

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – OCTOBER 2023 *by Robert Mill*



Oak Marble Galls (*Andricus kollari*), 13 October 2023. New Loch record. Photo Robert Mill.

Eastern Scotland as a whole, including Fife, has just had its wettest October since records began in 1836, with 235.9 mm of rain, 82% more than average (Met Office, 2023a, b). This was due chiefly to two extreme weather events: first, what the Met Office (2023a, c) termed an ‘atmospheric river’ which brought Scotland’s wettest-ever two-day period on 6th and 7th, and then Storm Babet from 18-21 October (Met Office, 2023a, d). Between those events Kinghorn had its only significant dry spell, nine days from 9th to 17th, seven of which were completely dry and only 0.6 mm falling on the other two. Other than that period, October’s only other dry days were 1st and 2nd, 23rd and 24th, and 30th (SEPA, 2023). Kinghorn’s local rain gauge at The Ecology Centre recorded 129 mm during the month, 71% above the October average of 75.4 mm (SEPA, 2023). Almost half of this, 61.2 mm, fell during the ‘atmospheric river’ event of 6th/7th, but the period of Storm Babet brought us only 13.6 mm, much less than parts of NE Scotland that had record rainfall and serious flooding. Our other wet spell was from the 25th to the end of the month, when 44 mm fell (SEPA, 2023). While parts of England often basked in warm or even hot sunshine during October, with temperatures up to eight degrees above average between 7th and 10th (Met Office, 2023b), Scotland had average temperatures over the month as a whole. Despite the torrential rain of 6th and 7th, temperatures in the first ten days of the month were also well above normal in eastern Scotland but, from 11th onwards (other than 18th and 19th), they were average or below until the end of the month (Met Office, 2023b). It was rather a dull month, with Fife having average sunshine levels for October but much of the country having less sun than average.

Despite all the wet weather, I was able to make eight recording trips around various parts of the Loch in October, three more than in September. As most plants had almost stopped flowering by the end of the month, my last two visits focused more on the lower plants and fungi. However, the month’s 27 new records were spread across most groups of organisms and comprised 1 mammal, 1 bird, 3 flies, 1 gall wasp, 1 harvestman, 1 springtail (surprisingly, the Loch’s first record of this group of insect-like animals) and two flowering plants, as well as 11 fungi and 6 lichens. At the time of writing many other lichens I photographed in October remain unidentified and some may be additional new records. As usual, the month’s new records are, particularly in figure captions, abbreviated NLR (new Loch record). In addition I found an old record of another bird, **Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)**, that visited Kinghorn Loch on 10 June 1936 (Baxter & Rintoul, 1936); this represents another addition to the Loch’s list. The grand total therefore increased by 28, from 1,629 (30 September) to **1,657** on 31 October.

AROUND THE LOCH Birds: Fifty-eight bird species were recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch in October, ten more than in September, although many of them were short stayers, often for just one day. Once again, I am indebted to Paul Williams (abbreviated PW) for many of the sightings. As in September, **Coot** was a strange near-absentee, with only a single record of one individual on 21st (PW), the first since 1 September.

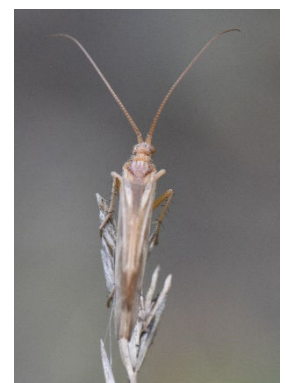
The month was very much a transition between summer and winter, with migration both in and out evident at the Loch, and even more so offshore as noted in the Village and Coast section of this report. Summer migrants that remained at, or visited, the Loch for all or some of the month were **Willow Warbler** (6th, PW), **Chiffchaff** (6th and 11th, PW) and **Swallow** (11th, PW) but there were no reports of **Blackcap**. Many **winter visitors** seemed to arrive early even though, locally at least, there was no hard weather during the month. Among land birds these included two **Bramblings** on 19th (Nigel Voaden) that are the second record of this species at the Loch; **Fieldfares** (more than 50 on 21st, PW), **Redwings** (several, 21st, PW) and **Woodcock** (one on 30th, Nigel Voaden) were also seen. The **water birds** included a **Long-tailed Duck** seen by Nigel Voaden on 30th which is a new addition to my Loch bird list, both on the basis of his sighting and on an older record of a female seen on 6 March 2007 that I traced while searching old issues of the annual *Fife Bird Report* in order to establish if Nigel's was the very first record of the species at Kinghorn Loch (Fife Bird Club, 2008). His therefore would seem to be second Loch record of Long-tailed Duck. Other water birds seen on or by the Loch in October that are more typical of winter than summer were **Cormorant** (two on 21st, PW), **Goldeneye** (17th and 18th), **Great Black-backed Gull** (not just one but three on 21st, PW), **Kingfisher** (one on 17th, Christopher Steiner, eBird) and **Whooper Swan** (seven on 16th, Nigel Voaden; four on 17th, Christopher Steiner). However, as in September, there were no sightings of **Tufted Duck** on the Loch, another odd absentee given the time of year. The **Mute Swan** family, as well as both **Great Crested** and **Little Grebes**, remained in residence all month. **Buzzard**, seen on four different days between 2nd and 17th by three different people, was the only raptor recorded. A **Jay** was seen once (Mark Nesbitt, 23rd, Kinghorn District Wildlife Group [KDWG] Facebook page). The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during October 2023 is: *Barn Swallow, Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Brambling, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Gull, Coot, Cormorant, Dabchick (Little Grebe), Dunnock, Farmyard / hybrid geese, Feral Pigeon, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Goldeneye, Goldfinch, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Crested Grebe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, Jackdaw, Jay, Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Linnet, Long-tailed Duck, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Pink-footed Goose, Redwing, Robin, Rook, Skylark, Song Thrush, Starling, Tree Creeper, Tree Sparrow, Whooper Swan, Willow Warbler, Woodcock, Wood Pigeon, Wren.*

