

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2024 by Robert Mill

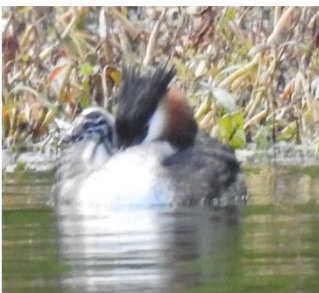


Gall on oak formed by the Cola-nut Gall-wasp (*Andricus lignicola*), 4 September 2024, new Loch record. Photo Robert Mill.

September 2024 in Fife and eastern Scotland generally was cooler and much drier than average, with average amounts of sunshine – a tremendous contrast to much of central and southern England, which endured up to three times the September average rainfall. The month started warm but a cool period soon set in from 9th-13th. The 16th-19th, especially 17th and 18th, were sunny and very warm but from 20th it turned cooler than average until the end of the month. The SEPA rain gauge at The Ecology Centre collected only 31.8 mm of rain during September, less than half the amount that fell in September 2023 and also only 53% of the site's long-term September average (60.1 mm). The wettest days were 1st (7.6 mm), 8th and 9th (12.8 mm in total equally divided between them) and 25th (4.2 mm) (SEPA, 2024).

I made five full recording visits to Kinghorn Loch during September plus a couple of very short ones before meetings; Paul Williams (PW) also made five. Although the weather was glorious for most of the last ten days, I was confined indoors with a very heavy cold from which I have still not recovered as I write this in early October. Therefore I probably missed many insect records as it was ideal weather for them. As usual I am deeply grateful to Paul for sending in bird records, as well as a few of mammals and insects, from the Loch and wider Kinghorn area. In spite of the lack of records in the latter part of the month, nine more species were added to the Loch list during September: 1 moth, 1 gall wasp, 1 tick, 4 fungi and 2 flowering plants. The total Loch list therefore increased from 1,754 on 31 August to **1,763** on 30 September.

AROUND THE LOCH



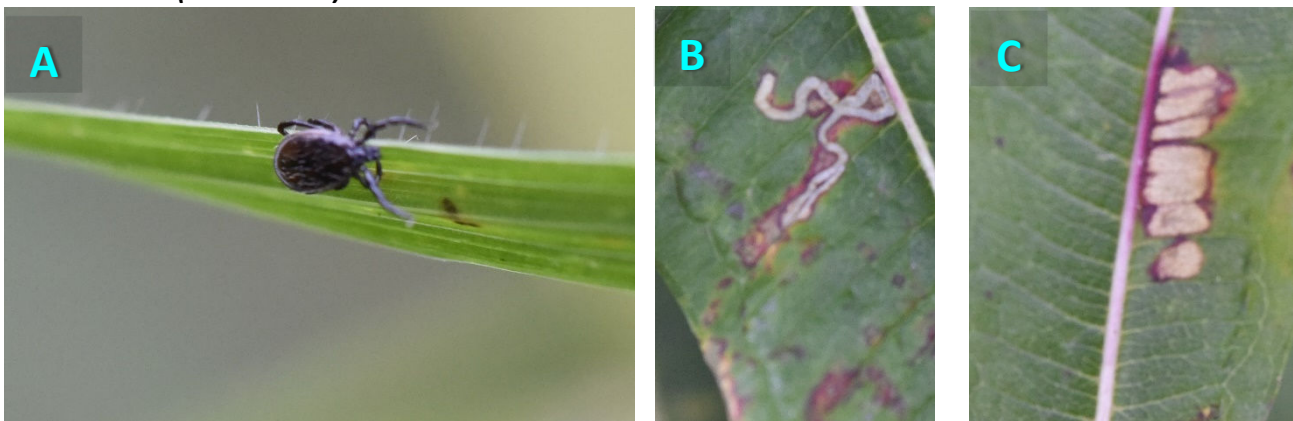
Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) with its latest offspring. Photo Paul Williams.

