



Newsletter for East Lothian Countryside Volunteers

June 2018

This month's BBF possibly has a bit of a butterfly-bias! But don't let that put you off turning the pages. There is some exciting news about a pioneering butterfly translocation project that is underway largely driven by Abbie, one of our volunteers. A local Green Hairstreak site has been re-discovered after many years and with quests for Small Blues to the north and south of us in June, could this be the year this tiny butterfly is seen in East Lothian? June is undoubtedly a good month to be out and about looking for butterflies, not to mention a myriad of other beautiful small things (obviously I'm a big fan of things without a backbone) so if you are wanting to sit in a flowery place on a sunny day, bug and butterfly bothering could be just the excuse you need.

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. Also see: www.elcv.org.uk/dates/



Thurs 7th June: Yellowcraig Dave; dwild@eastlothian.gov.uk

Wed 6th June & Sat 23rd Aberlady John; jharrison@eastlothian.gov.uk

Tues 12th June North Berwick Sam; sranscombe@eastlothian.gov.uk

Thur 21st June: Path Warden team task Duncan dpriddle@eastlothian.gov.uk

Tues 26th June: Levenhall Nick; nick1@eastlothian.gov.uk

Weds 27th June: Dunbar CVs Tara/Laura; dcv@eastlothian.gov.uk

R&R at Yellowcraig © Jane B

Ranger-led Activities and Hikes

Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rangerevents for details and to book.

HIKE. Coastal Safari: Sunday 24th June 10am Gullane

Join the ranger for an 8 mile walk along the coast, taking in seabirds, marine life and coastal plants of East Lothian. Finish with an ice cream in Gullane. Booking essential. £10 per person.



Coastal flora © Abbie

Colourful moth (a Buff Ermine) © Katty



EVENT. Moths are brown and boring!?: Sunday 24th June 8 - 10am Aberlady

This and other moth myths dispelled as we open up the moth trap to discover a world of colour and wonder before releasing them unharmed. Then, after breakfast (included) there will be a 45 minute talk about the fascinating world of moths including and introduction on how to spot and identify them

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

“Robin’s Walk” – an annual joint DCV/Dunbar golf club coastal litter pick



Setting new standards for volunteer fashion at Aberlady



ELCV Harry Blackley supported staff and children on a litter pick at Thurston Manor caravan park. Better still, his team of kids won a prize!



Aberlady litter pick and bridge repairs



Hogweed removal near Hailes castle (see article on invasives for more information about steps being taken to tackle invasive plants in East Lothian)



Path work at Yellowcraig

TEAM PHOTOS WANTED!

You turn up at your regular volunteering day, get stuck in to the job in hand, have a laugh, drink some coffee/eat lunch, wear yourself out and go home (I think I've got those things in about the right order?) It is all too easy to forget to take pictures, but pictures are good for remembering and good for promoting. I've received a few group photos from May which made me think it would be great to try to get a group photo for each group volunteer activity during June! Can you help? Before or after, silly or serious, big group, small group, with props or empty-handed – let's see if we can get a measure of just how many folk turn up to help each month. Maybe there will even be a prize for the one which makes me smile the most...



Dunbar Conservation Volunteers on a joint litter picking mission with Dunbar Golf Club



Wednesday Aberlady Bay Volunteers getting ready for some sprucing up of the Reserve



Friends of Yellowcraig after a session improving a disabled-accessible path





INVASIVE Non-Native Species



More information on some of East Lothian's invasive plants can be found on the ELCV website: www.elcv.org.uk/tasks/invasives/

What are they? Invasive non-native species (INNS) can be plants or animals that have ended up in the UK usually, but not always, by accident. Freed of the natural predators and competitors of their home country they can spread rapidly often at the expense of our native flora and fauna. VAST sums of money are spent trying to eradicate and control them (especially where there is commercial value involved) but it is not a battle easily won.

