

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – OCTOBER 2024 by Robert Mill



Candlesnuff Fungi (*Xylaria hypoxylon*) on mossy log, 30 October 2024. New Loch record. Photo Robert Mill.

October 2024 in Fife and eastern Scotland was milder than average, with temperatures rising in the second half after a cooler first half (Carlisle, 2024), although in our part of Fife only 8th-14th and 27th had below-average daily maxima; all other days were above-average (Met Office, 2024). Auroras were visible on the nights of 10th and 11th. The only notable weather event was Storm Ashley on 20th/21st (Carlisle, 2024; Met Office, 2024), which brought strong winds to Kinghorn but less than 6 mm of rain (SEPA, 2024). Indeed, in our area, October was yet another month with below-average rainfall (Met Office, 2024). The SEPA rain gauge at TEC registered 69.4 mm of rain, 86% of the site's long-term average and less than the last three Octobers (129 mm last year, 89 mm in 2022, 123 mm in 2021: SEPA, 2024). The wettest single day was 16th (15.4 mm) and there were 12 completely dry days (SEPA, 2024). Sunshine amounts in October along our stretch of Fife coastline were also average, as they were last month (Met Office, 2024).

Both Paul Williams and I made six full recording visits to Kinghorn Loch during October; mine were split between 2nd-11th and 26th-30th as I was away on holiday in the middle of the month. Paul's were evenly spread throughout except for the last week, when his job took him offshore. As usual I am indebted to him for all his monthly bird records, plus a few of mammals and insects, from the Loch and wider Kinghorn area. Six more species were added to the Loch list during October: 1 leaf-mining fly, 3 fungi and 2 flowering plants. As well as these, I discovered that the dumped Potato plant I found last month on 11 September (see last month's report) was another new Loch record (NLR), a fact overlooked last month. The total Loch list therefore increased by seven, from 1,763 on 30 September to **1,770** on 31 October.

AROUND THE LOCH



Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*),
4th. Photo Paul Williams.

Birds: Forty-nine bird species were recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch during October, one more than in August and September. Migration brought a few more wintering or passage **ducks** but **Sand Martins** were no longer present and **Chiffchaff** was also not recorded at the Loch. On 4th, two **Wigeon** made one-day stopovers (Travis Dickinson, eBird, in the afternoon, with one of them also seen by PW in the morning), while a **Blackcap** also recorded by Paul that day might have been a lingering summer visitor (or indeed resident), or another stop-over on passage like last month's Garden Warbler. Around 35-40 **Pink-footed Geese** settled on the Loch for a short while one day in the first week of the month (Week 40: 1-7 Oct), according to a local angler (PW, email 9 Oct) and later in the month PW noted a skein of about 100 flying over on 25th. As well as the Wigeon, a **Goldeneye** also visited the Loch for one day, this time on 22nd. However, unlike Wigeon which are only occasional visitors (I saw the last one in September 2022), Goldeneye winter on the Loch each year and hopefully the one on