Birds: As in August, 48 bird species were recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch during September, with some commonly-seen or heard species, such as **Cormorant, Pied Wagtail, Starling** and **Yellowhammer**, not recorded during the month. There were also no sightings of **Blackcap** or **Swift** although, particularly in the case of the latter, they may well have migrated away for the winter. Passage migration was evident in both directions. A **Garden Warbler** made a one-day stop-over on 13th (PW), while skeins of **Pink-footed Geese** were noted passing over en route from the Arctic to their wintering grounds on 11th by myself and on 13th by PW, about the same time as the first were seen in September 2023. Sadly, the **Mute Swan family** was depleted on the weekend of 7th/8th September, when one of the cygnets was killed in a repeat of the earlier

accident when the cob (male parent) was killed by a car at the jetty area. Two **Tufted Ducks** arrived at the Loch on 12th; they were joined by a third the following day and three were also seen on 18th by PW. By 27th, there were 11 Tufted Ducks on the Loch (PW). **Little Grebes** were present most of the month, with four counted by PW on 18th. **Great Crested Grebes** and their ‘humbugs’ (looking more like young adults by the day) were present all month; the pair at the west end even hatched a new ‘humbug’ around 12th, their third breeding attempt this year. **Curlew** was noted by PW on 27th, September’s only wader record. As well as the usual gull species, two **Great Black-backed Gulls** were on the Loch on 27th (PW). **Grey Heron** was only noted once (3rd, PW). One of the carp anglers mentioned to PW that he had seen a **Kingfisher** at the Loch one day in September; it may well have been passing through on its way to the coast. Pauline Bell recorded both **Sparrowhawk** and **Kestrel** on 14th, the month’s only sightings of those raptors, but **Buzzards** were noted on four occasions by PW. **Rooks** were seen on 19th by PW and **Jackdaws** were noted on several dates. About 12 **Sand Martins** visited the Loch on 12th (PW) and **House Martin** was unrecorded, but **Swallows** remained all month, as did at least one **Willow Warbler**. **Chiffchaff**, which was not recorded in August, was noted by PW on both 12th and 14th. On 3rd, PW saw a single **Goldcrest**, as well as a **Treecreeper**. **Grey Wagtails** were present on 12th, 13th and 27th but **Pied Wagtail** was not noted for the second month in a row. I saw a sizeable flock of at least 70 **Linnets** in the rape field next to the farm track from Craigenalt Cottages to Kissing Trees Lane on 4th and PW also saw the species on 27th. The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during August 2024, in the systematic order of the *British List* (BOU, 2022), is: *Greylag Goose, Farmyard geese hybrids, Pink-footed Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pheasant, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe (Dabchick), Great Crested Grebe, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Heron, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kingfisher, Kestrel, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Sand Martin, Swallow, Long-tailed Tit, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Wren, Treecreeper, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Linnet, Goldfinch.*

Mammals, amphibians and fish: The only mammals recorded in September were **Grey Squirrel** (13th, Paul Williams) and a **Rabbit** that I found dead on the Great North Road near its junction with the Rodan Braes track. It had obviously been killed by a predator.

Invertebrates (‘minibeasts’):

