

## KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – NOVEMBER 2024 by Robert Mill

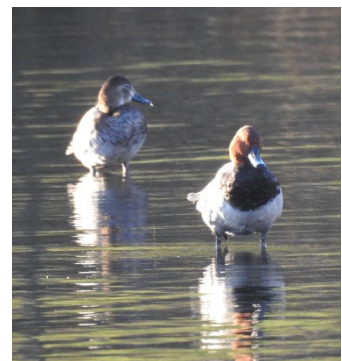


Large White butterfly caterpillar (*Pieris brassicae*) on Garden Nasturtium leaf, 7 November 2024. Photo Robert Mill.

November 2024 has been described by the Met Office (2024a) as ‘a month of two halves’. During the first half, most of Britain had day after day of quiet, settled and very mild weather with ‘anticyclonic gloom’ when the sun barely shone. Despite the cloud on most days, 18 of November’s 30 days were warmer than average in our area, including the first 15 other than 9th (Met Office, 2024b). The second half was much colder (particularly 18th-22nd) and often stormy, with one named storm (Storm Bert) whose rain (and some snow that was non-lying in our area) and winds were felt over most of the UK, including our area, for four days (22nd-25th), and another (Conall, 26th/27th) that missed Scotland completely. November was exceptionally dry in our area, with only 18.4 mm of rain collected by SEPA’s rain gauge at the Loch (scarcely more than a quarter of the November average for the site, 68.1 mm); 21 out of 30 days were totally dry, including all of 3rd-21st other than 0.6 mm on 15th. Even Storm Bert brought only 7.4 mm, which was the highest total on any one day (SEPA, 2024).

I visited Kinghorn Loch seven times during November and Paul Williams (PW) made eight visits. As usual I am indebted to him for all his records from the Loch and wider Kinghorn area. Just three more species were added to the Loch list during November: one moth (as its larval leaf-mine) and two ‘fungi’ (actually both Oomycetes as mentioned in the Cryptogams section below). The total Loch list therefore increased from 1,770 on 31 October to **1,773** on 30 November.

### AROUND THE LOCH

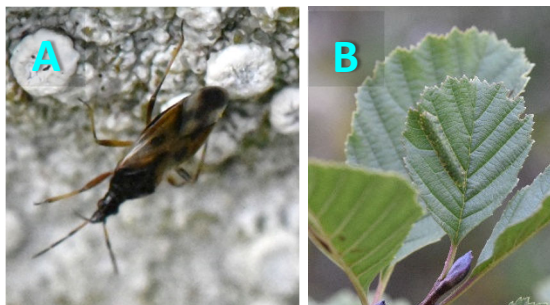


**Left:** Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), 21st. **Centre:** Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) on ice, 21st. **Right:** Two Pochards (*Aythya ferina*), 22nd. Photos Paul Williams.

**Birds:** November 2024 saw 56 different bird species recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch, seven more than the previous month. **Pink-footed Geese** skeins flew over on at least 4th and 12th. The three remaining cygnets from this year’s brood all dispersed away from the Loch during the month so that by the 30th the pen (adult female) was left on her own. On 11th, however, Paul Williams (PW) saw a remarkable 10 swans: the pen and her brood, another individual that was not chased away by her (possibly one of last year’s brood?)

