

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT – MARCH 2025 by Robert Mill



Bruch's Pincushion (*Ulota bruchii*), one of five mosses found at the Loch in March 2025 for the first time since 2011. Epiphytic on blackthorn short shoots, 6 March 2025. Photo Robert Mill.

March 2025 was another month of very settled weather, caused by high pressure keeping wet weather from the Atlantic at bay. This meant that it was yet another month of well-below-average rainfall, the tenth such month in a row. The Kinghorn Loch rain gauge only collected 20.8 mm, less than 40% of the site's March average. 17.2 mm of that low total fell on just three days (21st, 22nd and 27th), while another 9 days had less than 1 mm each (6 of them less than 0.5 mm each). All other days were dry (SEPA, 2025). Particularly by day, temperatures across the whole UK were significantly above average, although across most of the UK night-time minima were chilly. Scotland was the exception to this, meaning that Scotland had its 7th-warmest March on record since records began 142 years ago. Only six days (10th-14th and the 17th) had below-average temperatures (Met Office, 2025). My own back-garden temperature readings don't really reflect these Scotland-wide facts and on several days there was a significant wind-chill effect. I noted ground frost on two nights (18th and 19th). Sunshine amounts in Eastern Scotland were also somewhat above the average for March (Met Office, 2025).

I was away on holiday for a week or so towards the end of the month but made eight visits to the Loch in the weeks I was here. Paul Williams (PW) made six visits mid-month. Five species were added to the Loch's list in March: 1 spider, 2 flowering plants, 1 fungus (also found in the village for the first time) and 1 lichen. The total at 31 March thereby increased from 1,778 (28 February) to **1,783**.

AROUND THE LOCH

Birds:



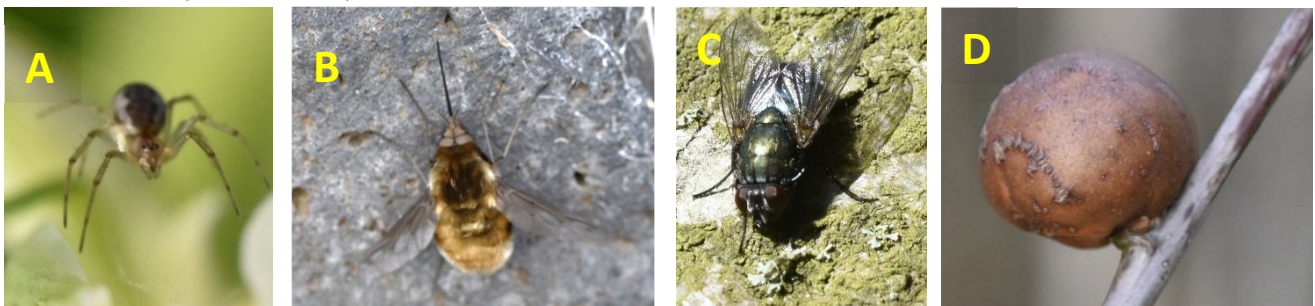
Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), 11th.
Photo Paul Williams.

Fifty-eight different bird species were recorded on and around Kinghorn Loch during March 2025, 11 more than last month. **Pink-footed Geese** were noted flying over on 10th, no doubt heading back to their summer breeding grounds in the Arctic. **Mute Swan** numbers remained stable (at two) throughout March. Up to three **Pochards** were present from at least 8th-21st. Between 1 and 6 **Tufted Ducks** were also present until at least 21st, and a single drake **Goldeneye** was also seen on three occasions between 12th-20th (PW). The long-staying **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen by myself on 3rd and 6th but not by anyone after then. I noted a **Collared Dove** on the east side of

the Loch on 6th. One or two **Water Rails** were seen or heard by PW between 10th and 21st, and he was able to take several photos on some days (see bottom of page 1). I also heard one calling near the hide on 31st. **Coot** were present all month, with 30 counted by Christopher Rodger (eBird) on 6th. Both **Great Crested** and **Little Grebes** were also present throughout March. There was only one March record of **Oystercatcher** – by myself on 11th. However, **Curlews** were frequently heard or seen all month, with about 25 counted by PW on 10th. **Black-headed Gulls** were last seen on 14th, by which time very few remained – they will have gone away to their breeding grounds. Single **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were noted by PW on 10th and myself on 30th and 31st. Single **Cormorants** were also recorded throughout March by either PW or myself, a contrast to early February’s high numbers. Paul made March’s only Loch record of **Sparrowhawk** (one on 18th) but **Buzzard** was noted on several dates by him or myself. **Tawny Owl** was heard hooting in daytime by myself (6th and 9th) and Paul (12th). PW also saw a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** on 10th, while I watched two **Ravens** doing aerial acrobatics above the jetty area on 6th. **Skylarks** were often heard singing, and **Chiffchaffs** were present from 10th onwards (the first 2024 record was 16 March). PW made March’s only records of **Goldcrest** (12th) and **Starling** (10th). **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** were again unrecorded at the Loch (and the wider Kinghorn area) in March but two **Mistle Thrushes** were noted by PW on 12th, 13th and 21st and three on 20th, while (unlike February) **Tree Sparrows** were seen on several occasions. Again in contrast to February, both **Grey Wagtail** and **Pied Wagtail** were noted several times from 10th onwards. PW also noted **Yellowhammers** at the Loch on 13th. Besides these, there were also anonymous, undated records on the hide whiteboard of **Grey Heron**, **Kingfisher** and **Jay**. The full list of the 58 birds recorded at the Loch during March 2025, in the systematic order of the *British List* (BOU, 2022), is: *Greylag Goose, Farmyard geese hybrids, Pink-footed Goose, Mute Swan, Mallard* (incl. 1 white domestic form), *Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Pheasant, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe (Dabchick), Great Crested Grebe, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Tawny Owl, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Wren, Starling, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Tree Sparrow, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer.*