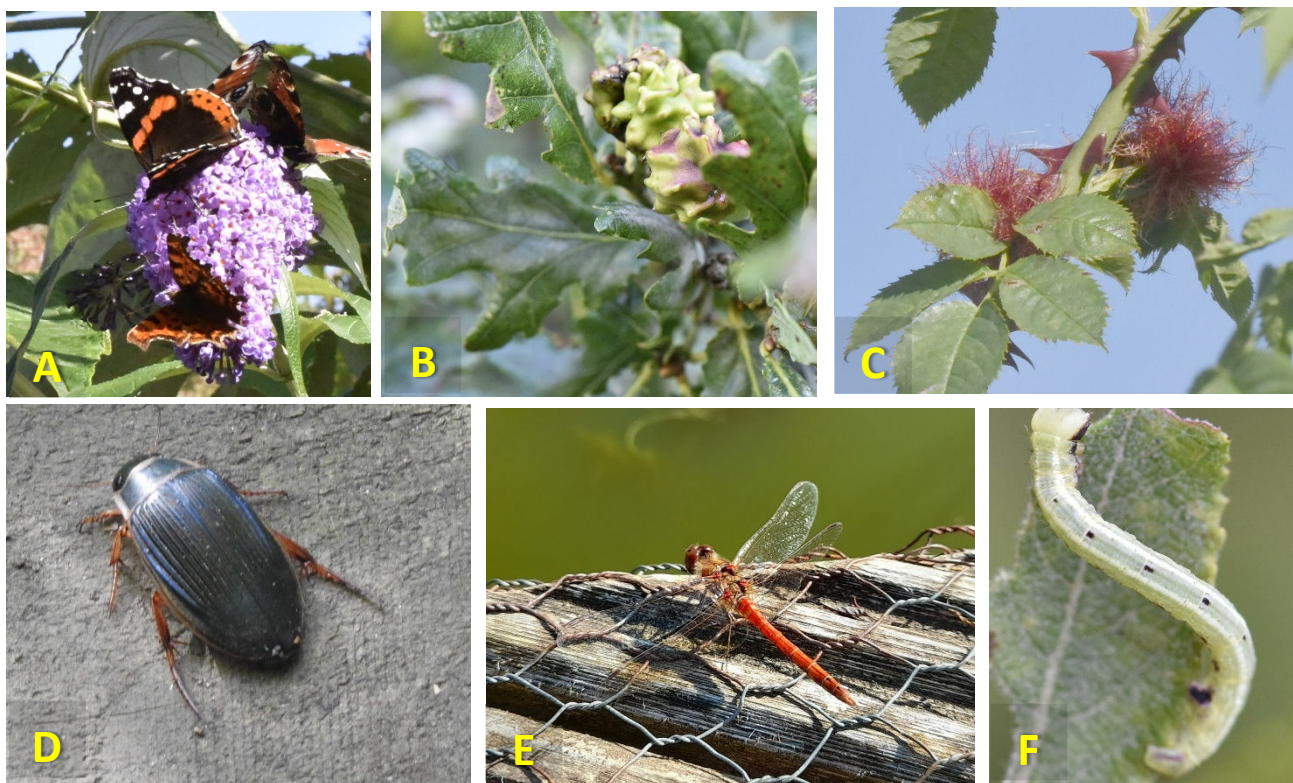


New Kinghorn Loch invertebrate records, September 2024. A, Sheep Tick (*Ixodes ricinus*), 13th, NLR. **B & C,** two larval mines of Little Cosmet (*Mompha raschkiella*) at different stages of development on Rosebay Willowherb leaves, 17th, NLR. Photos Robert Mill.

Forty-three invertebrate species were recorded and identified at the Loch during September despite no recording during much of the month’s best weather for them. Three of them were new Loch records (NLRs).

Six **butterfly** species were recorded during September, five of them on 4th and two of these five also on 17th and/or 18th. On the Buddleia bush at Craigenalt Farm on 4th, Pauline Bell and I both saw at least six **Peacocks**, two (or more) **Red Admirals**, one **Comma** and one **Small White**, while Pauline also saw a **Speckled Wood** elsewhere on her walk. I also saw **Speckled Woods** on both 17th and 18th and a **Small White** on 17th, while Paul Williams recorded another **Large White** at the Loch on 3rd. I recorded five **moth** species during the month, all but one of them (**Nettle-tap** on 17th) as larval leaf mines. Of those, **Little Cosmet** (*Mompha*

raschkiella) on Rosebay Willowherb leaves (17th) was a new Loch record. The others were **Common Cloaked Snout** (*Gypsonema dealbana*) and **Horse-chestnut Leafminer** (*Cameraria ohridella*) on 4th, and **Common Alder Midget** (*Phyllonorycter rajella*) on Alder (11th). I also saw an as yet unidentified caterpillar on a Grey Willow leaf in the western half of the marsh on 13th. Paul Williams photographed an as yet unidentified rather small, plain brown **caddis-fly** at the Loch on 27th that might be a new Loch record if it could be named.



