunteered in 2011 when Friends of John Muir Country Park was set up and have been involved ever since, learning a lot especially on plants and butterflies.



Favourite / least favourite volunteer task? My favourite tasks are litter picking, giant hogweed killing and tree planting /least favourite is hoofprint stomping on the salt marshes

Most memorable volunteering moment? Tea and chocolate biscuits

Favourite place in East Lothian: It has to be walks at Tynninghame on the beach and in the woods.

Place you'd most like to visit: Anywhere hot

Best wildlife experience: Seeing the Monarch butterflies in Michoacan, Mexico

Wildlife you'd most like to see: Otters on the Tyne

If you could be a British wild animal, what would you be? A wild cat

Lunchbox essential when volunteering: Dark Chocolate biscuits

When I'm not volunteering ... I like to go horse racing at Musselburgh, Kelso and Cheltenham and don't mind looking after other people's Labradors, which have been known to turn up at volunteer sessions

Any hidden talents? All hidden

Things to do

Volunteers needed for Partridge and Hare project!



Interreg
North Sea Region
PARTRIDGE
European Regional Development Fund



The project: looking for volunteers to help with the PARTRIDGE p

We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers who would like to gain experience of ecological surveying to take part in the EU PARTRIDGE Project. This project aims to look at how management solutions can improve biodiversity and ecosystem services in agricultural habitats, and we will be recording Grey partridge and Brown hare numbers from January-March to monitor biodiversity levels. Further information on the project can be found here (<http://northsearegion.eu/partridge/about-the-project/>).

The work:

For the project we will be focusing on partridge playback surveys and lamping. The playback surveys take place at dusk and surveyors will be required to walk 1km transects. Hare lamping surveys involve using a vehicle to drive around site at night and record mammals that are seen. The sites in the project are in Fife and Mid/East Lothian so participants can opt for all or specific areas if they have a preference. Volunteers will gain valuable experience in ecological survey techniques, ID skills and get the chance to take part in an EU project that aims to benefit farmers as well as biodiversity.

Requirements:

You do not need to have any previous experience of environmental surveys as all training will be provided. Although no strenuous activities will be undertaken, surveyors should be able to walk 1km on uneven ground at a brisk pace. We would recommend that surveyors bring wellies as the ground can be muddy and that they wear warm clothes. You should also be able to travel to site independently, although pick up can be arranged from a nearby train station (where possible).

To sign up or if you have any questions, please contact Fiona Torrance, Scottish Grey Partridge Recovery Project Research Assistant, at ftorrance@gwct.org.uk.

ADULTS ONLY!

This year the Ranger service are offering a series of events exclusively for adults. These will range from fossil walks to wildflowers, and seashores to mindfulness in nature. The first is on February 17th, and is a chance to learn how to identify wading birds and wildfowl

Waders and Wildfowl, Saturday 17th February

The East Lothian Coastline is an internationally important wintering ground for many species of Waders and Wildfowl. Learn how to identify the different species that overwinter along our coastline. Bring warm waterproof clothing, sturdy footwear and binoculars.

To book a place go to: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerservice



Join a Ranger-led Hike!

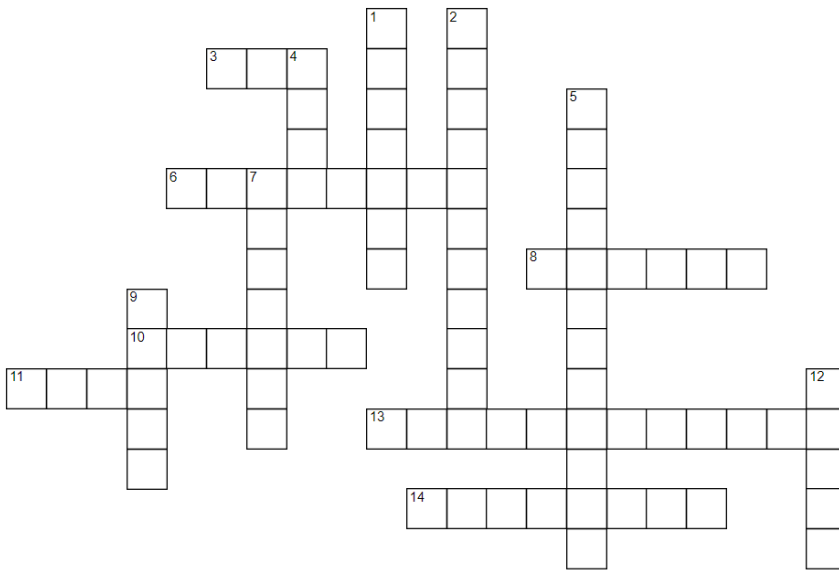
High Hopes: 25th February

Perfect for beginners to hill walking with a good level of fitness. Our 6.5 mile (10km) circular walk mainly uses estate tracks to take us around Hopes Reservoir and up to Lammer Law summit.

To book, visit: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerservice



The Last Page



ACROSS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 3 | e.g. Daubenton's |
| 6 | Monument on Byre's Hill |
| 8 | Birth place of John Muir |
| 10 | Breed of pony that graze on Traprain Law |
| 11 | County on the other side of the Forth |
| 13 | An invasive non-native plant that can be harmful to humans |
| 14 | Location of East Lothian gannet colony |

DOWN

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Favourite foodplant of the Cinnabar moth |
| 2 | Order of insect that contains bees, wasps and ants |
| 4 | River in Haddington |
| 5 | Spiny coastal shrub with orange berries |
| 7 | A type of butterfly or bird |
| 9 | Common name for Fagus sylvaticus |
| 12 | A snake found in East Lothian |

Christmas Quiz

Congratulations to Sylvia and Louise for getting the most points in BBF's Christmas Quiz.

Well done to everyone who entered. It was a close competition and everyone got high scores. Next year I shall have to make it harder...

Answers:

- 1 Tawny's eyes: black/dark
- 2 Slugs
- 3 Moths
- 4 Exmoor
- 5 1954
- 6 Meikle Says Law
- 7 Gullane, Dunbar, Tranent, Ppans, Whiteadder, Hopes, Stobshiel, Papan
- 8 Ycraigs, Traprain, NBK Law, Gullane, Barnsness, Aberlady
- 9 Daddy Long legs spider, Nursery web spider, 4spot Orbweaver, Zebra spider
- 10 Green Hairstreak, Cinnabar, Red tail bbee (Male), Sparrowhawk, Red grouse
- 11 Bass, Barnsness, Fidra
- 12 Buzzard, Otter, Bullfinch
- 13 John Muir
- 14 Curlew (others are ducks)
- 15 Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Russian Vine, Sycamore, Ragwort, Snowberry
- 16 apple, paper, cotton, orange, crisp packet, aluminium can, plastic bottle



Winning Weasels!

Well done to Abbie for scooping 1st prize in the Wildlife category of the Scottish Seabird Centre's photography competition. As you probably know, Abbie's is one of the main providers of images to BBF and it good to see her talents recognised.