Which ones are causing problems in East Lothian? Lots! but the extent of the problem isn't well-documented. Which species? Where do they occur? In what quantity? How quickly are they spreading? How much of a problem do they pose? Himalayan Balsam is a problem because it takes over other vegetation on river banks and when it dies back over winter the banks are left bare and subject to erosion. Giant Hogweed causes nasty blisters when it comes into contact with skin (see Nick's story below), so is a hazard along footpaths and other places people frequent.

What is being done by volunteers? ELCV and other volunteer groups help monitor and control some invasive species in East Lothian. For example, Pirri-Pirri bur at Yellowcraig and Barns Ness, Giant Hogweed at Aberlady and on the Tyne near Hailes and Preston Mill, Himalayan Balsam from some sections of the Tyne and Esk.

The Invasives Group A small group of ELCVs formed an Invasives subgroup with the aim of working up a project that could help to tackle some of the problem plants in East Lothian. Busy lives and other commitments mean we haven't got very far yet! We've decided to concentrate on a few species: Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Pirri-pirri Bur. The preliminary focus is mapping the extent of these species and raising public awareness. For now, practical control will be concentrated on supporting the work of existing groups but it is hoped that this will be extended in future years.

Get Involved! If you come across any of these plants in East Lothian you can email details to invasives@elcv.org.uk – please be sure to include a location (ideally a grid reference), a date and if possible a photo. For those familiar with iRecord, or wanting to have a go, you can enter details here: www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/join/east-lothian-invasives.

If you would like to get more involved in developing an INNS project in East Lothian, we would also love to hear from you!



Beware Giant Hogweed: Nick's story

Despite the hot weather, I wore my fleece as it has elasticated cuffs and left no gap on my wrists between it and my gloves. After a couple of hours of hard work, I took my fleece off and carried it over my arm for the walk back up the River Tyne and it must have had sap on it. That was last Thursday and on Sunday blisters started to appear up my arm. It makes me realise that we should take more care to rinse our tools and be aware that sap could be on our clothing after digging up Giant Hog Weed.



The BIG Flit

by Abbie Marland

The natural world is good at coping with change, and nothing ever remains the same. And very few parts of East Lothian are “natural”. Human influence has largely created our current landscape, and wildlife adapts. Just occasionally however, when change is rather drastic, a bit of balance is needed.

Major housing developments are growing fast in East Lothian, including the area known as Blindwells, a former opencast mine. After the mine was decommissioned, the site evolved into one of the largest rough grasslands in East Lothian, with a lake, marshes and scrub. These features became richly biodiverse, with scarce and rare wildlife species establishing and breeding. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blindwells>

A speciality of Blindwells is its colony of Grayling butterflies, which occupies the old railway sidings on the south side of the pond. This colony is one of only two in East Lothian. Graylings are a species of high conservation concern. Sadly, 2017 saw their worst UK population numbers on record. The colony had been monitored over time by butterfly recorder volunteers and East Lothian Ranger Service. Thus, when we knew that 2018 would mark the start of extensive development, and that the sidings would face eventual demolition, we worked up the Grayling Project to translocate the colony off site



Ambitious? Complex? Any precedent? Yes, Yes and No! The translocation of Grayling butterflies has never been attempted in the UK before. Such a project needs the creation of suitable “receptor” habitat, plus the uplift of the species in its early stages (eggs and caterpillars), which requires perfect timing and ecological understanding. Quite an undertaking. But we sought advice from some top UK butterfly experts and rolled up our sleeves.

Grayling butterflies like hot, sunny, rocky spots where they can bask and lay their eggs. The caterpillars eat fine grasses such as Fescues, over-winter, and the chrysalis is formed underground, with the adult butterflies on the wing from late June through the summer. They are truly masters of disguise, with cryptic colouring and the ability to vanish in front of your eyes. The orange outer top wing only shows during feeding, when the “eye” pattern can deter predators, and open wing displays occur during courtship.