Kinghorn Loch invertebrates, September 2024. **A**, Butterflies on buddleia, 4th: two Peacocks at the very top (left one partly hidden), one Red Admiral at top left below the Peacocks, and a Comma at the bottom. **B**, Knopper Gall (*Andricus quercuscalicis*), 4th. **C**, Robin's Pincushion galls (*Diplolepis rosae*), 18th. **D**, female Great Diving Beetle, 27th. **E**, male Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*), 4th. **F**, unidentified caterpillar on Grey Willow, 13th. Photos: **D**, Paul Williams; **E**, Ewan Malecki (TEC); others, Robert Mill.

Nine species of **Hymenoptera** were seen during the month. The gall of the **Cola-nut Gall Wasp** (*Andricus lignicola*) on the Red Path Brae Path on 4th (and on 16th) was a new Loch record, while the galls of its close relative the **Knopper Gall Wasp** (*Andricus quercuscalicis*) were also found on 4th by the Craigenalt access road; both galls were on oak trees. **Buff-tailed Bumblebee**, **Common Carder Bee** and **Large Red-tailed Bumblebee** were all recorded, as well as **Common Wasp** and **Black Ant**. **Burnet Rose Galls** (*Diplolepis spinosissima*) remained on their host (11th, 17th). And, following August's flurry of **Robin'-Pincushion Galls** (*Diplolepis rosae*) elsewhere around Kinghorn, they were also found on wild rose bushes at the Loch on 18th.

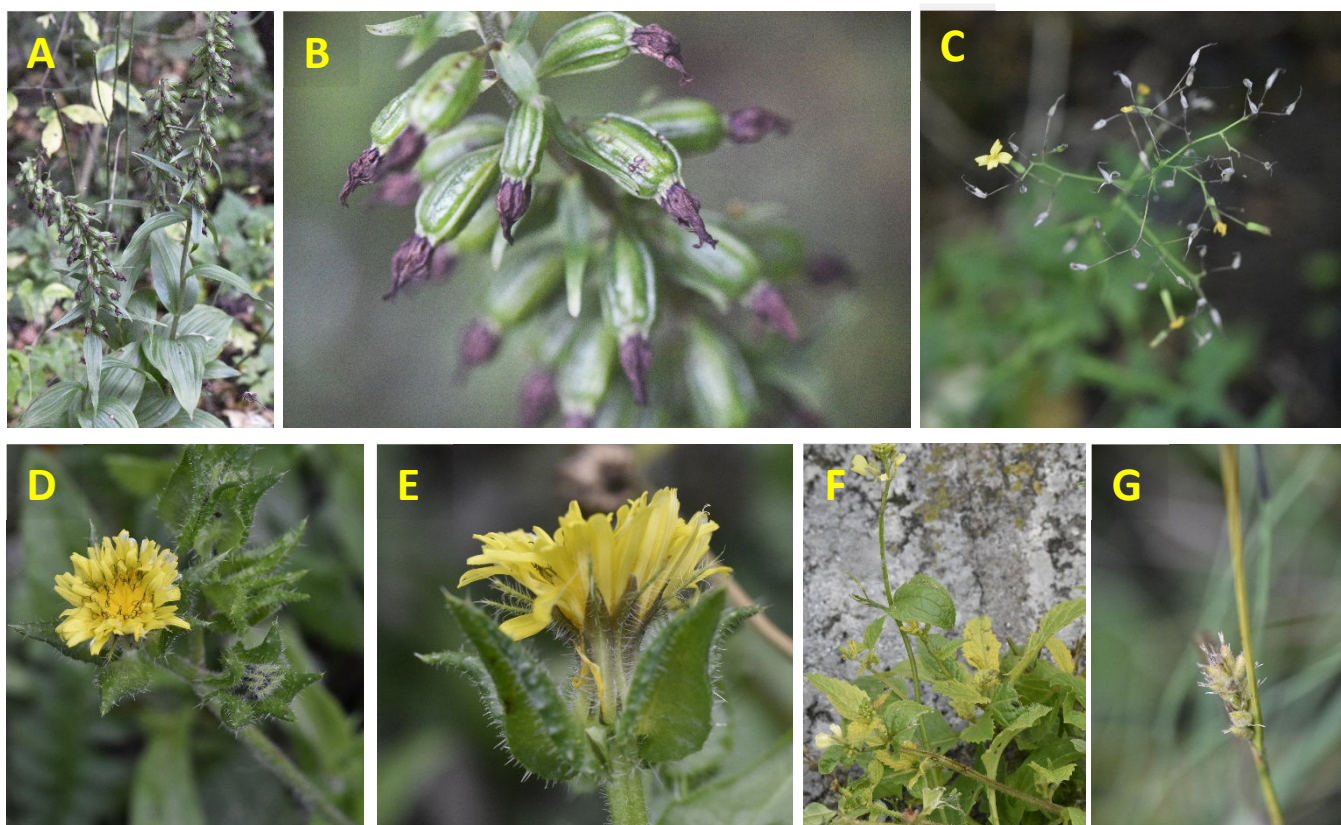
Five **hoverfly** species were seen during September, on one occasion each; more might well have been spotted had I been fit enough to go out recording during the sunny weather in the last week or so. They were **Tapered Drone-fly** (*Eristalis pertinax*) on 3rd, its relative **Common Drone-fly** (*Eristalis tenax*) on 17th, **Marmalade Hoverfly** (*Episyrphus balteatus*) and *Melanostoma scalare* on 11th, and **The Footballer** (*Helophilus pendulus*) on 17th.

