

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT - JANUARY 2022



Snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) in bloom at Kinghorn Loch, 20 January 2022. Photo Andrea Mill.

The exceptionally mild weather of December 2021 continued into the very beginning of 2022 with record-breaking temperatures, as mentioned in last month's report. However, there was then a sudden, short-lived cold snap but the month was mostly very mild. According to the maps in the Met Office's summary of the month (Met Office, 2022), our area was much milder than usual (about 2°C warmer than the 1991-2020 average), much drier than normal (33-50% of the 1991-2020 average), and considerably sunnier than usual (about 150% of the 1991-2020 average). The overall calm weather ended abruptly at the very end of the month, with back-to-back Storms Malik on 29th and Corrie on 30th/31st, which together brought down many trees. Compared to other parts of Scotland, however, our area got off relatively lightly.

Three new records were made in the Loch area during January: one mammal, one beetle and one flowering plant (see photos, next page). Also, Nigel Voaden's record of **Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)** at the Loch, made on 11 August last year, turned out to be a new Loch record, a fact that I had accidentally overlooked at the time. These four additions brought the Loch's biodiversity total up from 1,260 at the end of 2021 to **1,264** at 31 January 2022.

AROUND THE LOCH



NEW LOCH RECORDS, JANUARY 2022. **Left:** Great Diving Beetle (*Dytiscus marginalis*) found at Pond, 20th. Photo Lee Brown. **Centre:** Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*), 26th. Photo Andy Pay (corpse placed on fence post for photography). **Right:** Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*), 20th. Photo Andrea Mill.

Birds: 51 bird species were recorded by myself and others around the Loch in January, three fewer than in December. Thirty-four **Coot** were counted by Andy Pay on 26th, with numbers in the high 20s on other days from mid-month at least. **Dabchick (Little Grebe)** numbers continued to build up further, with between 20 and 30 present for much of the month. **Cormorants** also were present in double-digit numbers throughout, favouring the pipes in the southwest part of the Loch on which they have been congregating and often drying out their wings. One drake **Goldeneye** was present throughout the month, and I am aware of two records of **Tufted Duck**, both made by Paul Williams: 18 on 4th and about 6 on 31st. The **Ring-necked Duck** that was present during winter 2020/21 was not seen, however. The **Water Rail** again remained all month, although it was elusive, allowing only a few photos to be posted on the Kinghorn Loch Wildlife Group (KLWG) Facebook page. The apparently wintering **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was seen again by Paul Williams on 2nd and 31st (personal communication), while I saw a single **Great Black-backed Gull** on a buoy in the Loch on 20th. Fifteen **Curlews** were seen on 24th by Andy Pay and the species was also recorded on 20th by myself and on 31st by Paul Williams. **Oystercatchers** were also seen on three dates. The only **bird of prey** spotted in January was a **Common Kestrel** on 2nd (Paul Williams). A **Jay** was seen at least twice, by James Wrapson on 19th and Pauline Bell on 22nd (KLWG), while **Rook** was seen by Paul Williams on 2nd and 31st. **Fieldfare** (20th and 27th), **Mistle Thrush** (4th and 31st) and **Redwing** (2 on 24th, 1 on 27th) were all seen during the month, with all of them favouring the large field immediately adjacent to the north side of the access road to Craigencalt Farm. **Starlings** were present in the same field on 27th while Andy Pay saw a large group of 57 **Wood Pigeons** there and in the field behind on 26th, as well as four **Skylarks**. The male **Blackbird** with a mostly white forehead was seen again and was christened 'Blondie' by Elaine O'Rourke who put some good photos of it on the KLWG Facebook page. **Yellowhammer** was recorded twice, on 4th by Jacqueline Davidson and 24th by Andy Pay, while Tim Nicholson photographed a flock of **Common Linnets** on wires to the north of Craigencalt Cottage (11th). The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during January 2022 is: *Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Common Goldeneye, Common Gull, Common Kestrel, Common Linnet, Common Magpie, Common Pheasant (Ring-necked), Common Starling, Coot, Curlew, Dunnock, Farmyard / hybrid geese, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Cormorant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, Jackdaw (Eurasian), Jay (Eurasian), Lesser Black-backed Gull, Little Grebe or Dabchick, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Redwing, Robin, Rook, Skylark, Song Thrush, Tree Sparrow, Treecreeper (Eurasian), Tufted Duck, Western Water Rail, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.*

Mammals and amphibians: Andy Pay found a dead **Common Shrew** near the Craigencalt Farm access road on 26th; this was a new Loch record. Paul Williams (KLWG) photographed a **Stoat** on 31st and there was a **Grey Squirrel** near the bird hide on 22nd (Pauline Bell, KLWG). **Mole hills** were again evident all month in various places around the Loch. A **Common Toad** was found during the ongoing renovation of the Pond just beyond the bird hide by TEC staff.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'): The only significant invertebrate record made at the Loch during the month was a **Great Diving Beetle (*Dytiscus marginalis*)**, a new Loch record. It was found by Steven Heaney at the Pond during renovation work on 20th and was a sign that this ongoing work is already beginning to transform the Pond and bring wildlife back to what had previously seemed stagnant and 'dead'.

