
WLGS 5 Five Sisters Oil-Shale Bings [NT 009 641] (Figure 26), (Figure 27)

[WLC site description](#)

[Part of the Strathclyde Group sites](#)

Other designations: SAM (Five Sisters shale bing, SE of Mid Breich)

The oil-shale bings are unique in Britain and north-west Europe and form a significant part of the industrial heritage of West Lothian. The Five Sisters are a distinctive and well known landmark. Oil-shale waste is non toxic, alkaline and free-draining, unlike acidic coal spoil. The shale particles in oil-shale bings are more cohesive than in coal waste, and allow stable steep bing sides which are not prone to slippage. Burnt oil-shale is initially dark blue-grey ("blaes"), but rapidly oxidises to a characteristic red colour in contact with the elements (Figure 28). Variations in the chemical composition at the different bings produce a wide range of habitats and new niches for plants and animals and are a wildlife haven in a primarily agricultural and urban landscape.

(Figure 26) West Lothian's most distinctive landmarks — the Five Sisters oil-shale bings [NT 009 641] (WLGS 5) near West Calder, viewed from the south-west. The bings are 91 m in height with a summit altitude of 240 m. They are protected as a Scheduled Monument.

(Figure 27) Five Sisters oil-shale bings [NT 009 641] (WLGS 5) from the south. Burnt oil-shale is initially dark blue-grey ("blaes"), but rapidly oxidises to a characteristic red colour in contact with the elements.



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(Figure 28) Greendykes (Broxburn) [NT 087 736] oil-shale bing viewed from the west (WLGS 7).