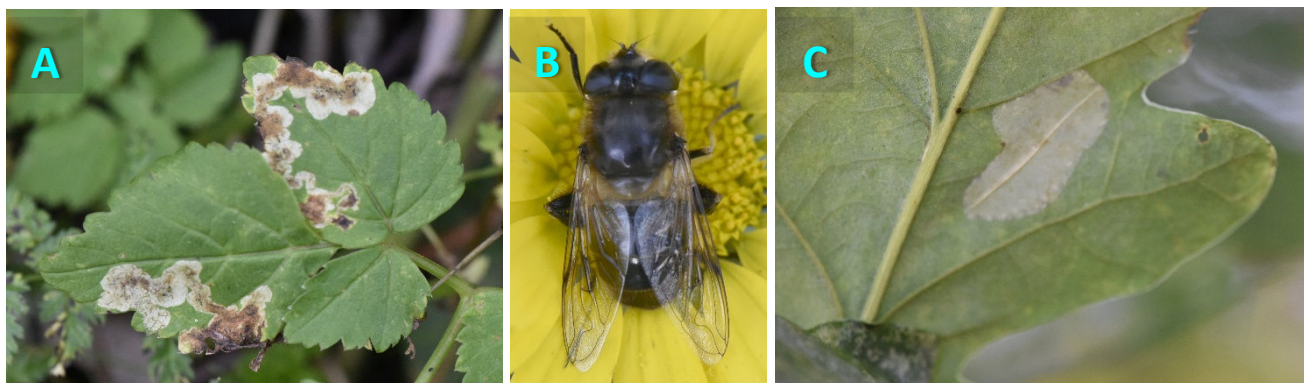
22nd was just the first of numerous records in the coming winter months. **Tufted Duck** numbers fluctuated in the first half from just one on 2nd to 18 on 11th and then back down to three on 14th before settling down at 13 from 17th onwards until the last count, by me on 30th. **Little Grebes** were present all month, the highest count being 14 on 25th by PW. **Great Crested Grebes** and their offspring from various broods also remained all month, with six seen on 2nd by PW. **Curlew** were recorded on several dates in the first half of October with 20 at Rodan Braes on 2nd and 33 in the horse pasture adjoining Craigenalt's access road on 14th. **Gull** numbers increased, particularly in the case of **Herring Gull**, of which 140 were counted by Travis Dickinson (eBird) on 4th and about 200 by PW on 8th. **Grey Heron** was noted twice (11th and 22nd, both by PW). **Sparrowhawk** and **Kestrel** were both unrecorded but **Buzzards** were seen or heard on five occasions by PW and myself. One of the carp anglers told PW that on the 10th he had heard a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** in the daytime and a **Tawny Owl** after dark. As well as commoner members of the crow family, a **Raven** was seen by PW over the Loch woods on 17th. **Swallows** were only recorded on 2nd (PW) and **Willow Warbler** was also only recorded once (8th, PW – possibly on passage?). **Starlings** were noted on three dates, with 60 counted by Travis Dickinson on 4th. **Grey Wagtails** were seen on three occasions, with three present on 25th (PW). On 4th Paul also saw more than 40 **Linnet**s in total between the Loch and Grangehill, while on 28th I saw a charm of at least 20 **Goldfinches** at the south edge of the ecocemetery meadow. The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during October 2024, in the systematic order of the *British List* (BOU, 2022), is: *Greylag Goose, Farmyard geese hybrids, Pink-footed Goose, Mute Swan, Wigeon, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Pheasant, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe (Dabchick), Great Crested Grebe, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Tawny Owl, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Swallow, Long-tailed Tit, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Robin, Tree Sparrow, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Linnet, Goldfinch.*



One of three Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*) seen on 4th. Photo Paul Williams.

Mammals, amphibians and fish: Three mammal species were recorded in October. Paul Williams saw single **Grey Squirrels** on 2nd and 14th, and three **Brown Hares** on 4th. Ewan Malecki, TEC's recently appointed new site manager, saw a **Stoat** in the garden outside the Nest Café on 11th.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'):



Kinghorn Loch invertebrate records, October 2024. A, Larval leaf mines of *Phytomyza angelicastris* on Ground Elder, 30th, NLR. B, Common Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*), 10th. C, larval mine of *Phyllonorycter quercifoliella* on oak leaf, 3rd. Photos Robert Mill.

Only ten invertebrate species were noted during October 2024, a massive drop from last month's 43 and also only one-third of the 30 species recorded a year ago in October 2023. No **caddisflies, dragonflies, bugs** or **beetles** were recorded, nor any of the **small insect groups** such as mayflies, earwigs etc., nor any **spiders** or other invertebrates.

The only **butterfly** species recorded during October was **Speckled Wood**, of which I saw one on 2nd and two on 3rd, while Paul Williams also saw the species on 14th and 17th (several that day). The only **moth** record was the larval mine of a midget species, most likely *Phyllonorycter quercifoliella*, which I found on an oak leaf

(3rd). Among Hymenoptera, not a single bee or social wasp was seen, not even Common Carder Bee which I noted on three dates up till as late as 18th in October last year. Only the galls of the gall-wasp *Diplolepis spinosissima* persisted on Burnet Rose (3rd). Two hoverflies were seen: **Common Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*)** on 10th, and *Melanostoma mellinum* on 30th. Five other flies were noted: **Bluebottle (*Calliphora vicina*)** and the crane-fly *Tipula oleracea* on 3rd, and the larval mines of three different leaf-mining flies. One of these, *Phytomyza angelicastris* on 30th at two different locations in the eastern monad NT2687, was October's only invertebrate new Loch record. The other two were *Pegomya solennis* on dock, and *Phytomyza ilicis* on Holly.