and another five flying over. There was a significant boost in **duck** species. **Pochards** were recorded on 11 dates throughout the month from 4th onwards, starting with a single male. Two males were seen by me on 13th, while the next day PW saw a male and two females. The peak number seems to have been five individuals on 20th, when I saw four males and PW saw three males and a female at a different time of day. **Tufted Ducks** were also present all month, usually in small numbers (3 to 6) but a flock of 16 was present on 21st (PW). Small numbers of **Goldeneye** started visiting from 20th, with four seen by PW on 22nd and 25th. Paul also saw a single **Goosander** 'redhead' (female or juvenile) on 22nd and posted a photo of it on the Kinghorn District Wildlife Group's (KDWG) Facebook page. On 18th, I saw a **Grey Partridge** rooting around among the alders at the edge of the community orchard; it eventually flew into the orchard itself near one of the ecohouses. A **Water Rail** was present at the west end from at least 20th and some good photos were obtained (particularly by Gavin Wilkinson on 20th: KDWG). **Little Grebes** were present all month, with numbers building up gradually, the highest count being 18 by PW on 27th. **Great Crested Grebes** remained until 15th but were not seen by anyone after that date and are assumed to have dispersed for the winter, which they typically spend on inshore coastal waters. **Oystercatchers** were seen or heard by me on 7th and PW on 27th (two). Potentially more than 70 **Curlew** were seen by me on 12th: a flock of 23 in pasture west of the 90° bend in the track from Kissing Trees Lane to Craigenalcott Cottages, and a larger flock of at least 50 flying over the big rape field alongside the same track east of the covered reservoir. As they flew, these were uttering low, hoarse, very 'un-Curlew-like' calls that I had never heard before (and which I don't see described in any of my standard bird books; however, after some searching, I found a recording of a similar call by Irish Wildlife Sounds on the Xeno Canto website, where it is described as a 'hoarse screech' – see reference list under 'Irish Wildlife Sounds'). The following day (13th), I saw another flock, this time of about 40, flying southwards over the western end of the Loch. A week later I saw three going north over the same pasture as I'd seen the flock of 23 on 12th. **Cormorant** was seen once, by PW on 25th. **Grey Herons** were noted on three occasions by PW, with three present on 25th. **Sparrowhawk** was again unrecorded but **Buzzards** and **Kestrels** were each seen or heard on three dates by PW. A single **Kingfisher** was seen at least twice (11th & 23rd, PW) while a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** was recorded on six different dates. After a long absence, a **Jay** was seen near the hide for the first two times this year on 21st and 25th (PW). **Goldcrest** was seen once (8th) and **Treecreeper** twice (4th and 14th). After shorter apparent absences since July and April respectively, both **Song Thrush** and **Mistle Thrush** were seen around the Loch again in November but, unusually and possibly on account of weather factors, both **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** were both unrecorded during the month. **Pied** and **Grey Wagtails** were both spotted once by PW, on 4th and 15th respectively. He also saw two **Siskins** at the feeder by the hide on 11th and a **Reed Bunting** in the nearby marsh area on 20th. The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during November 2024, in the systematic order of the *British List* (BOU, 2022), is:

*Greylag Goose, Farmyard geese hybrids, Pink-footed Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Goosander, Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe (Dabchick), Great Crested Grebe, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Kestrel, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Wren, Treecreeper, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Tree Sparrow, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Reed Bunting.*



**Kinghorn Loch invertebrate records, November 2024.**

**A**, Common Flower Bug (*Anthocoris nemorum*) on lichen, 7th. **B**, larval mine of Broad-barred Midget moth (*Phyllonorycter froelichiella*) on alder leaf, 7th, new Loch record. Photos Robert Mill.

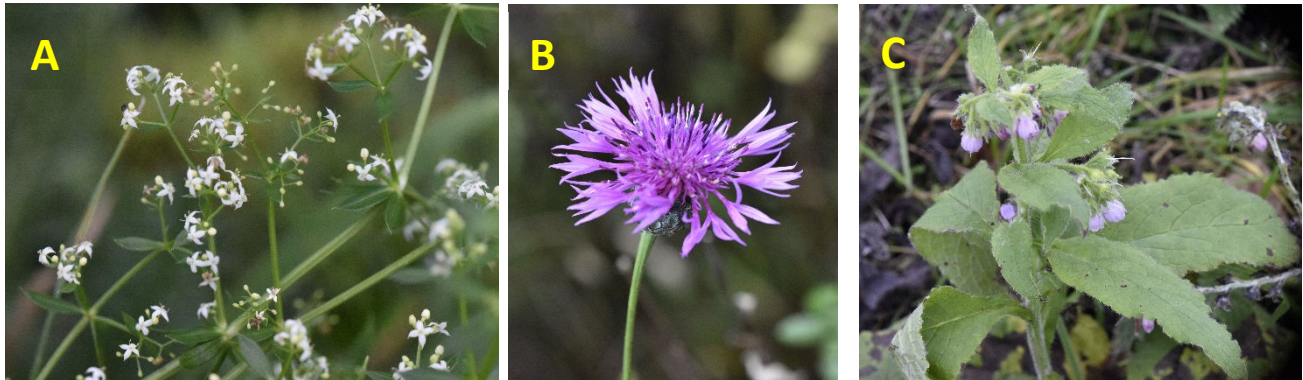
**Mammals, amphibians and fish:** The only mammal records during November were of **Grey Squirrels** (one or two) visiting the hide feeders on five different occasions, and fresh **Mole** hills in various places, particularly on the grass near the gate to the fishermen's path, and near the dam.

