

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT - JUNE 2021



Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), the 1000th species recorded at Kinghorn Loch. 28 June 2021. ***Inset bottom right***, in bud. Photos Robert Mill.

June 2021 was quite warm and sunny at times but there were also showery periods. I was away from the village for around ten days mid-month so not as much recording could be done as in a full month. Nevertheless, the 1000-species record 'milestone' was passed during the month. Two species vie for the 'Number 1000' spot: the honour of the 1000th *recorded* goes to Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), found at the roundabout by the TEC car park on 28 June where it was probably originally introduced as part of a wildflower seed mix, while the 1000th *identified* was the fungus *Trametes versicolor*, photographed by Andy Pay a week earlier on 21 June but not identified until the beginning of July. The final total at the end of June was **1,003**, 32 more than at 31 May.

AROUND THE LOCH



Left: Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), 21 June 2021. Photo Andy Pay. ***Right***: Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) on nest, 23 June 2021. Photo Robert Mill.

Birds First, a correction to May's report: Andy Pay informed me that the 'probable Garden Warbler' song he heard at the Loch on 22 May was almost certainly only the subsong of a **Blackcap**. I had been to the same part of the Loch later that same day and only heard Blackcap song myself. There are, however, seven previous Garden Warbler records from the Loch from earlier years in the National Biodiversity Network's database.

Fifty-one bird species were recorded at the Loch during June, with one additional species possibly flying over. This was a **Red Kite** seen by Andy Pay flying across the bay from Burntisland towards Kinghorn on 11th; it then turned inland and may well have flown over the Loch. However, I've not included it in the total species recorded at the Loch. Andy also saw a **Canada Goose** at the Loch on 21st and a single **Dabchick (Little Grebe)** on 13th; unfortunately, this did not stay. By contrast, there was excellent news concerning the **Great Crested Grebes**. The male on the Loch whose mate disappeared during May either gained a new one or the original one returned. Courtship was observed by several people early in June, followed by the building of a nest mound among the Amphibious Bistort very close to the hide, affording excellent views, and the female is now incubating. Let us hope that a brood of chicks ultimately hatch. If visiting the Loch, **please do not disturb the grebes**, whether you are walking, fishing, or especially doing water sports, and keep dogs under very close control if you are near the bird hide. Other notable sightings, some of them somewhat unseasonal, were two drake **Pochard** around 8th-10th, a **Shelduck** on 10th and a **Kestrel** and a **Mistle Thrush**, both on 12th. **Swifts** were first seen at the Loch on 10th and **Swallows, House Martins** and **Sand Martins** were also seen on various dates. Of the eight **Coot** chicks that fledged on 16 May, two appear to have survived, while May's **Mallard** ducklings and **goslings** have now grown into juveniles still being looked after by their parents. Another **Mallard** brood hatched elsewhere on the Loch during June. The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during June is: *Blackbird, Blackcap, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Collared Dove, Coot, Cormorant, Dabchick (Little Grebe), Dunnock, Farmyard geese hybrids, Feral Pigeon, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Crested Grebe, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, House Martin, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Linnet, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Pochard, Robin, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler, Shelduck, Song Thrush, Swallow, Swift, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Tufted Duck, Willow Warbler, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer*, plus **Red Kite** if it did fly over the Loch.

Mammals and amphibians: A **Rabbit** was seen in the grounds of the Ecology Centre building on 2nd. **Common Frog** tadpoles continued to develop in the dipping pond near the sluice in the first half of the month but were not seen after my return from the south of England in the second half.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts')



Left: Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), 6 June 2021. **Centre:** Unidentified caddisfly, 24 June 2021. **Right:** White 'fluff' on needles of Dunkeld Larch (*Larix x marschlinsii*) caused by Larch Woolly Aphid (*Adelges laricis*), 24 June 2021. All photos Robert Mill.

The only **butterfly** species recorded at the Loch during June were **Red Admiral** (6th, on the Rodanbraes track in woodland) and **Small White** (6th, 23rd). No **moth** trapping was carried out, but, as in May, both **Silverground Carpet** (6th) and **Nettle-tap** (24th) were seen, as well as an as yet unidentified, very plain brown, adult **caddisfly**. Not many **bees** seemed to be about on the days I visited, with the only species seen **Buff-tailed Bumblebee**, **Common Carder Bee** and **Large Red-tailed Bumblebee**, as well as **Common Wasp**. There also seemed to be very few **hoverflies**, with only **Banded Hoverfly** being recorded. There was a heavy infestation of **Larch Woolly Aphid** in the woodland above the Ecology Centre's car park (see photo taken on 24th) and much **Common Froghopper** 'spittle' on plant stems. **Common Smooth Woodlouse** (*Oniscus asellus*) was seen again on 2nd.

Flowering plants



Five new June plant records for the Loch. **Top left:** Fox and Cubs (*Pilosella aurantiaca*), 6 June 2021. **Top right:** Heath Dog Violet (*Viola canina*), 6 June 2021. **Bottom left:** Garden Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), 2 June 2021. **Bottom centre:** Biting Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*), 23 June 2021. **Bottom right:** Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*), 24 June 2021. All photos Robert Mill.

