The weather has improved and hopefully you are managing to get out and enjoy some of the wonderful wildlife East Lothian has to offer. After a rather slow, cold start our bees, butterflies and other invertebrates are busy on the wing, plants are doing their summer thing (not good for hay fever sufferers) and the next generation of baby birds and mammals are exploring their new world. For those that are missing the energetic cutting, burning and bashing type of activities that we focus on in the winter months: relax and enjoy the rewards of your toil. The hard graft of winter habitat management helps to maintain our diverse habitats and encourages this summer wildlife bonanza to flourish.

Upcoming ELC Conservation Volunteer tasks:
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.

Aberlady - John; jharrison@eastlothian.gov.uk
Weds 6th beach clean & Sun 17th July plant survey

Yellowcraig – Dave; dwild@eastlothian.gov.uk
Thurs 7th July Plant surveys & 28th July Path work

Path Wardens team Duncan; dpriddle@eastlothian.gov.uk
Thurs 21st July Donnoly – Danskie path clearance

Tyne team Duncan; dpriddle@eastlothian.gov.uk
Thurs 28th July River Tyne path cut back

North Berwick – Sam; sranscombe@eastlothian.gov.uk
Tues 26th July

Levenhall - Nick; naitken1@eastlothian.gov.uk
Tues 26th July

Dunbar – Tara; dcv@eastlothian.gov.uk
Weds 27th July

The Big Nature Festival may have gone, but it need not be forgotten! Abbie’s photos have been collated on a dedicated volunteer Flickr account, which you can access here: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/143497401@N05/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/143497401@N05/)

(Apologies for the lack of chronological order; this might be sorted in due course.)

Please send in ideas or content for the next 'Best boot forward' to kbaird@elothianmail.net Apologies for any omissions or inaccuracies.
Volunteer activity: some photos

North Berwick pony

Ranger walk at Spott mill

Path work near Elphinstone

Mission moonwort at Aberlady

Grazing project veg survey ©Abbie Marland

Repairing fences in the Glen, North Berwick ©Sylvia Beaumont

Looking for pirri pirri on Yellowcraig dunes

New toys for path wardens

Tree bumble bees are about!

Pony Picnic, Traprain Law

Bob, Traprain ©Sylvia Beaumont

“We’re going on a plant hunt, we’re going to see some tiny ones…” Plant hunting at Aberlady
Ladybird Spotting
By Katie Murray

Katie Murray grew up in Dirleton and is currently studying for a PhD in Ladybird ecology at the University of Stirling. As part of this, she has just launched the “Ladybird Challenge” inviting all of us to send in sightings of 7-spot ladybirds this summer. The more data the better, so please take a look at the website and submit your records.

Asked to think of a ladybird, the majority of people will instantly picture the 7-spot ladybird, *Coccinella septempunctata*, a well-known species often referred as the ‘gardeners friend’. There are however many more species that are easily spotted around the UK, including in East Lothian. In fact, this group of charismatic beetles contains 46 species in the UK, of which 26 are what you could consider the colourful, ‘classic’ ladybirds. The remainder, the so-called inconspicuous ladybirds, are small (under 3mm) and dull in comparison, although still have their own charm!

The name ladybird has a religious origin, referring to the Virgin Mary (Our Lady) due to her depiction in paintings wearing a red cloak, with the 7-spots representing the seven joys and seven sorrows of Mary (referring to the 7-spot ladybird). Generally speaking, the deeper the colour of red on species such as the 7-spot, 2-spot and harlequin ladybirds, the older the ladybird is. These ladybirds tend to emerge as yellow from their pupal case, becoming more orange as their wing cases harden and their spots develop. They then increasingly become redder as time goes on.

Ladybirds have a number of natural enemies, mainly in the form of parasites and parasitoids. One parasitoid of our native 7-spot ladybird is the parasitic wasp, *Dinocampus coccinellae*. This wasp has an amazing lifecycle. After laying an egg inside a ladybird, the wasp grub hatches and eats the still-alive ladybird from the inside. The grub then pushes its way out of the back of the ladybird, before spinning a cocoon between the legs of the still-alive ladybird, turning it into a ‘zombie bodyguard’, protecting the developing wasp from predators. The adult wasp breaks out of the cocoon and flies off to find ladybird hosts of its own.