**Invertebrates ('minibeasts'):**

Just eight invertebrate species were identified in November, two fewer than the previous month, plus two flies that currently remain unidentified. Six of the seven identified

insects were larval stages, mostly as leaf mines in which the larvae feed hidden from view. An adult **Common Flower Bug (*Anthocoris nemorum*)** was on lichen on the side of the dam (7th), while on the same visit I found a **Large White butterfly** caterpillar on a Garden Nasturtium leaf in the Community Garden (photo: p. 1), as well as larval mines of the **Broad-barred Midget moth (*Phyllonorycter froelichiella*)** on its foodplant, alder leaves. The latter was a new Loch record. The very mild weather in the first half of November meant that many plants retained their leaves, allowing the larval mines of four **fly** species to be found again. As well as these, I found a fly with a chequered abdomen basking in sunshine on a wall on 12th, and a small black **midge** resting on a birch trunk on 18th. However, no adult **butterflies, moths, bugs, beetles**, or members of smaller insect groups were spotted during the month, nor any **spiders**. November's only other invertebrate record was of numerous **Great Pond Snails (*Lymnaea stagnalis*)** in the shallows at the east side of the Loch (18th).

### Flowering plants and ferns:



**Late-flowering plants, Kinghorn Loch, November 2024.** **A**, Hedge Bedstraw (*Galium album*), 7th (and till 18th). **B**, Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), 7th (and till 25th). **C**, Russian Comfrey (*Symphytum x uplandicum*), 13th. Photos Robert Mill.

Five ferns and horsetails, and 118 wild or naturalised flowering plant species (74 in flower for at least part of the month, 20 in fruit and 24 vegetative), were recorded around the Loch during November. Thirty-nine cultivated plant species were also noted, of which 29 were in flower. None were new Loch records. By the month's end, the frosts had just about killed off many species for this year and some were only barely 'in flower'. These included the two plants of **Bristly Oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*)** in the jetty area. Some of the more notable 'in-flower' records were four umbellifers, **Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)** on 7th, **Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*)** and **Pignut (*Conopodium majus*)** on 12th, and **Rough Chervil (*Chaerophyllum temulum*)** on 13th; **Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*)** up till 25th (Common Knapweed, *C. nigra*, is still flowering in December); **Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*)** and **White Campion (*Silene latifolia*)** until 13th at least; and both **Hedge Bedstraw (*Galium album*)** and **Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*)** till at least 18th. The hawkweed ***Hieracium grandidens*** also continued flowering (12th).



**New 'fungal' records, Kinghorn Loch, November 2024.** **A**, *Pseudoperonospora urticae* on nettle, 12th. **B**, *Albugo candida* on Wintercress, 13th. Photos Robert Mill.

**Cryptogams** At least 25 different **fungi** and allies were identified around the Loch during November and one or two are still to be identified. Two of them were new Loch records, both of them Oomycetes rather than true fungi: ***Pseudoperonospora urticae*** on nettle leaves (12th) and ***Albugo candida*** found on Common Wintercress leaves near the allotments on 13th. The mild weather allowed the survival of 11 powdery mildew species, four white moulds, three rusts and three other leaf-spot fungi on the leaves of a variety of hosts. The remaining two records were the lichenicolous fungus ***Vouauxiella lichenicola*** (18th) and **Conifer Mazegill (*Gloeophyllum sepiarium*)** which continued its annual emergence at the Pollinator

Beds. Fourteen lichens and three mosses were found, as well as the usual three terrestrial algae.

## VILLAGE, BEACH AND COAST



**Kinghorn area birds and plants, November 2024. A & B, Stonechat (*Saxicola rubetra*), Grangehill, 11th (A, male; B, female). C, Pot Marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), village on waste ground, 11th. D, Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) still in flower by Mire Path, 14th. Photos: A & B, Paul Williams; C & D, Robert Mill.**

No **land mammals** were recorded by anyone during November other than at Kinghorn Loch. **Cetacean** sightings, as listed on the board near the Harbour View, comprised **Bottlenose Dolphin** on 14th and 15th. The board also mentioned a **Minke Whale** record from October which wasn't on it when I looked at it when preparing my report for last month.