So landscape scale excavations have been going on down Levenhall Links. We have begun the creation of habitat to (hopefully) suit Grayling butterflies, and other species. The main feature are sheltered south facing “scrapes, containing banks of re-cycled crushed concrete which are to be sown with fescues, and surrounded with areas sown with wildflowers. Surveys at Blindwells end are underway with the permission of the developers, and the plan is to start collecting and moving caterpillars or eggs late this season or nest Spring. Timing will depend on many factors coming together, so fingers crossed for the eventual Big Flit.

East Lothian Council, East Lothian Countryside Volunteers and Butterfly Conservation Scotland (East) have been working together to make this project possible. Hats off to everyone who has already put in so much effort, particularly those who have dug muddy turves, gone on night surveys, cleaned up debris and sown seed, despite thick haar and freezing cold winds. Special thanks to the team of Junior Rangers who dedicated a whole afternoon helping establish the new butterfly site.



1st June: Junior Rangers hard at work. Abbie says: "It was an amazing achievement to get half of the whole site sculptured, cleaned and sown with special grasses before the storm arrived. Huge thanks to the team of Junior Rangers for all their work this afternoon, and thanks also to Katie, this year's Toun Honest Lass, for lending a hand."

Some things to do

1-10th June is [Small Blue Butterfly Week](https://butterfly-conservation.org/244/events.html?uf_Class=EastScotland)! The Small Blue is Scotland's smallest resident butterfly and its populations are mostly small, isolated and severely under threat. Volunteers are planning to visit known sites in the coming weeks, to look for the butterflies and its food plant and also to identify any potential new habitat. There are two surveys just south of East Lothian, in Borders. These will be fun and informative events with plenty of other wildlife on offer. Full details can be found at:

https://butterfly-conservation.org/244/events.html?uf_Class=EastScotland

Saturday 2nd June, Coastal walk from Eyemouth 11.00am-3.00pm

Meeting at Gunsreen Carpark NT947643. Turning off the A1107 in Eyemouth at NT943636.

Sunday 24th June, Burnmouth. Meet at 10.30 am in the car park just off the A1 at Burnmouth (NT953607).

There are currently no records of Small Blue in East Lothian, but it's always worth keeping an eye out for them... just in case!

Compared with Scotland's most widespread blue butterfly, the Common Blue, the Small Blue is MUCH smaller and very dark - its wings have a silvery underside and dark brownish upperside with just a light dusting of blue scales. It can be seen flying from mid-May to late June. The caterpillars feed exclusively on Kidney Vetch
Photo © Abbie Marland



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



This is an Orange Tip butterfly spotted by Nick Morgan on his transect in Haddington earlier in the month. He noticed it had a wonky flight, but on closer examination... it's wings don't match! There is the "orange tip" of the male on the left wing, and the plain white of the female on the right wing. What's going on? It's a gynandromorph – a mixture of both male and female. More details no doubt to be had on Google, but according to experts it is "a find of a lifetime". Well done Nick.

Seen any butterflies? Nick Morgan (nmorgan@eastlothian.gov.uk) would love to know! He collates all East Lothian records and puts together an interesting summary of the sightings at the end of the year

Some more things to do

For something a bit different and especially if you have a boat or can fly a plane...

Volunteers wanted for SCRAPbook - Plastic Pollution Project



The SCRAPbook project aims to use aerial photography to map marine litter across Scottish coastlines and identify "pollution hotspots".



They are looking for volunteer pilots and photographers to identify and record areas of litter and pollution, volunteers to help with beach cleans once areas are identified and anyone with a kayak, RIB or boat to help access and clear areas that are a bit harder to reach. If you would like to find out more or are keen to be involved, visit: <https://scrapbook.org.uk/>

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

BioBlitz

**BIG BOTANICALS
BIOBLITZ**

Saturday 9 June | 10am to 5pm

Come along to the Botanic Cottage and help us discover and record the variety of wildlife living here in the Garden!