Only seven other **flies** were recorded in September, all of them previously recorded. The galls of the gall midge *Dasineura ulmaria*, found for the first time last month (see my August 2024 report), were on 13th discovered to be widespread and frequent on Meadowsweet leaves in the western part of the marsh. The **Greenbottle** (*Lucilia sericata*) was seen again on 3rd and the crane-fly *Tipula oleracea* on 4th. The month's other fly records comprised the mines of four different leaf-miners, the most interesting being *Scaptomyza flava* on Garden Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*) on 11th.

The only **bugs** recorded in September were both aquatic species: **Common Backswimmer** (*Notonecta glauca*) and **Lesser Water Boatman**, both found on 3rd by Stevie Heaney and his team while doing work at the small pond used for pond dipping. During that work they also found a **Great Diving Beetle** (*Dytiscus marginalis*) and PW found another in the Loch woodland on 27th. The only other beetle found in September was a **Seven-spot Ladybird** found by myself on 4th. No **damsel**flies were seen at all and the only **dragonflies** were **Common Darters** photographed at their favourite spot, the Pond boardwalk, by Ewan Malecki (4th) and Paul Williams on 18th.

The Loch's first record of any **tick** species was made during September, when a small black one, presumed to be a **Sheep Tick** (*Ixodes ricinus*), was found on a grass blade in the western half of the marsh on 13th. Needless to say, I checked my legs and arms very carefully on getting home, in case any others had been sucking my blood and potentially passing on disease! (Ticks are notorious for spreading Lyme Disease to humans). Many live **Great Pond Snails** (*Lymnaea stagnalis*) were just off the east shore of the Loch on 3rd while at the marsh on 13th I found both **Brown-lipped Snail** (*Cepaea nemoralis*) and **Hairy Snail** (*Trochulus hispidus*).

Flowering plants and ferns:



New and noteworthy plant records, Kinghorn Loch, September 2024. **A & B**, Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), 13th, new Loch record: **A**, fruiting stems; **B**, seed capsules and remains of flowers. **C**, Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), 17th, new Loch record. **D & E**, Bristly Ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echoides*), 13th, 2nd Loch record: **D**, front view of flower-head; **E**, side view of flower-head and involucre. **F**, Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*), 13th. **G**, Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*), 13th. Photos Robert Mill.