Flowering plants and ferns



Plants in flower around Kinghorn Loch, January 2022. **Left:** Petty Spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*), 20th. **Centre:** Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), 20th. **Right:** Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), 27th, mature catkin at centre, two young ones at right; (*inset bottom left*, a few of the male flowers in the mature catkin in close-up). All photos Robert Mill.

Winter Aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) was found by myself and my wife Andrea under the cherries and maples opposite the Craigencalt Farm car park on 20th; this was a new Loch record. Plants recorded in flower on either 20th or 27th included **Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)**, **Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)**, **Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*)**, **Petty Spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*)**, **Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)**, **Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)**, **White Dead-nettle (*Lamium album*)** and **Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* aggregate)**.

Fungi, lichens and bryophytes

I found the liverwort **Forked Veilwort (*Metzgeria furcata*)** on a tree trunk on 27th, confirming a record made during the 2018 BioBlitz. The only **fungi** noted in January were **Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*)** on 27th and **Elder Whitewash (*Hyphodontia sambuci*)** on 28th. Some lichens were also photographed but had not been identified at the time of writing.

VILLAGE, BEACH AND COASTAL PATH

My wife and I heard a **Tawny Owl** hooting near our home on the night of the 9th. A small number of **Pink-footed Geese** flew over Lochside Grange on the evening of 19th, and ten (possibly the same small flock) were seen on the Mid Mire field in the early evening of 20th after I had had a walk around the Loch.

Eight **Common Scoter** were seen off Kinghorn village on 30 December 2021 by Michael Cook (eBird website), a record that didn't find its way into last month's report but is still worthy of note. On 2 January, Anthony Wetherhill (eBird) saw a **Red-breasted Merganser** off Kinghorn, while a **Kittiwake** and two **Common Guillemot** were present off Kinghorn on 4th (Michael Cook, eBird) and a single **Long-tailed Duck** was seen on 14th (Finlay Hamilton, eBird). Bruce Meldrum (KLWG) photographed

more **Long-tailed Ducks** off the coastal path on 13th. About 10 **Fulmars** were on the cliffs at Kinghorn on 19th, considerably fewer than my wife and I saw there in December. At Pettycur, there was a big raft of around 150 **Eider** offshore on 9th.

The Hump-backed Whale was seen on New Year's Day off Seafield by Paul Williams (KLWG; photos on their Facebook page). Tim Nicholson photographed two **Grey Seals** on rocks off the coastal path on 31st.

Paul Williams recorded 35 bird species at Seafield in January. Of particular note are his records of both **Little Gull** and **Mediterranean Gull** there on 1st - the latter onshore with **Black-headed Gulls**, and the former on the sea. He also saw single **Red-throated Divers** there on 1st and 31st, and 17 **Purple Sandpipers** in the harbour area on 31st. **Rock Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Shag** and even a **Pheasant** were some of the other species seen by Paul near Seafield during the month. Michael Cook (eBird) also saw two **Razorbills**, two **Purple Sandpipers** and five **Velvet Scoters** near Seafield Tower or just offshore from it on 4th.



Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*). :**Left**: Part of a large patch in flower by the coastal path south of Seafield Tower, 18 January 2022. **Right**: Flowers close up. Photos Andrea Mill.

A large patch of **Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*)** was in flower along the side of the coastal path next to the railway embankment not far south of Seafield Tower, near the steps down to the beach, from the beginning of January (if not earlier) and was photographed by a few people, including Pauline Bell (KLWG) on 5th, my wife Andrea on 18th and Tim Nicholson (KLWG) on 24th. **Wallflower, Lesser Periwinkle, a fumitory species and Gorse** were all in flower at Pettycur on 11th. Possibly the most 'out-of-season' flower seen during January was **Montbretia (*Crococsmia × crocosmiiflora*)** outside a house next to the grassy slope beside Kinghorn golf course on 27th.

Reference

MET OFFICE (2022). Third sunniest January on record starts the year for the UK. <https://blog.metoffice.gov.uk/2022/02/01/third-sunniest-january-on-record-starts-the-year-for-the-uk/> accessed 9 February 2022.