Flowering plants and ferns:



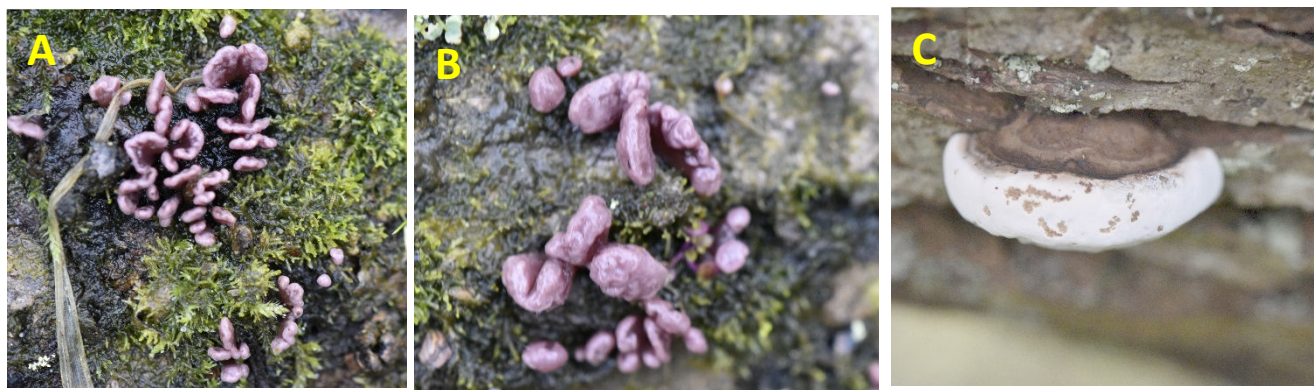
New and noteworthy plant records, Kinghorn Loch, October 2024. **A**, Acorn and leaves of Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*), 2 October 2024, new Loch record. **B**, Spear-leaved Orache (*Atriplex prostrata*), 10th, new Loch record. **C**, Bristly Oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echinoides*), 26th, 2nd record in 2024. **D & E**, Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*), 26th: **D**, habit; **E**, underside of frond showing bright yellow sori. **F**, Small-flowered form of Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), 26th. **G**, Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), ripe fruits, 30th. **H**, Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*), 30th. **J**, Borage (*Borago officinalis*), 26th.

Photos: **A**, Paul Williams; all others Robert Mill.

Eight ferns and horsetails, and 151 wild or naturalised flowering plant species (98 in flower, 32 in fruit and 21 vegetative), were recorded around the Loch during October. Forty-four cultivated plant species were also noted, of which 38 were in flower. There were two new Loch records. The first was **Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*)**, whose very distinctive acorns, each surrounded by a green ruff-like structure, were photographed by

Paul Williams by the Rodan Braes track on 2nd, thus confirming suspicions raised earlier in the year when Tina Scopa (a local artist) and I found fallen foliage resembling Turkey Oak leaves by that track on 11 March. The other was **Spear-leaved Orache (*Atriplex prostrata*)**, found by me just outside the entrance to the Community Garden on 10th. Among the other flowering plants, a second plant of **Bristly Oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*)** was found at the jetty area on 26th, this time a little further west and just within the western monad NT2587. **Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*)** was found near TEC with a couple of very out-of-season flowers on 2nd, 10th and 28th. A very small-flowered form of **Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)** was found near the rest area on the Great North Road track (26th) while on the same date the hawkweed ***Hieracium grandidens***, as well as **Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*)** and **Michaelmas Daisy (*Symphotrichum × salignum*)**, were all re-found in flower further south along the same track. On 30th, I visited the marsh, where **Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*)** and **Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*)** still had one or two flowers but almost everything else was in fruit (such as **Watercress**, so confirming the identity of the marsh plants as ***Nasturtium officinale***) or, like the **Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)**, dying back and decaying prior to the onset of winter. The fern records included a magnificent plant of **Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*)** with long, oblong fronds bearing bright yellow sori (spore-containing structures). By the end of October, the alien **Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*)** seemed to have been almost though not completely eradicated from the Pond by the weevils TEC has been using since June this year as a biocontrol method.

Cryptogams Twenty different **fungi** were recorded around the Loch during October. Three of them were