As part of my PhD at the University of Stirling (in partnership with the UK Ladybird Survey and the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology) I have set up the Ladybird Challenge. The project aims to find out more about the occurrence of the parasitic wasp, *Dinocampus coccinellae* in the UK, as well as to investigate what effect the notoriously invasive alien harlequin ladybird is having on the wasp population. The wasp shows no attack preference between the harlequin and the 7-spot when given a choice; however attacked harlequins rarely produce adult wasps, resulting as a ‘dead-end’ for the parasite. We aim to see if the harlequin is resulting in a decline of yet another species (we already know it causes the decline of many native ladybirds).

Take Part in the Ladybird Challenge!
If you see any 7-spot ladybirds or *Dinocampus coccinellae* cocoons when out and about this summer, we would love to hear about them. Visit ladybirdchallenge.co.uk to submit your sightings. We are working closely with the UK Ladybird Survey, and will pass on any records of 7-spot ladybirds to them. If you see any other ladybirds, the Ladybird Survey would also love to hear about them ([www.ladybird-survey.org](http://www.ladybird-survey.org)). See the next page for a guide to some of the species you might spot.

For more information, and videos, visit ladybirdchallenge.co.uk. We are also on twitter @lbird_challenge.
Some Ladybirds to spot


7-spot ladybird (Coccinella septempunctata)

Orange ladybird (Halyzia sedecimguttata)

14-spot ladybird (Propylea quatuordecim-punctata)

2-spot ladybird (Adalia bipunctata)

10-spot ladybird (Adalia decimpunctata)

Harlequin ladybird (Harmonia axyridis)

The harlequin ladybird is an invasive species that has not yet reached Scotland and been able to sustain a population. If you see this ladybird in East Lothian, please report it to the UK Ladybird Survey.

Are you tick-aware?

Ticks are small arachnids, which live off the blood of birds and mammals – including you. They are most abundant in long grass, rough vegetation, bracken and woodland. They may be present throughout the year but are particularly active between May and October and especially at times of warm weather. It is worth checking your body after being out and about in the countryside and following the comprehensive advice given here: https://www.thebmc.co.uk/get-ready-to-tackle-ticks
Wall Brown (*Lasiommata megera*), a new arrival in East Lothian having only been recorded here regularly since 2010. You will find it along much of the coast from North Berwick eastwards as well as on North Berwick Law and Traprain Law. It loves sunny, rocky locations. It is thought that climate change is pushing this species northwards and it is now becoming quite rare in southern England where it was once common.

Burnet Roses (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*), a lovely sight along our coastline, specially near Longniddry. They have white, sweetly scented blooms, densely prickled stems, small paired leaflets plus fruits which are glossy black and last all winter.

Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), a dragonfly of late spring and early summer. Until recently a rare sight in East Lothian, but it has been increasing its range both inland and on the coast by lakes and ponds.

Weasels! Smaller and shyer than Stoats (though closely related), they have a short tail with no black tip, and feed on small prey such as voles. The “kits” are weaned at 3-4 weeks, but keep together as a family group until 8-12 weeks.

Midsummer Blues (butterflies). The Common Blue males are iridescent blue above, whilst the females have brown upper wings with orange spots & blue spangles. Bird’s Foot Trefoil is the favoured food plant, so watch for female butterflies quietly laying eggs.
Name: Jennifer Lothian  
Job Title: Outdoor Access Officer  
Length of service: 11 years  
What do you do? I cover the west of the county. My job involves promoting responsible access, upholding access rights and other statutory duties. I’m involved with managing the Core Paths Network in the west, and I work with landowners, user groups, local communities and the local Area Partnerships to improve, upgrade and promote the core path network (both local paths and active travel routes connecting communities). I work with planners and developers, and colleagues across the Council to improve paths, outdoor access opportunities, green networks, active and sustainable travel for the future. It’s a lot to do part-time but it’s a very rewarding job – especially making a difference to local people, and doing my bit to help the planet by encouraging walking and cycling over using the car.

Brief career: I came from a nature conservation background, with a love of wildlife and the outdoors, and years of volunteering experience with Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue Trust, the Highland Wildlife Park, the RSPB and Scottish Wildlife Trust. I have a First Class BSc (Honours) degree in Zoology and a PhD from the University of Glasgow. I spent a year researching hybridisation in Scottish and European wildcats. My previous employment includes working for the National Museum of Scotland, the University of Glasgow (assisting with teaching practical undergraduate Zoology), the Highland Wildlife Park, Scottish Wildlife Trust, and Scottish Natural Heritage (as a Recreation and Access Advisor).