Many of June's new records for the Loch were of flowering-plant species, including **Garden Angelica** (*Angelica archangelica*) at three spots on the east and north sides with a particularly magnificent, tall specimen just west of the launching area; **Sun Spurge** (*Euphorbia helioscopia*) on 24th, very distinctive by its finely toothed leaves; **Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea** (*Lathyrus latifolius*) on the north shore of the Loch on 24th, with large magenta sweet-pea-like flowers; **Biting Stonecrop** (*Sedum acre*) on the wall of the launching area car park on 23rd; and both **Fox and Cubs** (*Pilosella aurantiaca*) and **Heath Dog Violet** (*Viola canina*) by the Rodanbraes track on 6th. **Lesser Spearwort** (*Ranunculus flammula*) and **Water Forget-me-not** (*Myosotis scorpioides*) were in flower at the children's dipping pond near the sluice on 20th and 23rd; both species have old Loch records dating from 1910 and it is good to see that they are still present (or have re-colonised or been re-introduced). Many of the water plants that formerly grew in or around the Loch were killed by the

'red mud' industrial pollution that occurred while the aluminium smelter was dumping effluent into the Loch in the mid-20th century and it would be interesting to carry out a survey to find out how many species either survived the pollution or have re-colonised since the Loch has been pollution-free. Mention must also be made of **Drooping Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum nutans*)** found by one of the Ecology Centre's team, Fraser Nicol, on 31st May.

Fungi and viruses



Left: Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*), 21 June 2021, the 1000th identified species from the Loch. Photo Andy Pay. **Centre:** Burnet-rose Rust (*Phragmidium rosae-pimpinellifoliae*), 24 June 2021. Photo Robert Mill. **Right:** European Mountain Ash Ringspot-associated Virus (*Emaravirus EMARaV*) on its host, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), 28 June 2021. Photo Robert Mill.

***Trametes versicolor* (Turkeytail)**, a bracket fungus, was seen and photographed by Andy Pay on 21st and represents the Loch's second macrofungi record (mushrooms, toadstools and the like, as opposed to 'microfungi' such as rusts, smuts and mildews, of which five have so far been found). Of the latter, **Burnet rose rust (*Phragmidium rosae-pimpinellifoliae*)** was forming bright orange galls on its host, Burnet Rose, on 24th. Finally, on 28 June, a rowan tree on the road in to the Ecology Centre car park was found to be infected with **European mountain ash ringspot-associated virus** (scientifically known as '**Emaravirus EMARaV**'). This recently discovered virus was first found in Scotland as recently as 2013 -- the Loch record may be the first for Fife.

IN AND AROUND THE VILLAGE



Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), 24 June 2021. Photo Robert Mill.

Skylarks frequently sang above Mid Mire and the oat field between the golf course and Burnside Path and **House Martins** regularly patrolled the Burnside Path and adjacent long pond and oat field during the month. **Sedge Warblers** continued to sing by the long pond and in the scrub below the new Lochside Grange houses and a **Common Whitethroat** was present below Lochside Grange on 5th. Two **Grey Herons** flew east over the Burnside Path on the evening of 6th, presumably coming from the Loch.

A 7-spot Ladybird was on hogweed by the Burnside Path on 6th and another on forget-me-not beside the track over the golf course on 27th. **Small White** butterflies were by the Burnside Path on 6th and 24th and a **Red Admiral** there on 23rd.

Two plants of **Field Bindweed** were in flower on the slope down to the Burnside Path from Lochside Grange on 24th.

DOWN ON THE BEACH AND COASTAL PATH

Common Seals were 'singing' on rocks just offshore south of Seafield on 21st and numerous pups could be seen. No other marine mammals such as whales or dolphins were recorded in the Kinghorn area during June, in contrast to April and May when the Sei Whale was around.

Fulmars remained on the cliffs at Kinghorn beach while **Gannets**, **Cormorants** and **Eiders** were regularly seen along the coastal path and at Pettycur.



Pettycur flowers. **Far left:** Greater Red-Hot Poker (*Kniphofia x praecox*), 4 June 2021. **Centre left:** Wild Mignonette (*Reseda lutea*), 4 June 2021. **Centre right:** Wild Clary (*Salvia verbenaca*), 30 June 2021. **Far right:** Seaside Daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*), 30 June 2021. All photos Robert Mill.

At Pettycur on 4th, the cliffs below the caravans were a blaze of thoroughly naturalized red and yellow **Greater Red-Hot Pokers (*Kniphofia x praecox*)** mixed with the rich blue of **Evergreen Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*)**. On 30th June, two rare Pettycur specialities were found: **Wild Mignonette (*Reseda lutea*, also seen there on 4th)** and **Wild Clary (*Salvia verbenaca*)**. There was plenty of the mignonette, but only a single plant of the Clary was seen and it is to be hoped that more is present in less accessible spots. Both have been known at Pettycur since at least 1811 (Maughan, 1811) but are otherwise rare in Scotland, and the Kirkcaldy area even earlier. They also both once occurred in the Kirkcaldy/Dysart area even earlier (Lightfoot, 1777) but neither is found there now (Ballantyne, 2002). **Seaside Daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*)** was also found naturalised both at Pettycur harbour and at Kinghorn beach. **Common Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*)** was found at various spots along the coast, as well as by the track across the golf course, during June.



Common Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*), coastal path, 25 June 2021.

A **Brown-lipped Snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*)** was found beside the coastal path. This snail's shells vary hugely in colour: one found at the Loch in May was dark brown and white, while the one on the coastal path was mostly pale yellow with dark brown lines around the spirals. Sea shells found on the beaches at Kinghorn and Pettycur during June included **Dog Whelk (*Nucella lapillus*)** on 1st, two tellin species -- **Tellina fabula** on 19th and **Thin Tellin (*Tellina tenuis*)** on 21st at Kinghorn and 30th at Pettycur, as well as species mentioned in my earlier reports. A **Common, or Moon, Jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*)** was on Kinghorn beach on 7th.

References

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