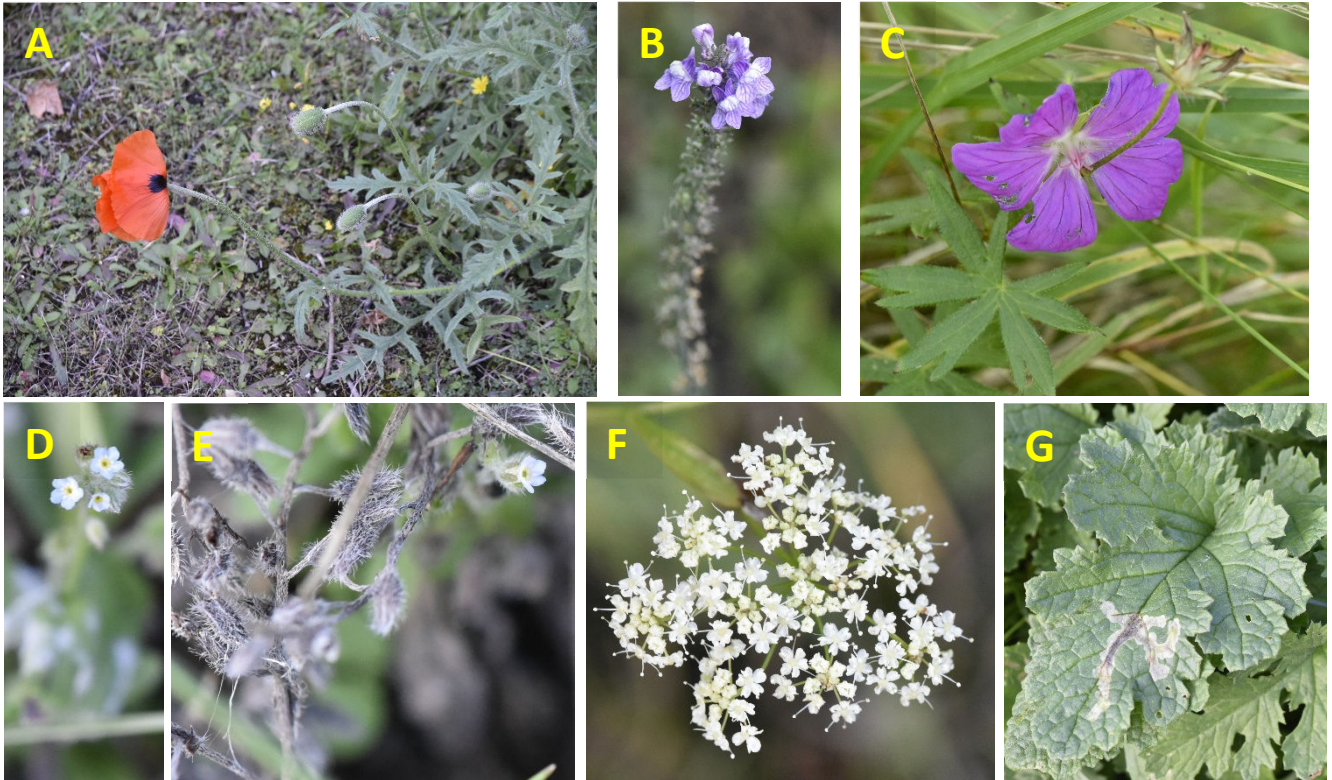
New fungi records, Kinghorn Loch, October 2024. A & B, Purple Jellydisc (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*) on mossy old willow root, 30th. C, Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*), underside of mossy old willow bough, 30th. Photos Robert Mill.

NLRs, all of which were found in the vicinity of the marsh on 30th: **Purple Jellydisc (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*)** and **Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*)** on different willow boughs or roots in and near the willow carr or willow wood near the loch margin, and **Candlesnuff Fungus (*Xylaria hypoxylon*)** on a mossy decaying log in the woodland just to the north of the marsh (for photo see top of page 1). As well as these three new records, **Snowy Waxcaps (*Cuphophyllus virgineus*)** reappeared on the lawn north of the Jubilee Bed (10th), and **Conifer Mazegill (*Gloeophyllum sepiarium*)** on one of the logs forming the edge of the Pollinator Beds (28th). Six powdery mildews, five white moulds (*Ramularia* spp.), two rusts and two other leaf spots were also



recorded. Only two bryophytes (the moss ***Grimmia pulvinata*** and the liverwort ***Metzgeria fruticulosa***) were identified but this in no way reflects the diversity of epiphytic and ground-dwelling mosses and liverworts seen at the marsh on 30th, which really need to be looked at by a bryophyte specialist. Seven lichens and all three of the terrestrial algae on the Loch list were re-found. They included fruiting **dog lichen** at the willow carr that, from the orientation and brown colour of the fruiting bodies, allowed me to confirm that the species was, as previously thought, ***Peltigera hymenina*** (see photo at left).