201 wild or naturalised flowering plant species, as well as nine ferns and horsetails, were recorded around the Loch during September. Of the 201 wild or naturalised plants, 148 were recorded in flower some time during the month while the other 53 had young or ripe fruits or were in a vegetative state. Forty-seven cultivated plant species were also noted, of which 45 were in flower. There were two definite new Loch records. On 13th, I was surprised to find three fruiting stems of **Broad-leaved Helleborine** (*Epipactis helleborine*), an orchid not previously found at the Loch. Surprised, because I had walked down the track where they were found on several dates earlier in the summer and not noticed the flowers, remnants of which were present on

the fruit capsules. On 17th, I found about seven plants of **Wall Lettuce (*Myelis muralis*)** in shade by Treetop Walk, all of them in fruit but one did have a solitary open flower and a couple of buds. This is a species that was very common on walls and shady places in and around my home town on the banks of the Firth of Clyde but I have very rarely, if ever, seen it since moving to Kinghorn in 2021, although there is a 2020 record in NBN Atlas from the vicinity of the railway line just west of Burntisland (NBN Atlas, 2024). As well as these two definite new records, I found another unidentified **hawkweed** in marshy woodland on 3rd that could be a new record. In addition to these, one of 2022's new Loch records, **Bristly Oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*)**, turned up in the jetty area again after an absence of almost two years. This year's plant was much shorter than the 2022 one and was just within the boundary of the Loch's eastern monad, NT2687, whereas the much larger and lankier 2022 clump was at the west end of the jetty in NT2587.

I made two more visits to the recently-found western half of the marsh in September, on 3rd with TEC's newly appointed site manager Ewan Malecki and on 13th to do the first proper recording at the site. Probably the most significant find on the latter visit was a single fruiting plant of **Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*)**. This has been known from Kinghorn Loch since the time of George West's 1905 survey (West, 1910) but, because none was found by me in the wetter eastern half of the marsh in 2021 or 2022, some plants of it were reintroduced to that part by TEC in 2022. It is good to know that wild plants do still occur in the wider marsh area. I also discovered that **Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*)** is probably even more frequent in the western half of the marsh than in the eastern half. Apart from invasion by young willows and other bushes such as **Guelder Rose**, there are two potentially invasive species in or near the western half of the marsh: **Himalayan Balsam**, plants of which were found last month but which in September was discovered to be thinly scattered across much of its area, fortunately nowhere forming large invasive colonies, and **Buddleia** of which there is a large bush on its southern edge, close to the B923.

Elsewhere around the Loch, I found **Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*)** flowering in the Community Garden on 11th and also at the jetty area on 13th. This was once a common arable weed but it has declined so much over the last several decades that it is now on the Scottish Biodiversity List, one of eight such plant species (and 82 species of all animal and plant groups) on the Loch's list. One or two of the eight plants have (so far) just been found in one recording season but Charlock is one that I do record at the Loch at least once every year, so it seems to be established there. The same day I found **Potato** flowering, again in the Community Garden but dumped 'in the wild' as opposed to being grown as a crop. On 18th I took more photos of the leafy **hawkweed** species I found last month and which was now in fruit, with some flowers remaining. **Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*)** was in flower that day in the ecocemetery meadow.



New fungal records, Kinghorn Loch, September 2024. **A**, *Colletotrichum nymphaeae* on White Waterlily, 11th. **B**, *Phyllachora graminis* on grass blade, 13th. **C**, *Melampsorium betulinum* on Downy Birch, 18th. **D**, *Rosisphaerella rosicola* on Many-flowered Rose, 11th. Photos Robert Mill.

Cryptogams Thirty-eight different **fungi** were recorded during September; four of them were NLRs. These were ***Colletotrichum nymphaeae***, a leaf spot on White Waterlily leaves, in a small pool in the Community Garden (11th); the rust ***Melampsorium betulinum*** on Downy Birch leaves (18th); ***Phyllachora graminis***, a black leaf spot of grasses, in the western marsh on 13th, and ***Rosisphaerella rosicola***, a leaf spot that particularly affects Many-flowered Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and was found on its leaves on 11th. Of the other 34 fungal records, 14 were powdery mildews, six were rusts, six were white moulds, one was **Campion Smut** and seven were other leaf spots. Once again I paid little attention to other cryptogams; two lichens, three bryophytes and two terrestrial algae were recorded.