Favourite place in East Lothian:  
Whitesands beach – watching gannets and rock-pooling with my kids.

Best Natural history experiences: Seeing the Northern Lights filling the night sky above my tent beside Vatnajokull ice cap in Iceland. Watching giant leatherback turtles heaving themselves onto a nesting beach by night in Trinidad, West Indies. The golden eagle that flew right over my head on the top of Carn Ban Mor in the Cairngorms. Meeting David Attenborough! (he's my hero).

And now for something on Leatherback turtles....

Leatherbacks are the largest sea turtles in the world, growing over 2 m in length. They eat jellyfish and have an extra-long oesophagus lined with spines to help deal with this slippery prey. Unlike other turtles, they have a flexible, rubbery 'shell', from which the name leatherback derives. Leatherbacks nest on tropical beaches but are found in most of the world’s oceans occasionally turning up on Scottish shores. Sadly they are critically endangered – entanglement in fishing gear and marine litter are largely to blame (a plastic bag looks a lot like a jellyfish).
Summaries of some of the other volunteer events during the past month

**Flower Power, Butterdean Wood**
A group of volunteers braved the rain at Butterdean wood to learn about plants and record some of the species growing there. Stuart, our Biodiversity Officer, guided the walk giving some of his top tips for plant ID (e.g. the upper lip test for rough or smooth meadow grass). Plenty of ‘common’ plants were found, but also a few nice woodland specialities such as Sanicle and Wood Avens.

More plant trips are planned this summer –details are somewhere in this newsletter.

**Picnic with Ponies, Traprain Law**
It was a ‘home game’ for some and an ‘away leg’ for others, but on Sat June 25th volunteer pony checkers, together with some plant and bumblebee recorders, met at Traprain Law for the Pony Picnic. Here, Duncan explained to the group about the positive impacts of the grazing programme so far. Juliet Rogers, from the Moorland Mousie (Exmoor pony conservation) trust kindly joined us to provide additional insight into the biology of these wonderful animals. And let’s just be clear, we didn’t picnic on ponies, no we went for some savouries, but mainly biscuits. And cake; lots of cake! Thanks to all who came and helped my sugar levels.

**Last few places...**
**Boat Trip for volunteers! Sunday 24th July 6pm – 7pm**
Cost now only £5 per person
We have managed to secure the Seabird Centre’s catamaran for an exclusive trip at a bargain price around Craigleith and the Bass. There are still a few places left, so if you would like to join us, get in quickly, either by emailing kbaird@elothian.net or completing the doodle poll at http://doodle.com/poll/k86f97m5ibd8ykex
I will be in touch with those who have already signed up very soon. If you can no longer make it, please can you let me know so I can offer your place to someone else.
Tool Talk

Ever wondered about those tools at the back of the ranger’s containers? What are they for and how do you use them? This month… drum roll… we start a new slot in Best Boot Forward on tools, written by Bobby Anderson who is the senior ranger for the “East Team”. To start, a bit on tool maintenance. In future months we will delve more deeply into some of the tools frequently used in conservation management. Other “tool themed” ideas and contributions welcome.

Volume 1 - “A Volunteers Toolkit”

Apart from the volunteer, himself or herself, our next most important asset when undertaking management tasks in the countryside, are the tools and equipment we use. The correct tool, in the right hands, used properly and looked after with care, will give many years of service. It will also work more efficiently leaving fewer aches and pains to remind us of the work that has just been undertaken.

The funds available and the price of quality items is a factor when buying, but the aftercare of tools is essential to prolong their life and ensure they continue to operate safely and efficiently.

“There is no point in spending ages putting a nice sharp edge on a wood chisel only to then use it to open a tin of paint!!”

Over the next wee while we will look at the tools we most commonly use, which one does what and how to get the most from them. Take a look at the accompanying photo. There are a number of items here which I think are essential.

We work in some wet and muddy conditions. Rust and mud take a heavy toll on steel. Any digging implement will benefit from being scraped clean of any clinging mud after use. Tools used for cutting or raking grass can be given a brush down to remove any damp leaf material. Loppers and secateurs should have any moving parts oiled and spraying any exposed metal surfaces with WD 40 will drive off any water from the metal surface and also give it a light coating of oil to prevent rust whilst in storage.

Undertaking these simple tasks at the end of a work session will prolong equipment life and also make using the tool a much more pleasant experience.
Other events, opportunities and goings-on

Fire!