VILLAGE, BEACH AND COAST



Plants of village and coast, October 2024. **A**, An out-of-season Oriental Poppy (*Papaver orientale* or *P. setiferum*), waste ground in village, 7th. **B**, Pale Toadflax (*Linaria repens*), waste ground in village, 7th. **C**, Bloody Crane's-bill (*Geranium sanguineum*), coastal path, 29th. **D & E**, Very out-of-season flowers of Early Forget-me-not (*Myosotis ramosissima*), coastal path, 29th; **E** also shows fruits. **F**, Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), coastal path, 29th. **G**, Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) basal leaf with larval mine of the fly *Acidia cognata*, churchyard, 7th. Photos Robert Mill.

The only **land mammals** recorded during October were **Roe Deer** at Grangehill on 4th (Paul Williams). The only October **cetacean** sightings, as listed on the board near the Harbour View, were of both **Bottlenose Dolpin** and **Harbour Porpoise** on 3rd, and a **Humpback Whale** on 28th.

Bird sightings around Kinghorn during October were largely by Paul Williams (PW) or myself, with a few by various contributors to eBird.

Pink-footed Geese were noted by PW passing over the coastal path at Seafield on 3rd, while I saw or heard skeins of up to 200 over Kinghorn on several occasions. Eight **Mallard** were off the coastal path between Kinghorn and Kirkcaldy on 4th (Travis Dickinson, eBird: abbreviated TD). Small numbers of **Goosanders** were off Pettycur (4th, TD; 19th, Anna Markova: eBird) and Seafield (7th and 12th, PW) but no **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen. Nearly all the usual **wader** species were seen in October, except Black-tailed Godwit and Knot; high counts included 36 and 31 **Curlew** off the Kinghorn coastal path on 5th and 6th respectively (PW), 10 **Bar-tailed Godwits** there on 5th (PW), and 31 **Sanderlings** at Seafield on 14th (PW). **Kittiwakes** and two late **Sandwich Terns** were off Pettycur on 5th (Jon Penman, eBird). Also off Pettycur, Jon Penman saw a juvenile **Pomarine Skua** and three **Arctic Skuas** on 5th, while a single **Great Skua** was seen there by Anna Markova (eBird) on 19th. **Common Guillemot** and **Razorbill** were off Pettycur on 5th (Jon Penman) and PW also saw one of the former auk species at Seafield on 25th. **Red-throated Divers** were also seen at Pettycur on 5th by Jon Penman and at Seafield on 25th by PW. **Cormorants** and **Shags** were frequently seen, with 94 Cormorants counted off the Kinghorn coastal path by TD on 4th.

Single **Kingfishers** were along the Kinghorn-Seafield Tower coastal path on 3rd and 4th, and at Seafied itself (14th and 25th; all PW). PW noted a **Willow Warbler** at Seafield on 5th, as well as **Long-tailed Tit**. A **Stonechat** was recorded on the Kinghorn-Seafield Tower coastal path on 4th by TD and on 6th by PW. PW also saw two

more **Rock Pipits** at Seafield on 7th, as well as three **Greenfinches** on 14th. **Reed Bunting** was recorded along the Kinghorn-Seafield Tower coastal path on 3rd (PW) and 4th (TD).

For a variety of reasons, I was only able to do two main walks other than at the Loch; these were in the village, harbour and Doo Dell on 7th and along the coastal path on 29th. As at the Loch, invertebrates were very scarce indeed. The only **butterfly** species noted was a **Speckled Wood** along the Kinghorn coastal path on 7th (PW); this, and a larval leaf-mine of the fly *Acidia cognata* on a Ragwort leaf in the churchyard on 7th, were in fact the month's only invertebrate records other than the few seen at the Loch.

Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) still had a few flowers, both in the village (7th) and along the coastal path (29th). In the churchyard on 7th, **Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*)** was flowering and there were a very few flowers on the **Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*)** patch found there earlier in the year. **Pale Toadflax (*Linaria repens*)** and a very out-of-season plant of **Oriental Poppy (*Papaver sp.*, either *P. orientale* or *P. setiferum*)** were also flowering in the village that day. Most plants seen along the coastal path on 29th were in fruit, but there were still a few **Bloody Crane's-bill (*Geranium sanguineum*)** flowers in reasonable condition and, as at the Loch, **Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)** had started flowering again after its summer break. Fresh leaves of **Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*: one of the earliest plants to flower in the spring)** were well developed there and at Doo Dell, and **Ivy (*Hedera helix*)** was flowering in both areas, although on the day of my visit its nectar-rich flowers were not attracting any of the many pollinators (such as wasps, flies and butterflies) that often use it as one of their food sources late in the year.

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