VILLAGE, BEACH AND COAST

No **land mammals** were recorded during September. The September **cetacean** and other sightings, as listed on the board near the Harbour View, were: **Minke Whale** on one day (12th, Sam Tedcastle); **Basking Shark** (a large fish rather than a mammal!) on two days; **Harbour Porpoise** on four days; and **Bottle-nosed Dolphin** on nine days.

Bird sightings around Kinghorn during September were once again mainly by Paul Williams (PW), with a few by Graham Sparshott (GS: Fife county bird recorder), Angus McFarlane (eBird) and myself.



A raft of Teal (*Anas crecca*), Seafield, 19th.
Photo Paul Williams.

Pink-footed Geese were noted by PW passing over the coastal path between Seafield and Kinghorn on 9th, 12th and 28th. Three **Wigeon** were at Seafield on 19th, while GS noted 15 and 8 respectively moving SW off East Braes on 21st and 22nd. Two **Teal** were at Seafield on 16th and a larger raft of 10 on 19th (PW). Six **Common Scoters** were reported off East Braes on 21st by GS. **Goosanders** and **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen by various observers on a number of dates but no high counts were noted. **Grey Partridge** was noted by PW between Seafield Tower and Kinghorn on 9th. By the end of September, more or less the full complement of the commoner wintering **waders** had returned to our coastline;

11 species were recorded. **Bar-tailed Godwits** were seen by PW at Seafield from 12th onwards (6 on 16th) as well as between the Tower and Kinghorn on 19th, while Angus McFarlane saw two **Black-tailed Godwits** at Pettycur on 6th and another six were at Seafield on 16th (PW). Between one and five **Knot** were along the Seafield/Kinghorn coast on 3rd and 17th (PW) while on 10th I had a really good close view of one at the harbour end of Kinghorn beach, feeding among the seaweed at the outflow of the Mill Burn. **Sanderlings** were at Seafield all month (PW), with 23 counted by him on 19th being by far the highest number. The first **Purple Sandpipers** also arrived there on 4th, with 9 present on 19th. **Kittiwakes** were off the coastal path north of Kinghorn on 19th (PW) and 21st (GS), with 100 present on the latter occasion. The **gull** highlight of the year so far was a first-calendar-year **Yellow-legged Gull** seen off East Braes by GS on both 21st and 22nd. Significant numbers of **Sandwich Terns** were often seen off the coastal path and Kinghorn by various observers, although counts were all lower than in August, with >40 on 3rd (PW) being the month's maximum. A single **Little Tern** was off East Braes on 21st (GS), with 35 **Common Terns** and 60 **Arctic Terns** there at the same time. Graham Sparshott also noted three **skua** species during his watch at East Braes on 21st: single **Great Skua** and **Long-tailed Skua** as well as 12 **Arctic Skua** (and another 8 of those on 22nd) were counted by him. He also noted 10 **Red-throated Divers** off East Braes that day, the month's only record. **Fulmar** was only recorded on 3rd (PW) and the only reports of **Manx Shearwaters** were by GS (13 off East Braes on 21st, only 3 on 22nd).



Knot (*Calidris canutus*), Kinghorn beach, 10th. Photo Robert Mill.