Mammals, amphibians and fish: A **Fox** was seen and photographed by Elaine O'Rourke in the third week of the month (15th-21st); surprisingly, this seems to be the first record of Fox from the Loch. Other mammal records included **Roe Deer** (two on 2nd, 3 on 17th, Paul Williams), **Stoat** (one on 6th, Paul Williams) and **Grey Squirrel** on three dates. **Mole** hills were present on 28th, the first time I have seen any fresh ones for some months. No **amphibians** were noted.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'): There was, as might be expected, a further decrease in the number of invertebrate species recorded in October – 33 compared to 40 in September. Three **butterfly** species were noted: **Red Admiral** by Paul Williams on three dates with a remarkable 11 seen by him on 11th, **Small Tortoiseshell** by him on 6th, and **Speckled Wood** in the third week of the month by Elaine O'Rourke (KDWG). The larval mines of two **moth** species were found by me: **Golden Pigmy** (*Stigmella aurella*) on 16th and **Plain Rose Pigmy** (*Stigmella spinosissima*) on 2nd. The latter is a very rare moth, nationally graded pRDB2 (= IUCN Vulnerable) and known from less than ten Ordnance Survey 10 km squares nationwide; most of these are in Scotland, including Fife. My record, of a larval leaf mine found on the only host plant, Burnet Rose, confirm those of Nigel Voaden and mean that the area surrounding the Loch is an important site for this species in Britain. A **caddisfly** climbing up a grass stem (31st) was identified as *Limnephilus lunatus*, a species that has been

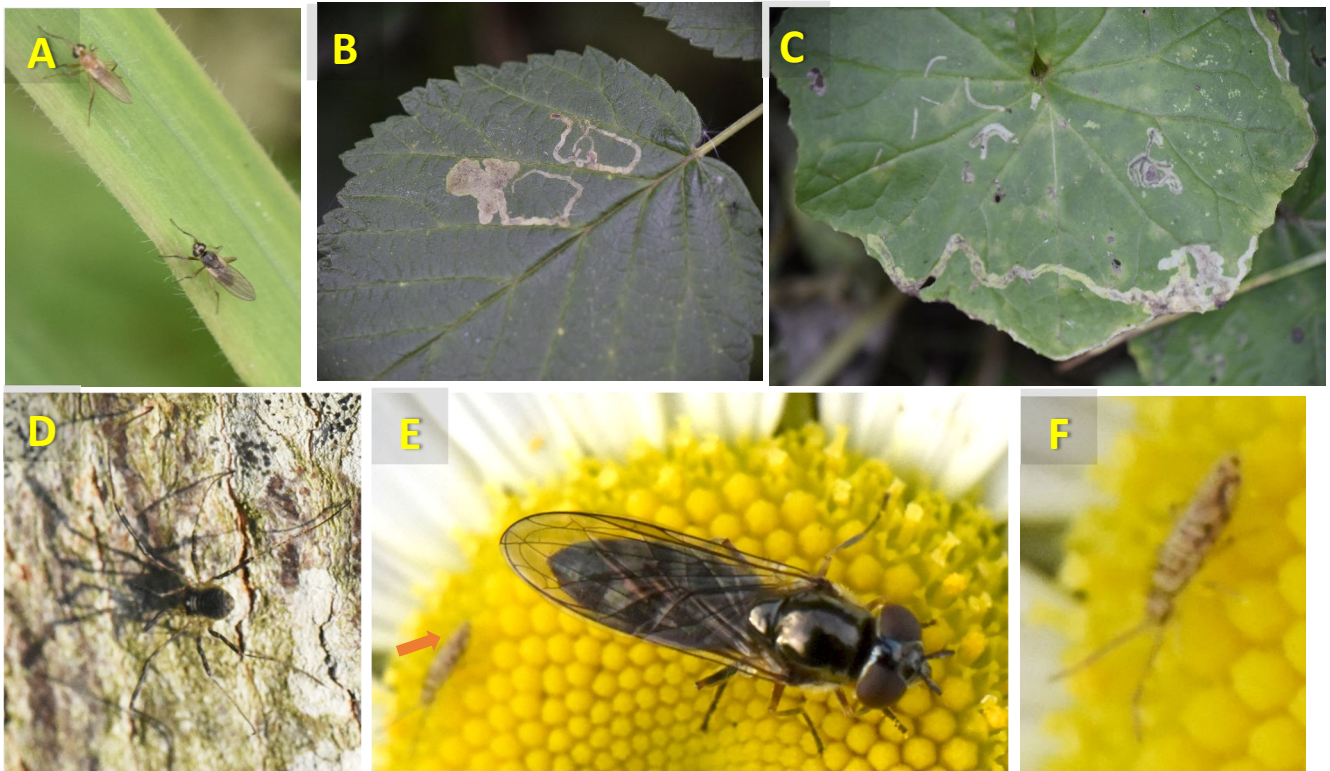


Larval leaf mine of Plain Rose Pigmy moth (*Stigmella spinosissima*) on its host, Burnet Rose, 2nd. See text. Photo Robert Mill.