In mid-June, the extended dry weather finally caught up with us with a carelessly discarded BBQ precipitating a wild fire at Byre’s Hill (Hopetoun) near Haddington. Despite considerable efforts from fire services and ELC Countryside staff, the gorse continued to burn on and off for over a week, finally being extinguished when the weather changed. As such, ‘we’ are now looking at what we should do with the charred remains of the gorse and it is likely we shall take the opportunity to cut out some of the dead stems, creating firebreaks and allowing other plants to flourish. So expect a call for volunteer help sometime soon!

The gorse on fire ©Abbie Marland

East Lothian Volunteer Path Wardens’ AGM

The ELVPW Trustees had their AGM on 23rd June. Two trustees - Mike Traynor and Nick Morgan - stood down although Nick will attend Trustees meetings as a Council official. Their seats were filled by Graham Pettigrew and John Laws. Dave Oldham takes the position of Secretary which was held by Nick Morgan. Andy Stevenson and Duncan Priddle continue as Chair and Treasurer respectively as do Dave Quarendon and Thomas Bower as Trustees.

Plans for the coming year were discussed and include promoting the work of path wardens by stickers on path signage, asking wardens to complete a form describing a walk they cover and organising a SpringTyne Stroll for 2017. Linked to this the training of path wardens for leading guided walks was well received. There was also discussion of coordinating path wardens work with that of Amenity Services staff and encouraging wardens to submit monthly reports.

We finished with an interesting talk by Carl Howman, ELC’s Dog Warden. Stray dogs, fouling and aggressive dogs were discussed and a useful debate followed. Thanks to everyone to came along. If you want to find out more about the work of the path wardens (they do lots of it!) check out the blog on their website https://pathwardens.wordpress.com/aboutus/trustees/ or the facebook page (search for East Lothian Path Wardens).
Volunteer Plant Hunting

Have you ever wished that you could identify that bonny flower as you walk around East Lothian’s beautiful countryside? Ever fancied exploring different part of the county to see what is there? Now is your chance. A group of plant hunters meets about once per month to explore different areas, learn about the plants and build our knowledge of the biodiversity around the county. Trips are led by Stuart, the Council’s Biodiversity Officer, who will tell you about the plants and give tips on identification. A list of plants and other species is produced and sent to The Wildlife Information Centre where it can be used for nature conservation, ecological research, and other uses, including helping with planning applications. If you would like to join some or all of these interesting and useful trips please get in touch with Stuart smcpherson@eastlothian.gov.uk or Katty kbaird@elothianmail.net for more information and to be put on an email distribution list which will keep you updated with details of upcoming excursions. Recent trips have included Papana Wood near Garvald and Butterdean near Gladsmuir. Trips being planned over the next few months are:

19th July (p.m.) Morrison’s Haven, nr Prestonpans
18th Aug Saltoun Tip, near East Saltoun
31st Aug Whitecastle Hill Fort, near Garvald
13th Sept Kidlaw and Lammerloch Reservoir, near Stobshiel

Hope to see some of you there!

Make your moths count!

A new atlas of UK moths is due to be produced next year (for the uninitiated, this is a book detailing the current distribution of all moth species in the UK). For this to be as informative and useful as possible, moth sightings are needed from everywhere. Here in East Lothian we have quite good coverage, but there are still some gaps, especially in southern areas. If you have a garden that might be good for moths and would be happy for a moth trap (a very bright light) to be run overnight then get in touch with Katty kbaird@elothianmail.net. Gardens with a variety of plants, or close to natural habitats and without neighbours/spouse that might get annoyed by a bright light shining all night are best.
Where in ‘EL?  

Some more pictures taken whilst out and about in East Lothian. Where are they?  
Thanks to Neil, Katty and Sylvia for the photos. Last month’s answers below.

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Last month’s answers:

Gazebo (in this case a classical summer house) built in 1718 on the Dunglass Estate, on the north end of the 'French Camp' which dates back to Mary Queen of Scots time, when English forces occupied Haddington. You can still see the earthen ramparts and deep trenches of the camp. A lovely site worth visiting.

Sundial built in the 1600s next to Dunglass Collegiate Church

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Farewell Brian

Brain Dawkins, who was covering Laura’s rangering patch whilst she was on maternity leave has come to the end of his contract. Here’s a big thank you for all the work he has done with us over the past 9 months or so, and we look forward to welcoming Laura back into the fray later in the summer.