Paul Williams saw a probable **Honey-buzzard** at Seafield on 10th, another of the month's highlights. The record currently awaits acceptance by the Fife Rare Birds Committee. Two **Kingfishers** were at Seafield on 16th (PW) with a single one there the following day; earlier in the month PW also saw one on the coast nearer to Kinghorn on 3rd. A **Great Spotted Woodpecker** seen at Pettycur Bay on 6th by Angus McFarlane was a somewhat unusual record for the site. A **Peregrine** was at Seafield on both 16th and 17th (PW). **House Martins** were at Seafield on 12th and 13th and **Swallows** until at least 16th (PW); they were also seen by him at Grange Hill on 12th. PW noted **Willow Warblers** along the coastal path on 9th and 13th and also a **Chiffchaff** on 9th, as well as two **Common Whitethroats** at Grange Hill on 12th. Angus McFarlane counted 70 **Starlings**

at Pettycur on 6th. Both **Stonechat** (12th) and **Whinchat** (18th) were noted at Grange Hill by PW. The autumn's first **Rock Pipit** was seen at Seafield on 17th by PW.

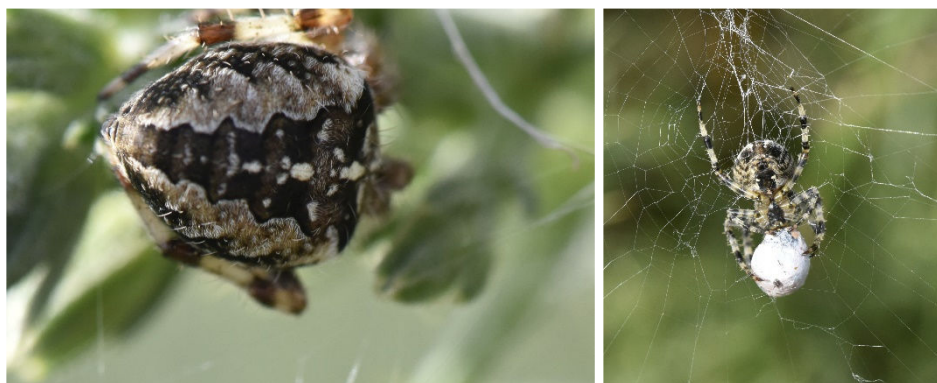
Because of my focus on Kinghorn Loch earlier in the month and my severe cold in the second half (and into October!), September's invertebrate, fungal and plant records from the wider Kinghorn area are very few, particularly as I only managed to fit in one 'non-Loch' walk myself (Mid and North Mire on 16th) before illness prevented me from going outdoors. The only **butterfly** species noted were **Small White** in the village on 10th and 12th and the Mire Path on 16th; **Speckled Wood** in Kinghorn on 12th (Sam Tedcastle) and Red Path Brae Path resting on, and possibly feeding on, rowan berries (16th); and a **Peacock** seen in Kinghorn on 12th by Sam Tedcastle. Paul Williams photographed a **Knot Grass moth** caterpillar at Seafield on 16th; this is a scarce species that is on the Scottish Biodiversity List. Along the Mire Path on 16th I noted **Honey Bee, Common**

Carder Bee, Buff-tailed and **Large Red-tailed**

Bumblebees as well as a unidentified black-and-red **ichneumon wasp** and **Robin's Pincushion galls**

caused by *Diplolepis rosae*; the latter were also seen by Gavin Wilkinson along the coastal path, where I saw them in August. I also saw three **Seven-spot Ladybirds**

at different places along the Mire Path on 16th, as well as three different **hoverflies** (**Common Drone-fly, Marmalade Hoverfly** and **Humming Syrphus**), the very large non-biting midge *Chironomus plumosus* and two **Garden Spiders** (*Araneus diadematus*).



Two Garden Spiders (*Araneus diadematus*), Mire Path, 16th. Photos Robert Mill.

There were few botanical highlights on my walk along the Mire Path. The fruits of **Stinking Iris** were developing on one of the plants. **Round-leaved Mint** (*Mentha suaveolens*) was in flower and there were still enough flowers on the **Japanese Knotweed** (*Reynoutria japonica*) patch to attract a lot of bees and other pollinators. There were also still a few flowers left on **Rest-harrow** (*Ononis repens*) and **Bladder Campion** (*Silene vulgaris*). The big Mire Field had recently been ploughed to the edge like last year and as a consequence no **Scarlet Pimpernel** plants were visible.

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