A caddisfly, *Limnephilus lunatus*, at the top of a grass stem, 31st. Photo Robert Mill.

seen previously, most recently in the moth trap at the end of August. Six Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants etc.) were recorded during October but the only **bee** seen was **Common Carder Bee** on 2nd, 6th and 18th. Numerous **Oak Marble Galls**, caused by the gall wasp *Andricus kollari*, were found on one particular oak tree by the approach to



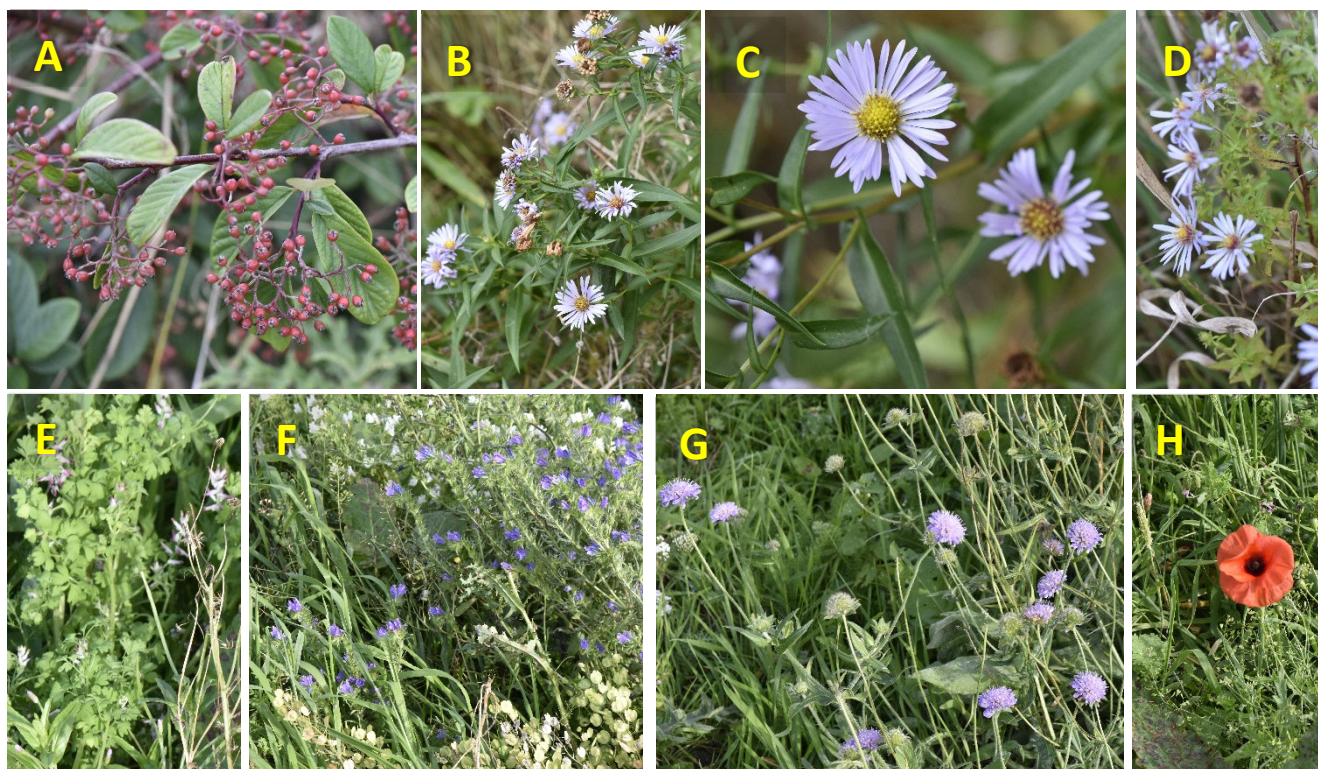
October 2023 Loch invertebrates: **A**, Two Yellow Spear-winged Flies (*Lonchoptera lutea*) on leaf blade, 18th, NLR. **B**, Larval leaf mine of *Agromyza idaeina* on Raspberry, 16th, NLR. **C**, Larval leaf mine of *Phytomyza tussilaginis* on Coltsfoot, 16th, NLR. **D**, The harvestman *Oligolophus hansenii* on tree trunk, 28th, NLR. **E**, Slender Melanostoma (*Melanostoma scalare*), 16th; arrowed at bottom left is the Loch's first record of a springtail (enlarged as F). **F**, Springtail (*Entomobrya* aff. *intermedia*), 16th, NLR and first springtail record for Kinghorn Loch. All photos Robert Mill.

the jetty (from 13th, although I must have missed them earlier in the year as all were very mature); these were a new Loch record. Another oak gall, caused by the gall wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, was also found (16th) and galls of *Diplolepis spinosissimae* persisted on Burnet Rose (2nd, 13th and 16th). **Common Carder Bee** (2nd, 6th and 18th) was the only **bee** seen. **Seven-spot Ladybird** (18th) was the only **beetle** record and, unlike last month, no **bugs** were noted.

Common Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*) and **Tapered Drone-fly** (*Eristalis pertinax*), both seen on 1st, and **Slender Melanostoma** (*Melanostoma scalare*) on 16th were October's only **hoverfly** sightings. Fourteen other **fly** species were recorded during the month, either as larval mines (ten species) or actual flies (the other four). Three were NLRs: two differently coloured individuals of the rather variable **Yellow Spear-winged Fly** (*Lonchoptera lutea*) that seemed to be chasing each other up a grass blade (18th) and the larval mines of *Agromyza idaeina* on Raspberry and *Phytomyza tussilaginis* on Coltsfoot (both 16th). Of the two newly recorded leaf-miners, the first is nationally graded Common and the second Local (Warrington, 2022).

No other insects were noted in September. **Arachnid** records included another new **harvestman** species for the Loch that ran down a tree trunk as I was photographing the lichens on it (28th). I managed to get one rather poor photo before it went out of sight; from this I have deduced it is probably a rather dark form of the common woodland-loving species *Oligolophus hansenii*. As well as this, I found an unidentified **red spider mite** species on moss and two **gall mite** species on Alder leaves, *Eriophyes laevis* on 2nd and *Acalitus brevitarsus* on 16th. Rounding up October's invertebrate records was the Loch's first record of any **springtail** (*Collembola*) species, on 16th. This was on the same Ox-eye Daisy flower as the Slender Melanostoma hoverfly that I was photographing, but very much smaller than the hoverfly and not noticed until I was looking at the photographs on my laptop at home. I managed to identify the rather out-of-focus springtail as matching one variant ('variety 2, Janssens 2009') of *Entomobrya intermedia* using images on the *Collembola of the World* website (Bellinger et al., 2023). However, the pattern of the abdomen in these images, and my own, does not match the patterns specified for either *Entomobrya intermedia* or its close ally *Entomobrya nivalis* by Shaw & Trehwella (2019) and so 'variety 2' might not be either of those species.

Flowering plants and ferns:



Plants around Kinghorn Loch, October 2023. **A**, Late Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster lacteus*) in fruit, 23rd (also 18th), NLR. **B-D**, Michaelmas Daisy (*Symphyotrichum* × *salignum*), 16th & 18th, NLR: **B & C**, typical tall form with dark green willow-like leaf, 16th. **D**, Dwarf form with shorter yellow-green leaves, 18th. **E-G**, Plants still in flower in the new wildflower meadow area, 2nd: **E**, Common Ramping Fumitory (*Fumaria muralis* subsp. *boraei*). **F**, Purple Viper's-bugloss (*Echium plantagineum*); fruits of Field Pennycress (*Thlaspi arvense*) in foreground. **G**, Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*). **H**, Long-headed Poppy (*Papaver dubium*). Photos Robert Mill.

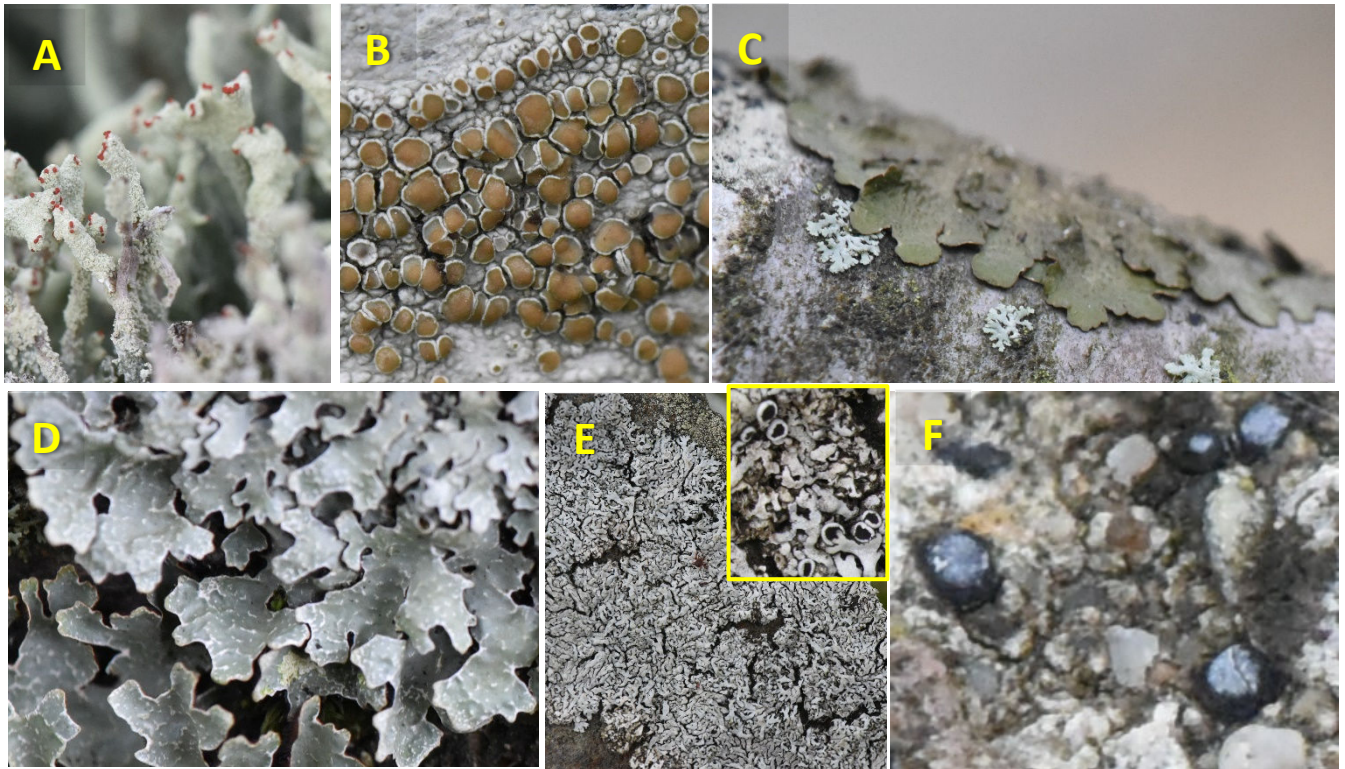
103 wild or naturalised plants were in October (some only just) and I found another 32 in fruit and 24 apparently in vegetative state – 159 species in all. Apart from these I noted 63 cultivated flowering plant species, as well as seven ferns. It was heartening to re-find the single fairly large plant of **Hart's-tongue Fern** whose location I know at the Loch, looking quite healthy, after several months of being unable to find it (there is another extremely small one near the farm but the species appears to be very scarce at the Loch although common in certain parts of Kinghorn itself, particularly along the few non-culverted parts of the Mill Burn). Two of the 159 species in wild situations were NLRs. One was **Late Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster lacteus*)**, found in fruit at two different locations in the east of my Loch recording area on 18th and 23rd. The other was **Michaelmas Daisy (*Symphyotrichum* × *salignum*)**, which I also found at two widely separated locations: firstly, a typical form of the hybrid in the southwest by the Great North Road on 16th, then a dwarf form with much more yellow-green leaves on the KCLA ecocemetery land on 18th. Both of the original two plants of **Chinese Mugwort (*Artemisia verlotiorum*)** that I discovered last year had begun to develop flower-buds when I inspected them near the month's end on 28th although these buds were not visible when I checked them on 2nd. Of the 103 'wild' plants flowering in the first half of the month, many had stopped by mid-month so that barely 40 species remained in flower on my last two visits on 28th and 31st. However, for most of the month, and indeed earlier in the late summer and autumn, the recently sown wildflower area where flax was cultivated last year has been a riot of colour (see photos E-H on this page). I had some input in the selection of the wildflower mix, advising former site manager Lee Brown on what species in the standard seed mix were not native to Fife and should therefore be excluded, and so a mixture specially tailored for TEC was ordered. However, there was at least one surprise: instead of the specified (Common) Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) which already grows at various spots around the Loch and is native to Fife, what actually came into flower were two colour forms of Purple Viper's-bugloss (*Echium plantagineum*), one blue, the other white (photo F). This has never been recorded from Fife (Ballantyne, 2002; Welch, 2023) and so I list it as a cultivated plant. However, it is still flowering as I write this in mid-November whereas the native species finished several months ago; it is also very popular with pollinating insects and therefore very welcome.



New fungi records, Kinghorn Loch, October 2023. A-C, 'Mushrooms': A, Common Funnel (*Infundibulicybe gibba*), 13th. B, Parasol Mushroom (*Macrolepiota cf. procera*), 13th. C, Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), 18th. D-F, **Powdery mildews: D, *Erysiphe cichoreacearum* on Tansy, 18th. E, *Golovinomyces cynoglossi* complex on Borage, 18th. F, *Podosphaera euphorbiae* on Sun Spurge, 28th. G-J, **Lichenicolous fungi:** G, *Laetisaria lichenicola* staining *Physcia* thallus pink, 28th. H, *Illosporopsis christiansenii*, pink blobs on *Physcia*, 28th (first found on 13th). J, *Vouauxiella lichenicola* (arrowed) on fruiting body of *Lecanora chlarotera*, 31st (first found on *Lecanora pulicaris*, 23rd). K, Willowherb Rust (*Pucciniastrum epilobii*) on Rosebay Willowherb, 16th. L & M, *Phloeospora ulmi* on Wych Elm leaf, 16th (L, lower surface; M, upper surface). All fungi NLRs. Photos Robert Mill.**

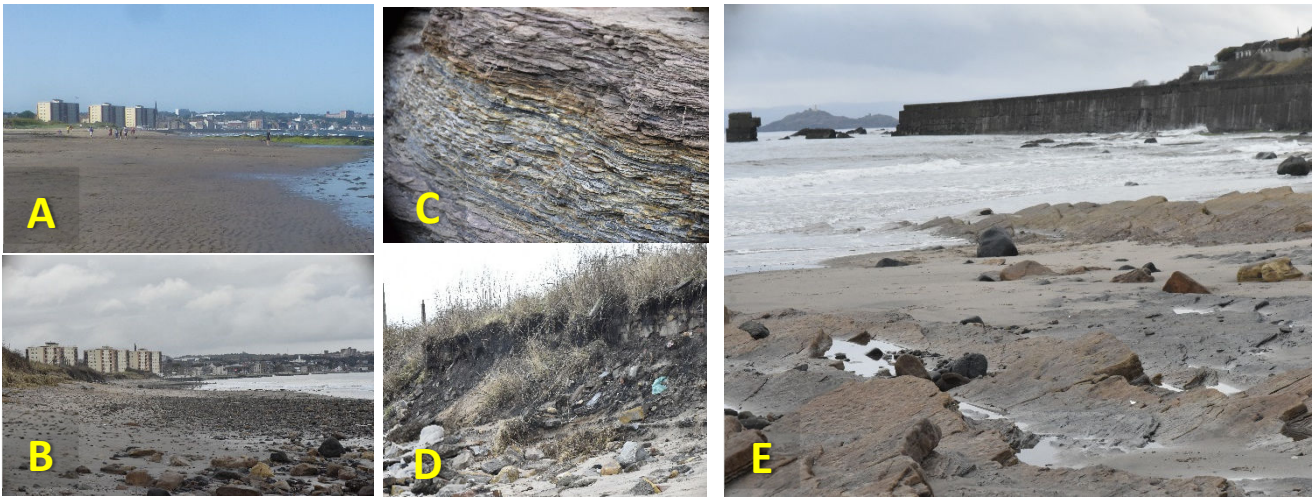
Cryptogams Forty-three different **fungi** species were recorded around the Loch during October, 11 of them being NLRs: 3 'mushrooms', 3 powdery mildews, 3 lichenicolous fungi, 1 rust and one other leaf spot.

Fourteen **powdery mildews** were found, making them the most highly represented group, as in September. The three NLRs were *Erysiphe cichoreacearum* on Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) on 18th; a member of the *Golovinomyces cynoglossi* complex, not yet named by scientists, on Borage (*Borago officinalis*) leaves on the same day; and *Podosphaera euphorbiae* on Sun Spurge (*Euphorbia helioscopia*) on 28th. As in September, eight **rusts** were recorded; among these, **Willowherb Rust (*Pucciniastrum epilobii*)** was a NLR. It was found on Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) in three different locations: by the Great North Road near the B923 and by the Craigencalt access road to Red Path Brae on 16th, and at the southern edge of the ecocemetery land on 18th. Seven **leaf spots** were still evident, with *Phloeospora ulmi* on Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) being a NLR (16th). My focus on lichens brought six records of **lichenicolous fungi** as by-products: three of them had been found on other occasions but the bright shocking pink *Illosporopsis christiansenii* (13th and other dates on the lichen genus *Physcia*), another pink-staining fungus, *Laetisaria lichenicola*, also on *Physcia* (28th), and *Vouauxiella lichenicola* on two species of the lichen genus *Lecanora* on 23rd and 31st in different locations, were all NLRs. October's five 'mushrooms and toadstools' included three NLRs – **Common Funnel (*Infundibulicybe gibba*, formerly known as *Clitocybe gibba*)** and **Parasol Mushroom (*Macrolepiota cf. procera*)**, both by the Craigencalt access road from 13th-23rd, and **Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*)** on 18th and 28th – as well as the oft-recorded bracket fungi **Conifer Mazegill** and **Turkeytail**. October's remaining fungal records were **Campion Anther Smut (*Microbotryum lychnidis-dioicae*)**, still present on a few Red Campion flowers, and two frequently recorded downy mildews.



New lichen records, Kinghorn Loch, October 2023. A, *Cladonia digitata*, 2nd. B, *Lecanora pulicaris*, 23rd. C, *Melanelixia subaurifera*, 23rd. D, *Parmelia sulcata*, 18th. E, *Physcia caesia*, 23rd (inset, fruiting bodies). F, *Sarcogyne regularis* (blue-black 'gemstone-like' fruiting bodies, 23rd). All NLRs. Photos Robert Mill.

I photographed many **lichens** during October, and have identified 26 of them so far. Six of these are NLRs: ***Cladonia digitata*** found in fruit on the same fence post as where I have also found ***Cladonia coniocraea*** (both 2nd); ***Lecanora pulicaris*** on a rowan trunk on 23rd; ***Melanelixia subaurifera*** on a cherry twig on the same date; the very common but previously overlooked **Hammered Shield Lichen (*Parmelia sulcata*)** on two different trees (18th and 23rd); another grey leafy lichen, ***Physcia caesia***, on a dry stone dyke on 23rd; and the bluish fruiting bodies, arising from a hidden crust, of ***Sarcogyne regularis*** on a concrete post on 23rd. Bryophyte records comprised **Common Smoothcap (*Atrichum undulatum*)** and **Yew-leaved Pocket-moss (*Fissidens taxifolius*)** on 2nd, both of which confirmed records made during TEC's BioBlitz in June 2018, and **Grey-cushioned Grimmia (*Grimmia pulvinata*)** which is very common on walls and often recorded.



Seafield beach, before and after Storm Babet. A & B, Similar views looking towards Kirkcaldy, before and after the storm: **A**, 15 July 2021; **B (and C-E)**, 16 November 2023. Much of the sand has been washed away and the beach is much more stony. **C**, Newly exposed strata. **D**, Erosion below Morrisons' boundary fence. All the access ramps down to the beach no longer exist. **E**, The south end nearest Kinghorn has much more exposed rock and one of the stacks beyond the sea wall has toppled into the sea. Similar changes have happened to the beaches at Kinghorn and Pettycur, and elsewhere along the Fife coast. Photos Robert Mill.

VILLAGE, BEACHES AND COASTAL PATH

As far as birds were concerned, October 2023 around Kinghorn didn't bring the same 'wow factor' as did September and its Brown Booby but there were nonetheless some highlights. Maybe the biggest surprise offshore was a diver resembling a Great Northern Diver but was more heavily built and was identified as a **White-billed Diver** by its observer, the Fife bird recorder Graham Sparshott, on 28th. On land, the other main highlight of the month was another very heavily built bird, a Bullfinch of the Scandinavian '**Northern Bullfinch**' race (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula*: the endemic British race, 'British Bullfinch', has a slimmer build and is scientifically *Pyrrhula pyrrhula pileata*). This was seen at North Mire on 25th, also by Graham Sparshott. October brought wintering ducks back to our coastline, including **Long-tailed Ducks** from 13th with 75 seen on 20th; **Common Scoters** from 4th, with 105 counted by John Nadin on 13th and a few **Velvet Scoters** mixed with them on 20th and 22nd; **Goosanders** off Seafield (Paul Williams, several dates from 2nd to 9th) and 5 off Kinghorn on 21st (Dan Owens and others, eBird) and **Red-breasted Mergansers** also off Kinghorn (6 on 21st, Dan Owens and others; 7 on 25th, Lukasz Pulawski, eBird). Small numbers of **Wigeon** were also seen off Kinghorn on 4th (four, Lukasz Pulawski) and 21st (six, Dan Owens and others). A **Great Crested Grebe** was also off Kinghorn on 13th (John Nadin). Storm Babet and its aftermath, 18th-22nd, brought a lot of unusual seabird movements involving numerous seabird groups especially petrels, shearwaters, gulls, skuas and auks. As well as the White-billed Diver, single typical **Great Northern Divers** were seen by Kris Gibb and others on 20th and by John Nadin on 22nd. A single **Leach's Petrel** was seen on 19th moving east and this heralded a larger migration of petrels over the following three days, with 43 **Storm Petrels** and 5 **Leach's Petrels** on 20th (Kris Gibb and others), and at least 12 Storm and 2 Leach's seen on both 21st and 22nd by various observers. Small numbers of both **Manx** and **Sooty Shearwaters** were also seen by Kris Gibb and others on 19th and 20th. **Wader** records included an unusual inland migration record of **Grey Plover** over North Mire on 25th (Graham Sparshott) while along the coast the most notable wader highlight was an influx of **Grey Phalaropes** on 19th and 20th during Storm Babet, with two on the first day and nine on the second (Kris Gibb and others). A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Seafield (21st, Paul Williams) while its commoner ally, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, was present at various spots along the coast between Seafield and Kinghorn all month, with 12 at Kinghorn on 25th (Lukasz Pulawski). Small numbers of **Knot**, **Dunlin** and **Purple Sandpipers** were also at Seafield in the first half of October (PW), while two **Purple Sandpipers** were also at Kinghorn (20th, Kris Gibb and others) and at Pettycur on 22nd (John Nadin). There was a period of **Little Gull** migration between 13th and 24th; on most days between 10 and 40 were counted but once again there was a very sharp spike in numbers during Storm



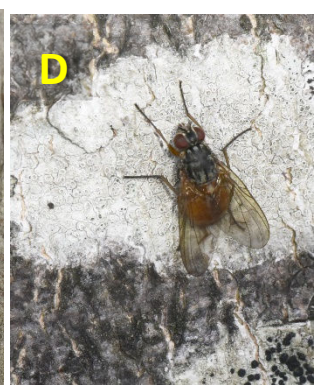
Left: Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), Grange Hill, photo Paul Williams. **Right:** Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis* f. *spectabilis*), similar to that found on Burnside Path on 11th by Stephen Sorbie. Photo:

https://influentialpoints.com/biocontrol/Harmonia_axyridis_harlequin_ladybird.htm

Babet, with Kris Gibb and others counting 530 on 19th and over 700 the next day. A single **Mediterranean Gull** was also at Kinghorn during Storm Babet from 19th to 22nd, seen by various birdwatchers. All four commonly recorded **skua** species were seen off Kinghorn during the same spell: two **Long-tailed Skuas** and two **Pomarine Skuas** on 19th, 7 **Arctic Skuas** on 19th with six on 20th and one on 21st, and 17 **Great Skuas** on 19th with two the next day. The tail-end of the storm brought a **Black Guillemot** to Kinghorn on 22nd. **Razorbills** and **Common Guillemots** were regularly seen all month while during Storm Babet single **Little Auks** were seen on 19th by Kris Gibb and others and on 22nd by John Nadin. Paul Williams saw

two **Buzzards** at John Nadin observed a **Peregrine** at Kinghorn beach a few days earlier (13th). The month's only sighting of **Barn Swallows**, other than that at the Loch on 11th, was by Paul Williams at Seafield on 5th. **Willow Warblers** were recorded by Paul along the Seafield to Kinghorn stretch of the coastal path between 2nd and 6th while **Chiffchaffs** were logged by Lukasz Pulawski at Kinghorn on 4th and by Paul Williams at Seafield on 6th. Graham Sparshott noted a single **Blackcap** over North Mire on 25th. **Winter thrushes** began arriving from 19th when, during their seawatch, Kris Gibb observed a large mixed flock of over 500 birds flying over, mostly **Redwings**. Graham Sparshott also noted smaller numbers of Redwings flying over North Mire (25 NE on 25th) and East Braes (33 SW and 17 NE on 28th). Graham also recorded larger numbers of **Fieldfares** on those dates (11 in the bushes at North Mire and 5 flying over, 25th; 55 at East Braes and 14 flying over, 28th). Last month's Whinchat at Grange Hill was replaced there by a small group of **Stonechats** (two seen on 6th and 3 on 11th by Paul Williams). Small numbers of **Meadow Pipits** were at Grange Hill (11th and 17th, Paul Williams), Kinghorn (two on 25th, Lukasz Pulawski) and over East Braes (3 on 28th, Graham Sparshott), while Paul saw **Rock Pipits** at Seafield on 9th and 21st. As well as those seen at the Loch, **Bramblings** were seen by Graham Sparshott over North Mire on 25th and East Braes on 28th. Twenty-one **Crossbills**, 10 **Siskins** and five **Redpolls** also flew northwards over North Mire on 25th (Graham Sparshott).

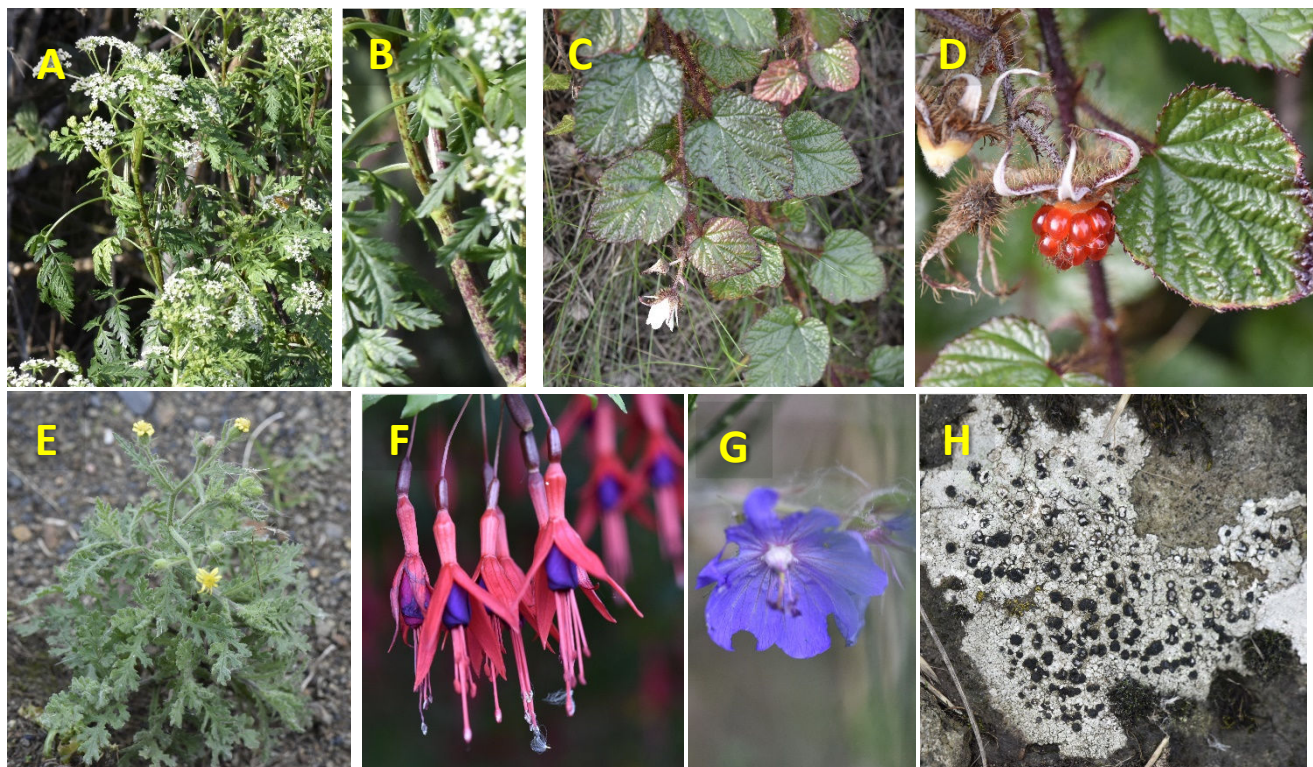
Bruce Meldrum noted a **Minke Whale** off Kinghorn (2nd) as well as **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** on 2nd off Kinghorn and 9th off Pettycur and **Basking Sharks** off Kinghorn on 8th.



Village biodiversity, October 2023. A & B, Crescent Cup Liverwort, Castle Mount, 17th. **C,** Seven-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*), Mid Mire, 11th. **D,** The fly *Tachina fera* on tree trunk, Burnside Path, 17th. Photos Robert Mill.

Besides those seen at the Loch, no **butterflies** or **day-flying moths** were noted during October and, as at the Loch, the only **bee** recorded was **Common Carder Bee** at Mid Mire on 11th. A **Seven-spot Ladybird** was also at Mid Mire that day, as was the fly *Tachina fera*, which was also seen along the Burnside Path (17th). Also on 11th, Stephen Sorbie posted a photograph on the KDWG Facebook page of an unidentified ladybird that he saw on a fence post by the Burnside Path that day. It has turned out to be one of the two commonest forms

of the very variable and invasive alien ladybird, the **Harlequin Ladybird** (*Harmonia axyridis f. spectabilis*). In NBN Atlas, there are currently no Fife records of this Asian species except for a cluster around Dunfermline and Inverkeithing (NBN Atlas, 2023a). It is rather worrying that it has now reached Kinghorn because it tends to out-compete all native ladybird species so that the Harlequins increase in numbers and the others disappear, reducing biodiversity. In the village, **Crescent Cup Liverwort** (*Lunularia cruciata*) was found on damp ground at the base of the volcanic rock face at Castle Mount (17th). Although very common throughout most of Britain there are rather few records of this species in Fife, and none at all from the Burntisland / Kinghorn area (NBN Atlas, 2023b).



Coastal path plants (and lichen), 17th October 2023. A & B, Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*); note the characteristic purple-blotched stem in B., **C & D,** Chinese Bramble (*Rubus tricolor*): **C,** flower and leaves; **D,** ripe fruit which is red, not black as in native British Brambles. **E,** Sticky Groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*). **F,** Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*). **G,** Meadow Crane's-bill (*Geranium pratense*), a very late, rather tatty flower. **H,** The lichen *Porpidia crustulata* on rock. Photos Robert Mill.

The Mid Mire field was ploughed to the edge at the beginning of October so no trace remained along the field borders of the **Scarlet Pimpernel** (*Lysimachia arvensis*) recorded earlier, or of many of its associates, when I visited on 11th. However, numerous plants did remain in flower; I found a **Hemlock** (*Conium maculatum*) plant in full bloom, as well as **Bladder Campion**, **Common Wintercress**, **Hedge Mustard**, **Gorse**, **Bramble**, **Large Bindweed**, **Field Forget-me-not**, **Hogweed**, **Pignut**, **Field Scabious**, **Knapweed**, **Mugwort**, **Ox-eye Daisy**, and **Feverfew**, while there were also a very few flowers left on **Japanese Knotweed**. Along the coastal path on 17th, I recorded **Bloody Crane's-bill**, **Dove's-foot Crane's-bill**, **Chinese Bramble**, **Himalayan Balsam**, **Fuchsia**, **Harebell**, **Red Valerian**, **Wood Sage** and **Michaelmas Daisy** still in flower; new leaves of **Alexanders**, which flowers very early in the year, were developing while **Hare's-foot Clover** was by then all in fruit. I also found a single plant of **Sticky Groundsel** (*Senecio viscosus*) in flower as well a rather tatty very late **Meadow Crane's-bill** flower. There are many different lichens on the rocks by the path and above the beach; the one shown is *Porpidia crustulata* for which, like the liverwort mentioned above, there are records in NBN Atlas from Fife but not from the Burntisland / Kinghorn area (NBN Atlas, 2023c).

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