During November, apart from my Loch visits, I undertook one walk round Mid and North Mire on 14th and two walks around the village, one of them focused on the harbour and Doo Dell (11th) and the other on the little narrow lanes in the heart of the village (22nd). Bird sightings around Kinghorn during October were almost entirely by Paul Williams (PW) or myself.

Skeins of **Pink-footed Geese** passed over Kinghorn regularly in the first half of the month. **Long-tailed Ducks** were frequently seen off the coast, with more than 35 off Seafield on 17th (PW). A **Goosander** was off Seafield on 7th (PW) but for the second month in a row no **Red-breasted Mergansers** were recorded. PW saw three **Grey Partridges** in Highlands Field (by Kissing Trees Lane opposite the start of the track to Craigencaht Cottages) on 10th. Two **Great Crested Grebes** were off Seafield on 10th (PW). High **wader** counts included more than 30 **Curlew** inland at Rodan Braes on 8th (PW), 20 or more **Sanderlings** at Seafield on 15th and 24th (PW), and about 50 **Purple Sandpipers** there on 17th (PW). There was an influx of **Little Auks** off the Fife coast in the second half of the month. Unsurprisingly the highest counts were further east (particularly off Fife Ness) but Kinghorn did not miss out. Single birds were seen off Seafield on 17th (PW) and Kinghorn the next day (Fife Bird Club report: see references). Fife Bird Club (FBC) noted 4 at Kinghorn on 21st, 21 the next day and an amazing peak count of 424 on 23rd; the last record was of two off Pettycur harbour on 24th. A single **Red-throated Diver** at Seafield on 16th (PW) was the only record of any diver species in November. A **Sooty Shearwater** was an unusual visitor off Kinghorn on 23rd (FBC). **Grey Herons** were seen by PW at Seafield on 7th, 10th and 24th, who also saw a **Sparrowhawk** and a **Kingfisher** there on 17th.

**Rooks** were at Grangehill on 11th (PW). As at the Loch, there were no records of **winter thrushes (Redwing and Fieldfare)** in the Kinghorn area during November. Two **Stonechats** (male and female) were noted by PW at Grangehill on both 8th and 11th. Paul also saw a single **Tree Sparrow** on the coastal path between Kinghorn and Seafield Tower on 7th. He also recorded both **Grey** and **Pied Wagtails** between Kinghorn and Seafield on numerous dates, and **Rock Pipit** on the stretch nearest to Kinghorn on 10th and 24th. Finally, a single **Yellowhammer** was seen by PW at Grangehill on 8th.

No **invertebrates** were seen in November on any of my three walks around Kinghorn and Mid Mire.

Flowering plants were also scarce although there were one or two surprising finds. Two plants of **Pot Marigold (*Calendula officinalis*)** were still in flower in wild situations at the harbour and on waste ground in the village on 11th, while even after some quite hard frosts the one on the waste ground was still flowering on 22nd. **Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*)** and **Common Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)** both continued flowering in the village until at least 11th, as did a plant of **Greek Mallow (*Sidalcea malviflora*)** on the cliff-top at Doo

Dell. The **Oriental Poppy** (*Papaver sp.*, either *P. orientale* or *P. setiferum*) plant I found last month also continued beyond 7th, on which date there were actually four flowers out compared with just the one in October! However, by 22nd it had been frost-damaged with the one remaining flower at ground level and partly withered. On 14th along the Mire Path and North Mire, **Common Wintercress** (*Barbarea vulgaris*), **Wetted Thistle** (*Carduus crispus*), **Hogweed** (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and **Pignut** (*Conopodium majus*) were all still flowering and one of the **Stinking Iris** (*Iris foetidissima*) plants had produced seeds. During my second village walk, around the little lanes on 22nd, I only found about six species that still had one or two flowers; apart from those already mentioned they included **Red Valerian** (*Centranthus ruber*), **Herb Robert** (*Geranium robertianum*) and **Bramble** (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.).

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