

Police called after pond was dredged in nesting season

Police were called in to investigate after a village pond was 'dredged' by a digger during nesting season in East Lothian.

Angry residents in the village of Athelstaneford raised the alarm after spotting the work being carried out at Garleton Pond on the outskirts of the community.

The pond, which is home to moorhen and coots every year, had been surrounded by trees and hedgerow prior to the work.

Countryside rangers were accompanied by wildlife police officers on a visit to the site where they said 'advice was issued' to those involved.

Now East Lothian Council has urged land owners to check before carrying out any work in wildlife areas, particularly during breeding seasons.

A council spokesperson said: "Our advice to anyone carrying out work in the countryside is to seek professional advice in advance to ensure work will not disturb any species at key times such as nesting."

Locals living in the village were stunned to see the work being carried out on the land last month.

One resident said: "When it was pointed out they shouldn't be doing the work as it was nesting season they didn't respond.

"This pond has been a popular spot for locals for many years

and we look forward to seeing the birds there each year. It is devastating because regardless of any action taken, the damage has now been done – it can't be undone."

Another resident added: "There is plenty of advice out there about when not to do this kind of work and the impact on wildlife but clearly that was just ignored. It is very upsetting to see."

The bird nesting season in Scotland runs from March to August and it is an offence to 'intentionally or recklessly disturb' any wild birds while they are actively nesting.

The pond lies in the shadow of Garleton Castle, which is a scheduled monument dating back to the 16th century. It is not clear who carried out the work, but Police Scotland confirmed it had spoken to those involved.

A police spokesperson said: "On Thursday, 10 April, we received a report of concern relating to work being carried out to a wildlife pond near Athelstanford in East Lothian. Officers attended and suitable advice was given."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter