

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2023 by Robert Mill



A leafhopper on Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) that appears to be Rose Leafhopper (*Edwardsiana rosae*), possibly the first Scottish record of this species as well as being a new Loch record. 23 September 2023. Photo Robert Mill.

September 2023 in the UK as a whole was the joint-warmest (with 2006) since records began and Scotland had its third-warmest on record (Met Office, 2023a, b). This was largely due to a settled spell in the first half of the month that brought well-above average temperatures, especially in England, although from 3rd-10th Scotland also experienced heatwave temperatures well above normal. In our area, day-time maxima were average or below on 13th, 15th-18th, 21st-23rd and 27th-30th, and above-average on all other dates (Met Office, 2023b). However, although Fife and the rest of Scotland was significantly sunnier than the long-term average it was also significantly wetter. The Kinghorn rain gauge collected 76.8 mm of rain, 131% of the September average for the site, and there were only ten completely dry days, seven of them between 1st and 11th in the warm, mainly settled spell. The most rainfall on a single day was 19.4 mm on 15th (SEPA, 2023). Kinghorn escaped the lightning storms that impacted parts of England and Scotland on 17th and 18th, and although the first named storm of the UK 2023/4 storm season, Agnes (27th/28th) did bring strong winds, we only received 4.6 mm of rain as a result of it.

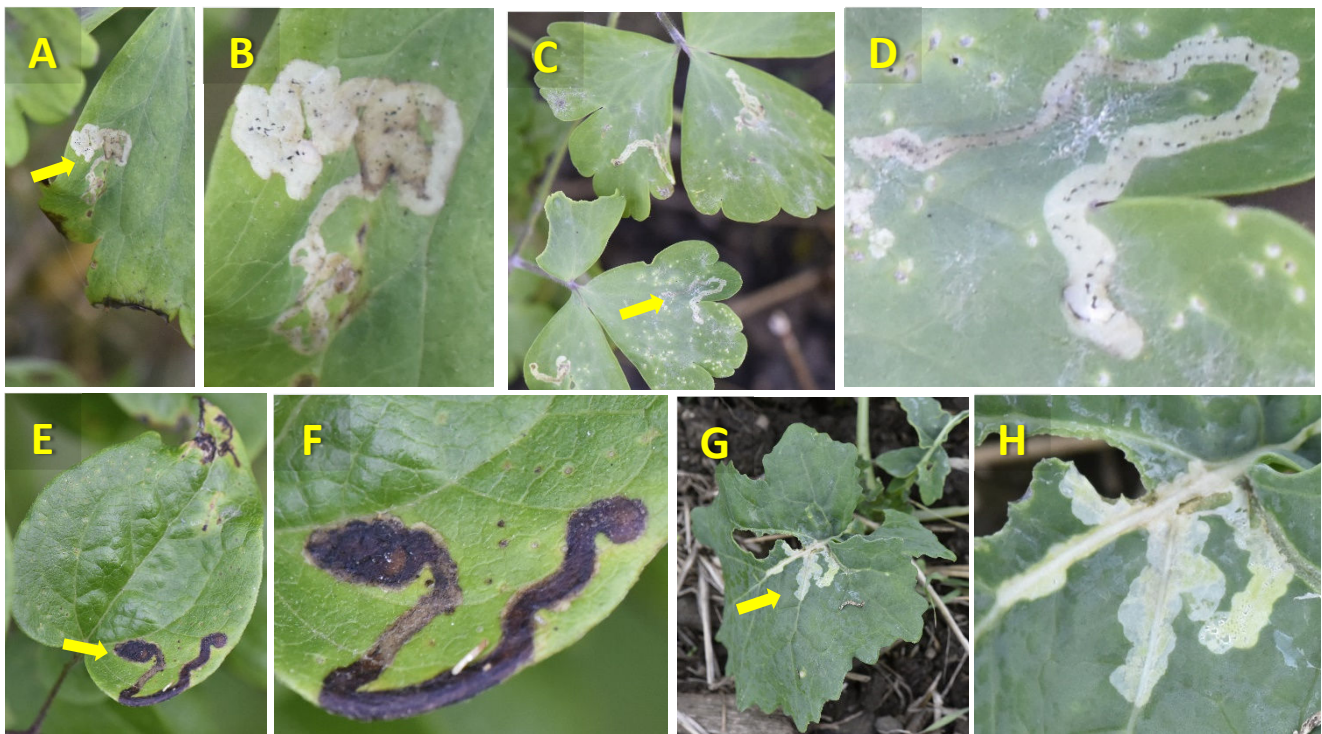
The unsettled weather was often either too wet or too windy for field trips to the Loch or elsewhere (even when dry, the wind was frequently too strong for getting sharp photographs of plants, and indeed would have acted as a deterrent to many pollinators and other insects). Consequently, I made only five trips to the Loch compared with 13 in August. Despite this, another 17 species were added to the Loch's list during September: 4 flies, 2 Hymenoptera (both sawflies, recorded as their larval mines), 1 bug, 4 flowering plants, 5 fungi and 1 lichen. As usual these are, particularly in figure captions, abbreviated NLR (new Loch record). The grand total increased from 1,612 (31 August) to **1,629** on 30 September.

AROUND THE LOCH Birds: Forty-eight bird species were recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch in September. This is quite a lot fewer than both the figure for last month (55) and that for a year ago in September 2022 (54). Some of the reduction may have been due to less recording activity (Paul Williams, for example, also went to the Loch less often in September than in August; as usual I express my thanks to him for his regular lists), but often bird activity, numbers and diversity all seemed low on the days I did visit and others on the Kinghorn Wildlife Group (KDWG) Facebook page also commented that the Loch seemed very quiet. One surprising near-absentee was **Coot**: I saw none at all on any of my visits and Paul recorded the species only on 1st. The sometimes rather autumnal weather brought the arrival of a couple of early, over-flying **Pink-footed Geese** on 12th. Some of the Loch's summer migrants appeared to have left the Loch area before the month began (such as **Common Whitethroat** and **Sand Martin**) while others departed during September (**House Martin**, only recorded at the Loch on 10th). **Blackcap** was recorded just once (21st, Paul Williams); this may

have been a passage bird as it was more than a month from the previous record of 17 August. **Chiffchaff**, **Willow Warbler** and **Barn Swallow**, however, all remained at the Loch, at least until 21st. Unlike last month, when Tufted Duck paid a brief visit to the Loch, September was back to 'Mallards only' as far as ducks were concerned. **Cormorant** was seen three times though, by PW on 6th and 13th and myself on 23rd, and both **Great Crested** and **Little Grebes** continued to hang around all month, as did the **Mute Swan** pair and their three remaining cygnets. **Buzzard** was recorded by Paul Williams on 6th and myself on 12th, **Kestrel** by Paul on 21st and **Sparrowhawk** by him only on 1st. **Grey Wagtails** were again seen on at least four dates, and **Pied Wagtail** on 21st (PW). Paul Williams also recorded **Meadow Pipits** twice, on 6th and 13th, and he posted a photo of a **Treecreeper** seen at the Loch (21st) on the KDWG's Facebook page. The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during September 2023 is: *Barn Swallow, Blackbird, Blackcap, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit, Common Gull, Coot, Cormorant, Dabchick (Little Grebe), Dunnock, Farmyard / hybrid geese, Feral Pigeon, Goldfinch, Great Crested Grebe, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, House Martin, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Linnets, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Meadow Pipit, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Pink-footed Goose, Robin, Rook, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Willow Warbler, Wood Pigeon, Wren.*

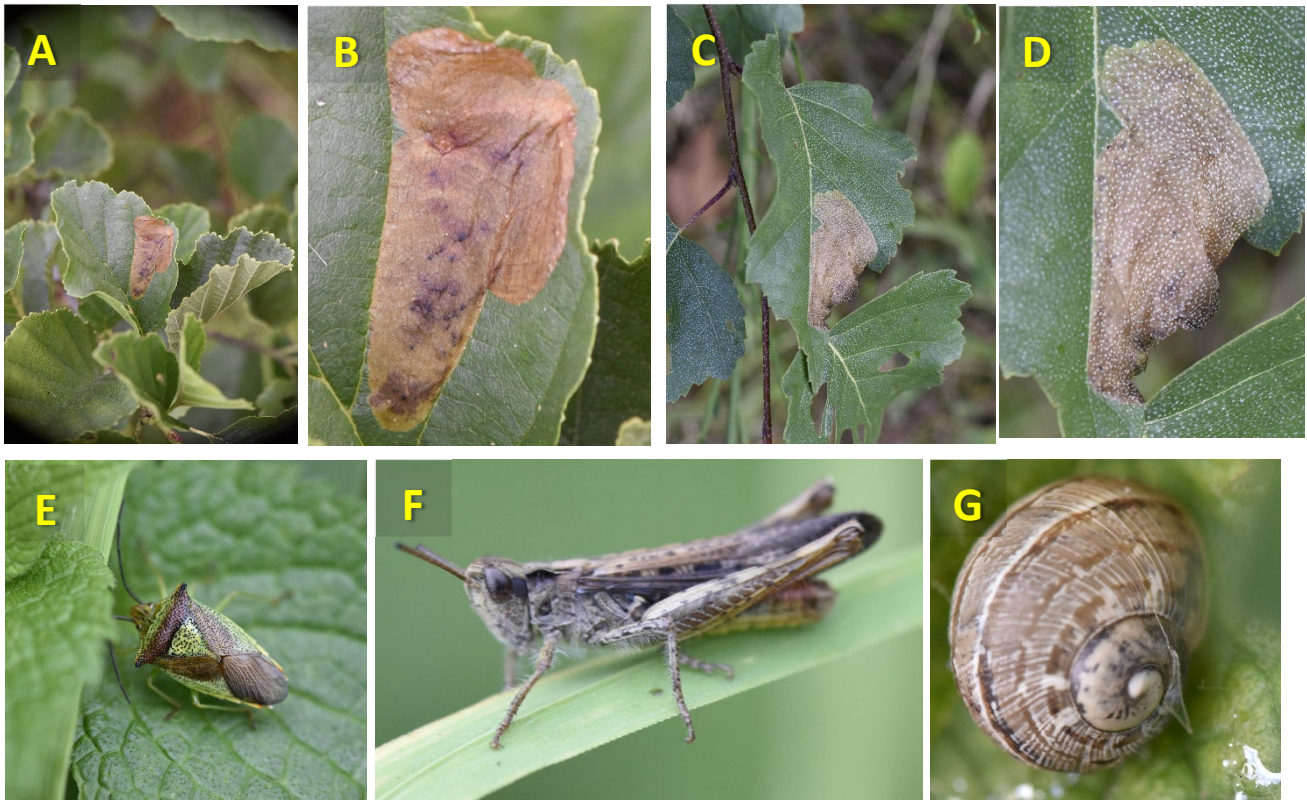
Mammals, amphibians and fish: The only notable mammal noted during the month was a **Stoat** seen by Paul Williams on 21st bounding down the edge of Red Path Brae next to the grassy area between the road and the slip-road to the two Loch access roads, right on the boundary of my Kinghorn Loch recording area.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'):



New fly larval leaf-mine records, September 2023. A & B, *Phytomyza aquilegiae* on Columbine, 7th. C & D, *Phytomyza minuscula* on Columbine, 12th. E & F, *Phytomyza hellebori* on Traveller's Joy, 7th. G & H, *Scaptomyza flava* on young Brassica, 23rd. B, D, G & H are enlargements of the mine arrowed in A, C, E & G respectively. The black dots inside some of the mines, best seen in B and D, are the 'frass' (poo) excreted by the larva as it feeds inside the leaf. All NLRs. Photos Robert Mill.

September's much more unsettled weather, coupled with the absence of moth trapping and the fact that many sources of pollen or nectar had just about stopped flowering, resulted in far fewer invertebrate species being recorded – only 40 compared to August's 113. Nevertheless, eight of them were NLRs. Only three **butterfly** species were recorded: **Small White** and **Speckled Wood** each on five dates, and **Red Admiral** just once (21st, Paul Williams). The only **moth** records were **Nettle-tap** seen by myself on 12th and the larval mines of ***Lyonetia clerkella*** found in various places around the Loch on four occasions, and of ***Gracilaria syringella*** on Garden Privet on 29th. No **caddisfly** species were recorded.



September 2023 Loch invertebrates: **A-D**, sawfly larval leaf mines – **A & B**, European Alder Leaf-miner (*Fenusa dohrnii*) on Alder, 7th. **C & D**, *Heterarthrus nemoratus* on Birch, 21st. **B & D** are enlargements of the mines shown in **A & C**. Dark marks in the mine shown in **A & B** are the larva's frass (poo). Both NLRs. **E**, Hawthorn Shield-bug (*Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*), 7th. **F**, Common Field Grasshopper (*Chorthippus brunneus*), 7th. **G**, Copse Snail (*Arianta arbustorum*), 12th. All photos Robert Mill.

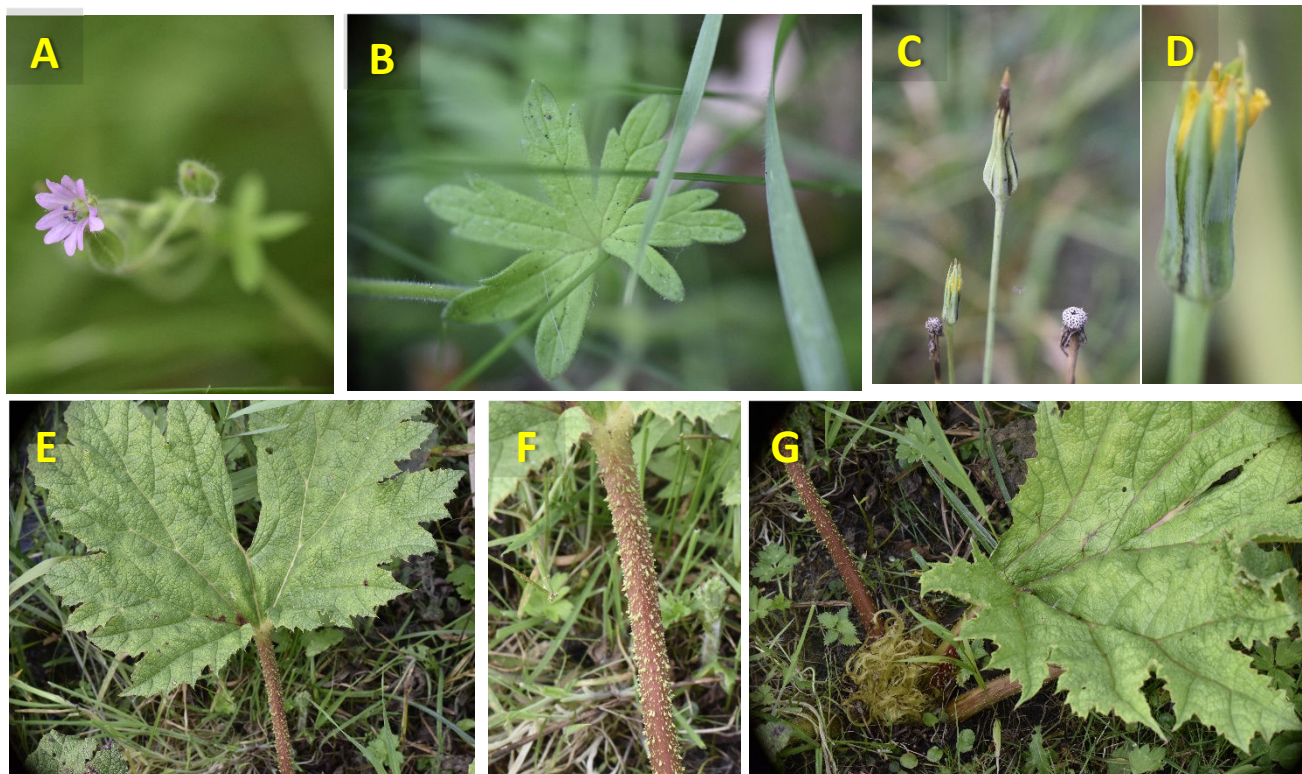
Seven Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants etc.) were recorded in September; two of them were NLRs. These were both **sawfly** species, found as larval leaf mines: **European Alder Leaf-miner (*Fenusa dohrnii*)** on Alder (7th and 12th at two different spots on the east and north shores of the Loch), and one on birch (21st) that looks most like the mine of ***Heterarthrus nemoratus***. **Common Carder Bee** (5 dates) and **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** (7th and 12th) were the only **bees** noted but **Common Wasp** was seen three times (7th, 12th and 21st). The galls of ***Diplolepis spinosissima*** persisted on Burnet Rose leaves.

The only three **hoverfly** records in September were two drone-fly species, **Common Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*)** on 7th and 12th and **Tapered Drone-fly (*Eristalis pertinax*)** on 12th, and **Humming Syrphus (*Syrphus ribesii*)** also on 7th and 12th. Fifteen other **flies** were recorded at the Loch in September, four of them being NLRs. Four were adult flies: yet another record of ***Eriothrix rufomaculata*** on 7th, the crane fly ***Tipula paludosa*** and an unidentified **chironomid midge** on the same day, and the greenbottle ***Lucilia sericata*** on 12th. One, the gall midge ***Hartigiola annulipes***, was found as its larval gall on Beech on 7th. The remaining ten, including all four fly NLRs, were all found as larval leaf mines on their respective host plants. The new Loch records, photographs of which are shown on page 2, were ***Phytomyza aquilegiae*** (7th) and ***Phytomyza minuscula*** (12th, 21st) both on Columbine leaves (one forms a blotch on the leaf, the other a wiggly corridor), ***Phytomyza hellebori*** on Traveller's Joy (*Clematis vitalba*) on 7th, and ***Scaptomyza flava*** on brassica (23rd). Most (not all) British leaf-mining flies belong to one family, the Agromyzidae, which has 424 British species according to a very recent review by Warrington (2022). This also gave provisional rarity assessments for nearly every one (390 of the 424), based on the number of 10 km OS grid squares in the species has been recorded, ranging from Common (more than 300 10 km squares: only 22 species UK-wide) and Local (101-300 squares: 39 species nationally) to pRDB 1 (fewer than five 10 km squares in the UK: 124 of the 390 graded British species). Since spring 2021 until the time of writing this in mid-October 2023, I have recorded 22 members of this family from the area around Kinghorn Loch and no doubt more will be discovered (one such, found in October but included in the figure of 22, will be mentioned in next month's report). Of these, nine are classed as Common by Warrington (2022), seven as Local, five as Nationally Scarce B (31-100 squares: 61

species are graded as this nationally), and the species-pair *Phytomyza pastinacae*/*P. spondylia* (found on Hogweed) as Nationally Scarce A (found in 16-30 squares) or B depending on which species is making the leaf mines I find fairly frequently on Hogweed. The fact that over a quarter of the Loch's Agromyzidae (6 of 22) are regarded as Nationally Scarce by Warrington (2022) underlines the importance of the vegetation (both wild and cultivated) around the Loch for this group of flies.

Just two species of **bug** were found, but one of them was a very intriguing record. It was a whitish leafhopper found on a Dog Rose leaf on 23rd (see photo, top of page 1). The only leafhopper 'commonly' found on rose leaves, at least in England, is **Rose Leafhopper (*Edwardsiana rosae*)**, but there are no Scottish records of this in NBN Atlas and only 64 from the whole of the UK, the most northerly being from Runswick Bay north of Whitby (North Yorkshire) (NBN Atlas, 2023). During my time at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, I was fortunate enough to discover not just one but two first Scottish records of leafhoppers when recording its wildlife: *Eupterycyba jucunda* on its host, Alder, on 17 September 2015 and *Idiocerus herrichi* on birch on 18 January 2017; both were verified by experts (see Mill, 2015, 2017). Many insects are spreading northwards as a result of climate change and, if confirmed, this probable Rose Leafhopper at Kinghorn Loch could be another example. My other September bug record was **Hawthorn Shield-bug** on 7th. No **beetles** were seen in September. Paul Williams saw **Common Darter dragonflies** on 6th and 21st and I found a **Common Field Grasshopper** on 7th. Another two **Autumn Orbweaver spiders (*Metellina segmentata*)**, one of last month's NLRs, were found, the first near the sluice on 7th, the second on 23rd with prey near the covered reservoir; both were found in different parts of the Loch recording area to last month's first record. **Garden Snail (*Cornu aspersum*)**, **Hairy Snail (*Trochulus hispida*)** and **Copse Snail (*Arianta arbustorum*)** were all recorded on 12th.

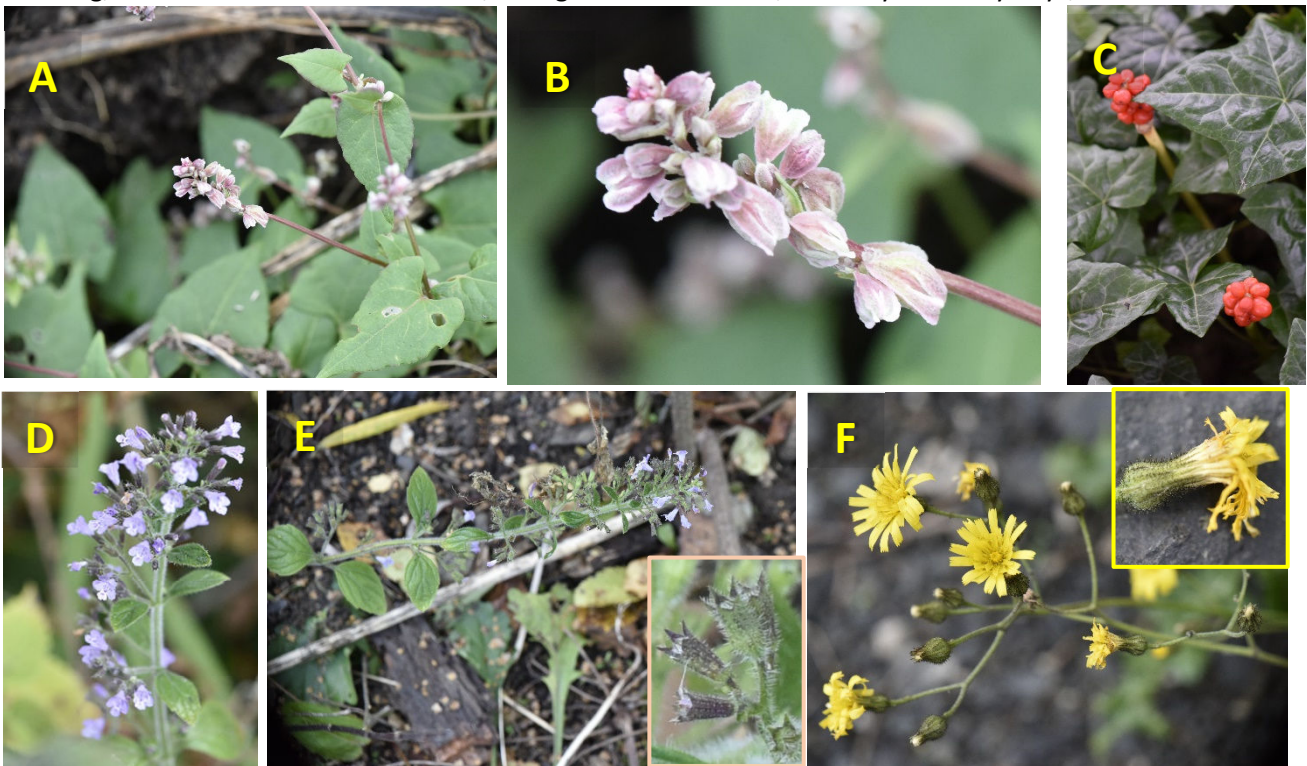
Flowering plants and ferns:



September 2023 Loch plant records (1). **A & B**, Small-flowered Crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*), 7th, NLR: **A**, flower; **B**, leaf. **C & D**, Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*), 23rd, NLR: **A**, old and young flowers and an old seed-head from which all seeds have blown away; **B**, closed-up flower enlarged. **E -G**, Chilean Giant-rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*), 7th, NLR (**E**, young leaf and its stalk; **F**, leaf stalk enlarged to show green spines; **G**, 'furry' rhizome and another young leaf. Photos Robert Mill.

On my five September visits to the Loch I was able to record 150 wild or naturalised plants in flower, another 20 in fruit and 17 seemingly in vegetative state (some may have had unnoticed fruits) and 74 cultivated flowering plant species, as well as one horsetail and four ferns. Four of the 187 plants in wild situations were NLRs. One was something that I had noticed for many months, a small-flowered *Geranium* that looked neither

like Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*) as its flowers were smaller and paler and its leaves more deeply divided, nor like Cut-leaved Crane's-bill as its leaves are not as deeply or elaborately dissected as in that species. I photographed it on 7th and it turned out to be **Small-flowered Crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*)**, which in Scotland is far commoner in the east and northeast than in the west but which can be overlooked and under-recorded because of its similarity to Dove's-foot Crane's bill (Leach, 2023). The other three September-flowering plant NLRs were all quite unexpected in different ways. The most bizarre find was a young plant of **Chilean Giant-rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*)** that mysteriously appeared at the very edge of the Loch (7th), near where I found the Wild Parsnip plant mentioned in last month's report. I at first thought I had found a young Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) plant, until I noticed the dense pale green spines on the leaf stalks, which made me realise that I was looking at a very young *Gunnera* plant. Both this species and Giant Hogweed are species that, because they are so invasive, are prohibited by law to allow to grow in the wild. This addition to the Loch's biodiversity, if allowed to grow and spread, has the potential to reduce other biodiversity at the Loch, so one hopes that its existence will be short-lived. The other two NLRs were much more welcome. First, on 21st I found **Black-bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*)** growing as a weed in the nursery area. This is an archaeophyte that has been a weed of cultivation since Neolithic times but is currently showing serious decline in the UK (Akeroyd & Dehnen-Schmutz, 2023). Two days later, I found **Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*)** beside the layby on the Craigenfalt access road. This only opens its flowers in the morning, hence its other common name, Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon, and only on sunny days, and it was almost 7



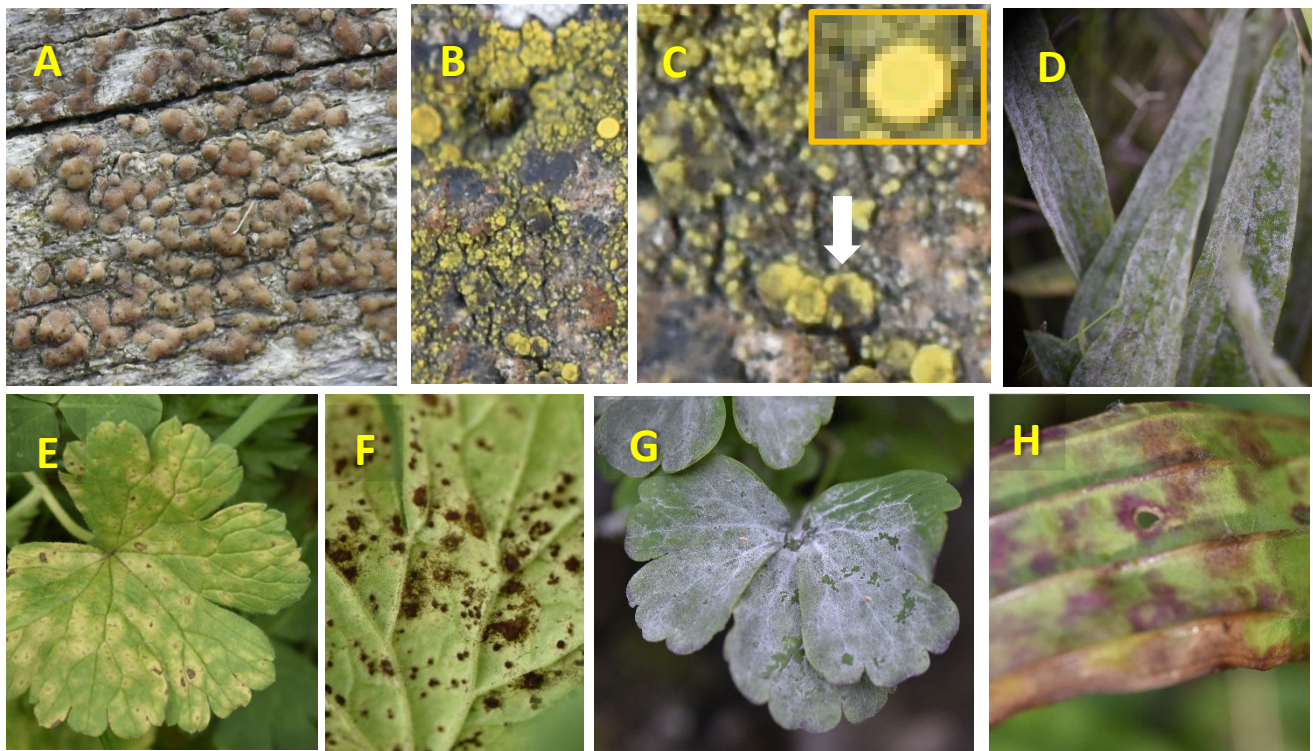
September 2023 Loch plant records (2). **A & B**, Black-bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), 21st, NLR: **A**, habit; **B**, one inflorescence enlarged. **C**, Wild Arum (*Arum maculatum*) fruits among ivy, 21st. **D & E**, Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium nepeta*), an August NLR: **D**, well-developed inflorescence in full bloom, 7th; **E**, lying on ground after weeding, 21st, some calyxes beginning to ripen (inset bottom right). This was the last day the plant was seen alive. **F**, Grand-toothed Hawkweed (*Hieracium grandidens*), 23rd, second Loch record: inset shows flowerhead and glandular involucre. Photos Robert Mill.

p.m. on a dry but not especially sunny day when I found the plant and photographed it. Three subspecies of Goat's-beard are known from Britain although one is only known from a few records, all pre-1930. Subspecies *minor* is the one native to Britain; in Scotland, it is fairly common in the south and up the east coast. *Tragopogon pratensis* subsp. *pratensis* is native in much of continental Europe but not Britain, where almost all of its far fewer records are from central and southeast England. Therefore, until I manage to see a freshly open flower on a sunny day (a tall order this year at least, in a very unsettled spell of weather well beyond the end of its normal flowering period of June/July), I am assuming that the Loch plant is the native subspecies.

As well as these new records, **Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium nepeta*)**, one of last month's NLRs, continued flowering until at least 21st, the last day I visited the site, although unfortunately by then the site had been weeded and the one plant left was lying prostrate on the ground. By then a few of the calyces had begun to swell but whether the fruit inside was ripe enough (or even fertile) to germinate and perpetuate the plant is unknown. Site clearance had also taken place in the mill buildings area near the jetty, so that the plants of **Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*)**, **Round-leaved Mint (*Mentha suaveolens*)** and other species that had been thriving there since at least last year up till 12th September this year, as well as the 11 rather sickly plants of **Chinese Mugwort (*Artemisia verlotiorum*)** that I had found there last month, had all disappeared by the time of my next visit to that area on 23rd September. On a happier note, **Grand-toothed Hawkweed (*Hieracium grandidens*)** was found at a second site on 23rd, near Craigencaft Cottages.

As in August, few if any wild plants previously known from the Loch's surrounding started flowering for the first time in September. However, a few, such as **Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)**, continued their second flowering, and an obviously cultivated plant of **White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*)**, a native species, flowered briefly in a small pool in the nursery (7th). The scarlet berries of **Wild Arum (*Arum maculatum*)** were again present by the access from the B923 (7th and 21st). Young plants of **Heath Groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*)**, obviously offspring of the plants first found in July 2023, were found by the Great North Road track on 12th.

Cryptogams Forty different **fungi** species were recorded around the Loch during September, 5 of them being NLRs. **Powdery mildews** were the most diverse group, with 16 taxa recorded, including two NLRs: ***Erysiphe***



Loch cryptogams, September 2023. **A**, The lichen *Lecanora saligna*, 21st. **B & C**, The lichen *Candelariella vitellina*, with some fruiting bodies infected by the lichenicolous fungus *Intralichen christiansenii*, 23rd: **B**, general appearance with a healthy bright yellow fruiting body just above middle right; **C**, enlargements showing fruiting body blackened by *Intralichen* fungus at bottom of main picture (arrowed) and same healthy fruiting body as **B** enlarged (inset). **D**, *Podosphaera plantaginis* powdery mildew on Ribwort Plantain, 23rd. **E & F**, Geranium Rust (*Uromyces geranii*) on Hedgerow Crane's-bill, 7th: **E**, upper leaf surface; **F**, lower leaf surface. **G**, *Erysiphe aquilegiae* var. *aquilegiae* on Columbine, 23rd. **H**, *Ramularia rhabdospora* on Ribwort Plantain, 7th. All (except *Candelariella vitellina*, the lichen host of *Intralichen christiansenii*) NLRs. Photos Robert Mill.

aquilegiae* var. *aquilegiae on *Aquilegia* (Columbine) leaves (its other variety, var. *ranunculi*, was recorded on Buttercup leaves in March last year) and ***Podosphaera plantaginis*** on leaves of Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), both on 23rd. Eight rusts were recorded, among which **Geranium Rust (*Uromyces geranii*)** on Hedgerow Crane's-bill (*Geranium pyrenaicum*) was a NLR (7th). **Mint Rust (*Puccinia menthae*)** was found on Water-mint leaves (*Mentha aquatica*) near the dam on 7th; in 2021 I found it on the same host at the marsh.

Seven **leaf spots** were noted, all of them found on previous occasions. Five '**white moulds**' were recorded including *Ramularia rhabdospora*, a NLR, on *Plantago lanceolata* (7th). A **lichenicolous fungus**, *Intralichen christiansenii* on some of the fruiting bodies of the yellow lichen *Candelariella vitellina* on 23rd, was the month's last fungal NLR. The remaining three September fungal records were the basidiomycetes **Conifer Mazegill** (*Gloeophyllum sepiarium*) and **Turkeytail** (*Trametes versicolor*), and **Campion Smut** (*Microbotryum lychnidis-dioicae*), all of which have been found around the Loch on numerous previous occasions. Six **lichens** were found, with *Lecanora saligna* on a wooden fence-top (21st) being 2023's second lichen NLR. The terrestrial algae *Desmococcus olivaceus* and *Trentepohlia aurea* were recorded again but the only **bryophyte** identified was *Grimmia pulvinata* (**Grey-cushioned Grimmia**) on 23rd.

VILLAGE, BEACHES AND COASTAL PATH



An immature Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) similar to the one that visited Kinghorn on 5th. Christmas Island, 2017. Photo: 'Hix'.
[https://www.zoochat.com/community/media/brown-booby-immature.375563/full/\[IMG\]](https://www.zoochat.com/community/media/brown-booby-immature.375563/full/[IMG])

Last month I wrote, "no particularly unusual birds were recorded around Kinghorn in August". That was before Fife Bird Club released its own August monthly report (Fife Bird Club, 2023) on 28 September, after I had sent in my own August monthly report to The Ecology Centre. Fife Bird Club did mention some unusual August birds off Kinghorn, including a **Little Tern** (1st), a **Sooty Shearwater** (3rd), a **Cory's Shearwater** on both 24th (with another **Sooty Shearwater**) and 25th, a **Black Tern** on 26th and a **Pomarine Skua** on 30th (Fife Bird Club, 2023). However, all those paled into insignificance when compared to what arrived off Kinghorn in early September: an immature **Brown Booby** (a large dark brown and white bird, related to Gannets: see photo at left, *not* of the Kinghorn bird) seen by several birdwatchers on 5th off Kinghorn Ness and Pettycur – one of two off the British east coast that week, the other an adult female in the Yorkshire area. 'Our local bird' was also seen the next day on the opposite side of the Forth, at Cramond Island and it was also seen in the Hound Point / Cramond Island area later in the month between 16th and 18th but did not seem to come across to this side of the Forth again. The only notable **geese** were a small group of four **Canada Geese** flying SW off East Braes on 1st (Graham Sparshott, hereafter GS) and about 20 **Pinkfeet** heading in the same direction off Pettycur (15th, GS). **Eiders** and **Goosanders** were frequently seen off stretches of the coastline, particularly off Seafield and East Braes by Paul Williams (hereafter PW). Less commonly seen ducks included 21 **Common Scoter** off East Braes (21st, GS), **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Kinghorn Ness on 16th (Ian Thomson, eBird) and 17th Robert Hynson, eBird), a **Shoveler** off East Braes (16th, GS) and **Wigeon** off East Braes (1st and 16th, GS) and Seafield (19th, Gavin Wilkinson, KDWG) as well as nine flying south over North Mire (24th, GS). **Teal** were also seen by various observers along the coast, a high count of 59 on 16th off East Braes being particularly noteworthy (GS). The only **diver** species seen was **Red-throated Diver**, seen on four dates off Kinghorn or Pettycur and by PW at Seafield on 18th. It was a great month for **shearwater** species. **Manx Shearwaters** were seen on several occasions, particularly off Kinghorn Ness or East Braes, until at least 17th; on 'Brown Booby Day' (5th) they were joined by not only a **Sooty Shearwater** but also a **Balearic Shearwater** (David Pointon and Jared Wilson, eBird). Later in the month yet another uncommon shearwater species visited Kinghorn, a **Great Shearwater** on 26th (Rare Bird Alert). **Fulmars**, which belong to the shearwater family even though they look more like gulls, were seen off Kinghorn Ness on 5th, 16th and 17th by different people but none were on the cliffs on my visits. **Wader** records included single **Grey Plover** and **Dunlin** at Seafield (24th and 14th respectively, PW), a group of **Knot** there from 7th-18th that slowly decreased in numbers from its initial peak of 19 on 7th (PW), up to 12 **Purple Sandpipers** there (12th, 16th and 28th, PW) and a **Common Sandpiper** at Pettycur on 15th (GS). Among September's more unusual **gulls**, 'top spot' must go to a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** at Pettycur on 15th (GS). Graham Sparshott also saw three **Little Gulls** off Pettycur the same day and three off East Braes on 16th, and a single one was at Seafield two days later on 18th (PW: photo on next page). This species is the world's smallest gull. A **Mediterranean Gull** was at Kinghorn Ness on 16th (Ian Thomson, eBird). As well as the usual **Common, Arctic and Sandwich Terns**, September brought no less than three sightings of **Black Terns**: two off East Braes on 1st (GS) and single birds at Kinghorn Ness (5th, David Pointon, eBird) and Pettycur (15th, GS). All four regularly recorded **skua** species



Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*), Seafield, 18th.
Photo Paul Williams.

were recorded off the local coastline in September. At least two **Long-tailed Skuas** were off East Braes on 10th (GS) while a high count of four off Kinghorn on 27th was regarded as nationally notable by Rare Bird Alert. Two **Arctic Skuas** were at East Braes on 1st and one on 10th with another three migrating offshore (GS) while there were also movements of this species off East Braes (16th, GS) and Kinghorn Ness (17th, Robert Hynson, eBird). Graham Sparshott saw two **Pomarine Skuas** both at Pettycur on 15th and at East Braes the next day. Lastly, there were four sightings of **Great Skua**: two at Kinghorn Ness on 5th (Jared Wilson, eBird) and single birds there on 16th and 17th (Ian Thomson and Robert Hynson respectively) and at Pettycur on 15th (GS). Both **Razorbills** and **Common Guillemots** were often seen all along the coast from Pettycur to Seafield throughout the month; there were comments on the KDWG Facebook page that some of the

Guillemots were unusually close to the shore and seemed lethargic, possibly suffering from avian flu that has continued to devastate seabird colonies this season. Paul Williams saw a **Buzzard** at Grangehill on 1st while my wife and I saw another near the Craiggelly transmitter while we walked along the country track that runs south Binnend from the minor road near Longloch Farm (11th). Single **Kingfishers** were at Seafield on 7th (PW) and 19th (Gavin Wilkinson). Bruce Meldrum posted a spectacular photo on the KDWG Facebook page of a **Kestrel** above the coastal path (29th). **House Martins** and **Barn Swallows** remained along the coast all month, particularly at Seafield, and Graham Sparshott saw many (c. 200) Swallows feeding at North Mire on 24th while another 96 (and 10 House Martins) flew over heading south, no doubt en route back to Africa. Single **Common Whitethroats** were at Grange Hill (6th, PW) and North Mire (24th, GS) and a **Whinchat** was also at Grange Hill on 6th (PW). Andrea and I spotted a female **Wheatear** on the drystone dyke beside the Binnend—Longloch track on 11th and GS saw two other Wheatears at East Braes on 28th. Graham Sparshott noted two large southward movements of **Meadow Pipits** during the month, one of 820 birds at Pettycur (15th) and another of 208 birds (plus 62 **Pied/White Wagtails**) over North Mire on 24th, on which date he also noted 8 **Song Thrushes**, 10 **Goldcrests** and 8 **Greenfinches** in the bushes.

As well as all the out-of-the-ordinary seabirds seen during September, it was a good month for **marine mammals**, with ten **Harbour Porpoises** off Pettycur on 15th (Graham Sparshott) and **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** seen by Bruce Meldrum off either Kinghorn (4th, 13th, 28th) or Pettycur (24th). Ronnie Mackie and Bruce Meldrum both also saw **Basking Sharks** off Kinghorn on 2nd (Ronnie) and 12th (Bruce) and posted photos or videos on Facebook of these and the dolphins.

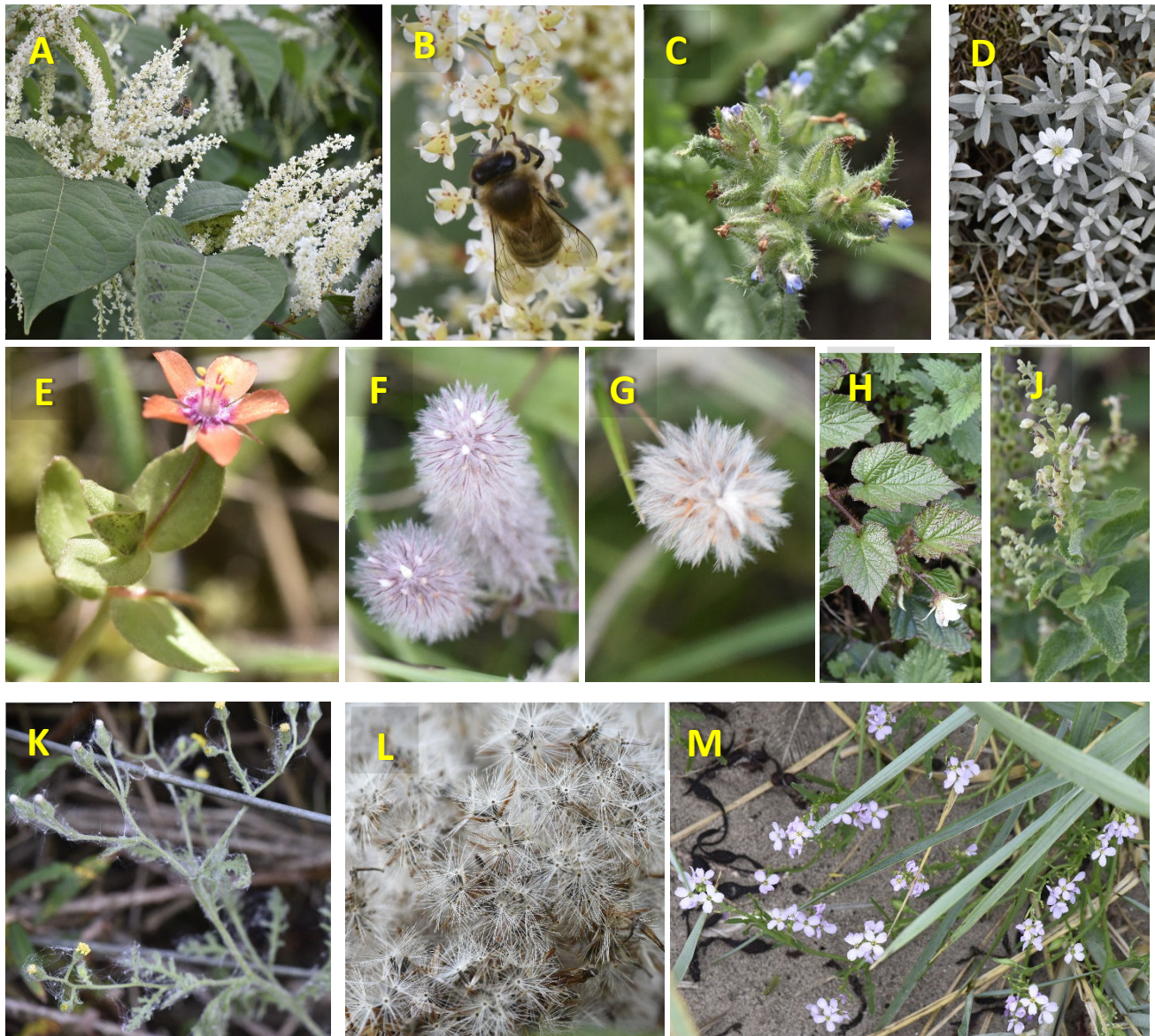
Probably the last **Meadow Brown** butterfly of 2023 was seen at Mid Mire by myself on 2nd. I also saw a **Speckled Wood** that day at Mid Mire and another by the Longloch—Binnend track on 11th. **Red Admirals** were seen on the Donkey Field Path (Kinghorn) on 10th, the Longloch—Binnend track the next day, the Burnside Path (16th) and four in different parts of Kinghorn (26th), three of them together on brambles by one of the Doo Dell paths, where I also saw a **Small Tortoiseshell**. No **day-flying moths** were identified although a pale pinkish-brown one was on bramble by the coastal path (4th). Large numbers of **Honey Bees** were visiting obviously nectar-



Left: Robin's Pincushion gall (*Diplolepis rosae*). **Right:** Brown-lipped Snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*). Both by coastal path, 4th. Photos Robert Mill.

rich Japanese Knotweed flowers at North Mire on 2nd. Several other bees were recorded by the Mire Path that day, including **Large Red-tailed Bumblebee** on Knapweed, **Common Carder Bee** on Knapweed and Large Bindweed, and **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** on Bramble, as well as **Common Wasp**. A **Robin's Pincushion gall** (*Diplolepis rosae*) was found on Dog Rose by the coastal path on 4th. **Marmalade Hoverfly** and **Humming Syrphus** were also seen by the Mire Path on 2nd; the latter species was also seen in the village on 26th. **Brown-lipped Snails** (*Cepaea nemoralis*) were seen at Mid Mire on 2nd and by the coastal path on 4th.

Once again, **Scarlet Pimpernel** (*Lysimachia arvensis*) and **Bladder Campion** (*Silene vulgaris*) remained in flower around Mid Mire until my visit on 2nd, when the weather was sufficiently sunny for one Scarlet Pimpernel flower to be almost fully open even at about 5.30 p.m. – according to Grigson (1958), the flowers



Plants of countryside and coastal path, September 2023. A & B, Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), North Mire, 2nd. The flowers were attracting many Honey Bees (**B**). **C**, Field Bugloss (*Lycopsis arvensis*), Mire Path, 2nd. **D**, Snow-in-Summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*), flowering out of season, Longloch end of track to Binnend, 11th. **E**, Scarlet Pimpernel (*Lysimachia arvensis*), open flower, Mire Path, 2nd at 5.30 p.m. (see text). **F & G**, Hare's-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), coastal path, 4th in flower (**F**) and 25th in fruit (**G**). **H**, Chinese Bramble (*Rubus tricolor*), coastal path, 4th. **J**, Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), coastal path, 25th. **K**, Heath Groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*), coastal path, 4th. **L**, Fruits of Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), coastal path, 25th. **M**, Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*) among marram grass leaves, Seafield, 30th. Photos Robert Mill.

act as a combination of both clock and weather-indicator, opening at about 8 a.m. and closing about 3 p.m., and also closing in damp, humid weather and when it is not sunny. This has led to a profusion of folk names of

which Poor Man's Weather-glass is the best known; others are Change-of-the-Weather, Ploughman's Weatherglass, Shepherd's Clock / Watch / Sundial, and Weather-teller. Other plants noted on my Mid Mire visit on 2nd were **Mugwort**, **Harebell**, **Fat Hen**, **Field Bugloss**, and both **Barley** and **Wheat** as relics of cultivation. Along the coastal path on 4th and/or 25th, I noted **Michaelmas Daisy** (*Symphotrichum × salignum*) as well as both **Agrimony** and **Hemp Agrimony** (both still with a few flowers on both visits though mainly in fruit), a single plant of **Thrift** (*Armeria maritima*) in flower as well as a few **Meadow Crane's-bill** flowers on 4th but not 25th, **Bloody Crane's-bill** still flowering on both visits, **Lady's Bedstraw** and **Hare's-foot Clover** both still flowering on 4th but only in fruit on 25th. **Sea Rocket** was found in flower on the beach at Seafield on 30th. Around thirty different species of flowering plants and ferns were found along the very botanically under-recorded Longloch—Binnend track on 11th; most were widespread and common species of track-sides and woodland margins but **Agrimony** and a flowering plant of **Snow-in-Summer** were more noteworthy, as well as **Purple Toadflax** and **Timothy** which were both found near the Binnend junction where several tracks meet. **Italian Toadflax** (*Cymbalaria pallida*) continued flowering on a village wall (26th), and **Seaside Daisy** was in bloom on the seaward side of the sea wall at the top of Kinghorn beach on the same day. Also on 26th, a large mass of **Russian Vine** (*Reynoutria baldschuanica*) was in flower above the railway line near the station, and the first **Ivy** flowers of the year were noticed by the Doo Dell paths, attracting Red Admiral butterflies, hoverflies and wasps.

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