- Guided wildlife tours • Nature talks
- Launch of The Lost Words Trail
- Pond dipping* • Gardening demonstrations
- Worm charming • Meet the Garden moths
- Local organisations' fair

Find out more:
www.rbge.org.uk/whatson

*Booking essential on the day

Dunbar Shore and Harbour Neighbourhood Group

2pm Sunday June 24th Beach Clean and Beach Garden work.

Come and help keep these areas looking good and meet local people. Everyone welcome!

For more details email:

shore_harbour@yahoo.co.uk

tel:01368 865228

Sunday 3rd June: Moths in the Garden

St. Mary's Pleasance, Haddington 10am

A FREE event organised by Haddington Garden Trust and Butterfly Conservation Scotland East Branch

For more information contact: mothsinthegarden@gmail.com



Lurking in the Lammermuirs

Ask someone to describe the landscape of East Lothian and they are most likely to mention the coastline and the golf courses, or vast arable fields. The upland areas in the Lammermuirs are often forgotten. Although no longer a habitat in its prime, this heather moorland with occasional steep tree-lined cleughs have some special wildlife for those with the time and inclination to look. In May the stunning Green Hairstreak butterfly was found by Hopes Reservoir, a place it hadn't been seen for 20 years. Up in the East Lammermuir Deans a Grey Scalloped Bar moth came to a light trap (only a couple of previous East Lothian records) and in a beautiful fragment of old birch woodland near Whiteadder a Grey Birch moth turned up – a first for East Lothian and only the third record from SE Scotland.



Look out for Jumpers

With some warmer weather at last, and sometimes even a sight of the sun, now is a good time to look out for some of our more charismatic spiders! Even those who break out in a cold sweat when confronted with a harmless arachnid surely can't fail to feel some affection towards this group of spiders?!

They are generally rather small, running around on warm surfaces such as walls, rocks and tree trunks. Characterised by a pair of large eyes (and the ability to jump), they can be engaging to watch as they go about their business. Look more closely at their colours and patterns and, whilst obviously being amazed, you may start to recognise several different species. The black and white Zebra Spider is perhaps the most familiar, and a species on the Scottish Spider Search's list: **please send us records!** www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/scottish_spider_search.php But there are other exciting discoveries to be made. The middle picture above was spotted by Iain Cowe on the coast near Eyemouth and is only the 3rd record in Scotland! The other two records are from the Forth coast, so worth keeping a look out should you be sunbathing on a rocky shore.



Spiders L to R: *Heliophanus* sp., *Aellurius v-insignatus* ©Iain Cowe and *Salticus scenicus* ©Katty Baird

The Last Page



Colour from opposite ends of the county:
Bass Rock at sunrise
and an Emperor moth
near Hopes Reservoir



MYSTERY EXOTIC OBJECT QUIZ!

Here are some fibrous balls, found washed up on a Sardinian Beach by Alastair Guild. What are they?

Bonus point: What use can they have?

Answer: at bottom of page.



Where in EL?

Two more photos. Where were they taken?



A distinctive tree ©Alan Whyte



Toad guidance ©Liz C

Last month's photos were of Luffness Friary: the pond and the Tomb of the Knight. Thanks Liz!



Washed up balls pictured above – what are they?

Neptune Balls are little balls made of the leafy remains of a Sea Grass endemic to the Mediterranean: Posidonia oceanica. The balls form in the sea when dead fibrous remains of the leaves are tossed about by the waves and clump together. They then get washed up onto beaches, sometimes in vast quantities. Until quite recently they were deemed 'useless' but it turns out they can be converted into high-quality building insulation. Not only is the weed mould-resistant and non-flammable, it also doesn't rot and converting it into insulation doesn't require any chemicals. And if that wasn't enough, it can absorb water vapour and release it again without having any effect on its insulation properties! Shame the sea grass beds are shrinking as a result of various environmental pressures.