Mammals, amphibians and fish: As last month, the only mammal records at the Loch were of **Grey Squirrels** at the hide feeders (10th and 20th), and fresh **Mole** hills in various places.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'):

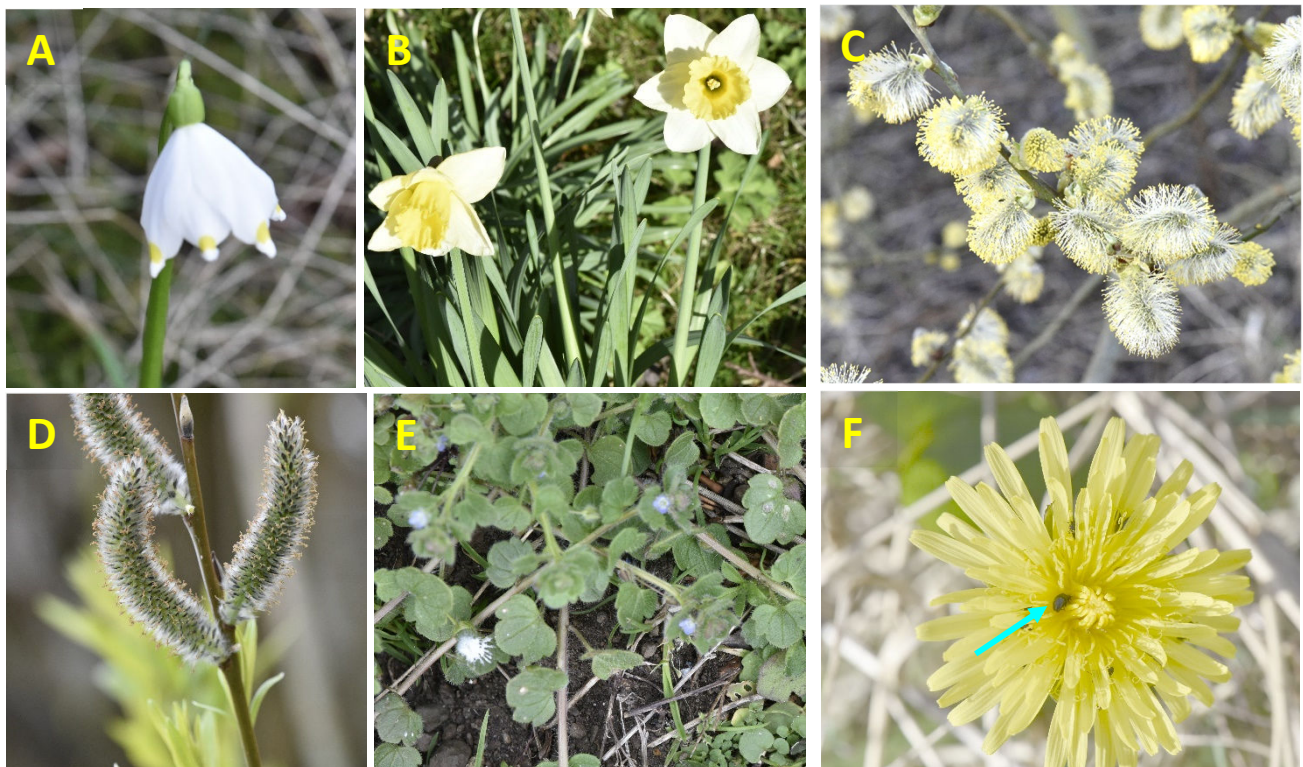


Kinghorn Loch invertebrates, March 2025. **A**, the spider *Neriene* cf. *peltata*, 30th. New Loch record. **B**, Greater Bee-fly (*Bombylius major*) basking on wall, 31st. **C**, Green Curve-vein (*Eudasyphora cyanella*), 31st. **D**, an old Oak Apple Gall (*Andricus kollari*) presumably formed last year, 8th. All photos Robert Mill.

Once again, invertebrate records in March were few, although more than in February. The only **butterfly** recorded was an **Orange-tip** male that I saw on 31st (an exceptionally mild day for March: I recorded 14.5°C in our back garden); this was almost a month earlier than 2024’s first sighting on 26 April. **Buff-tailed Bumblebees** were noted from 8th onwards and **Black Ants** on 31st, while earlier in the month I found a couple of **Oak Apple Galls (*Andricus kollari*)** that presumably were formed last year but

overlooked by me then – they were now very conspicuous because of the absence of any oak leaves on the bare twigs. **Common Pollen Beetles** were seen inside a dandelion ‘flower-head’ on 30th. Four different **fly** species were seen: **Greater Bee-fly** on 31st (again, nearly a month earlier than last year’s first sighting on 26 April), the bluebottle *Calliphora vicina* on 14th, **Green Curve-vein** (*Eudasyphora cyanella*) on 31st and yet another swarm of **Winter Gnats** (*Trichocera* sp.) on 14th. A small spider photographed by me on a patch of Few-flowered Leek (*Allium paradoxum*) in woodland near the sluice on 30th turned out to be *Nerienne* cf. *peltata*, a very widespread species yet a new record for the Loch area – spiders are one of the least well recorded invertebrate groups at the Loch.

Flowering plants and ferns:

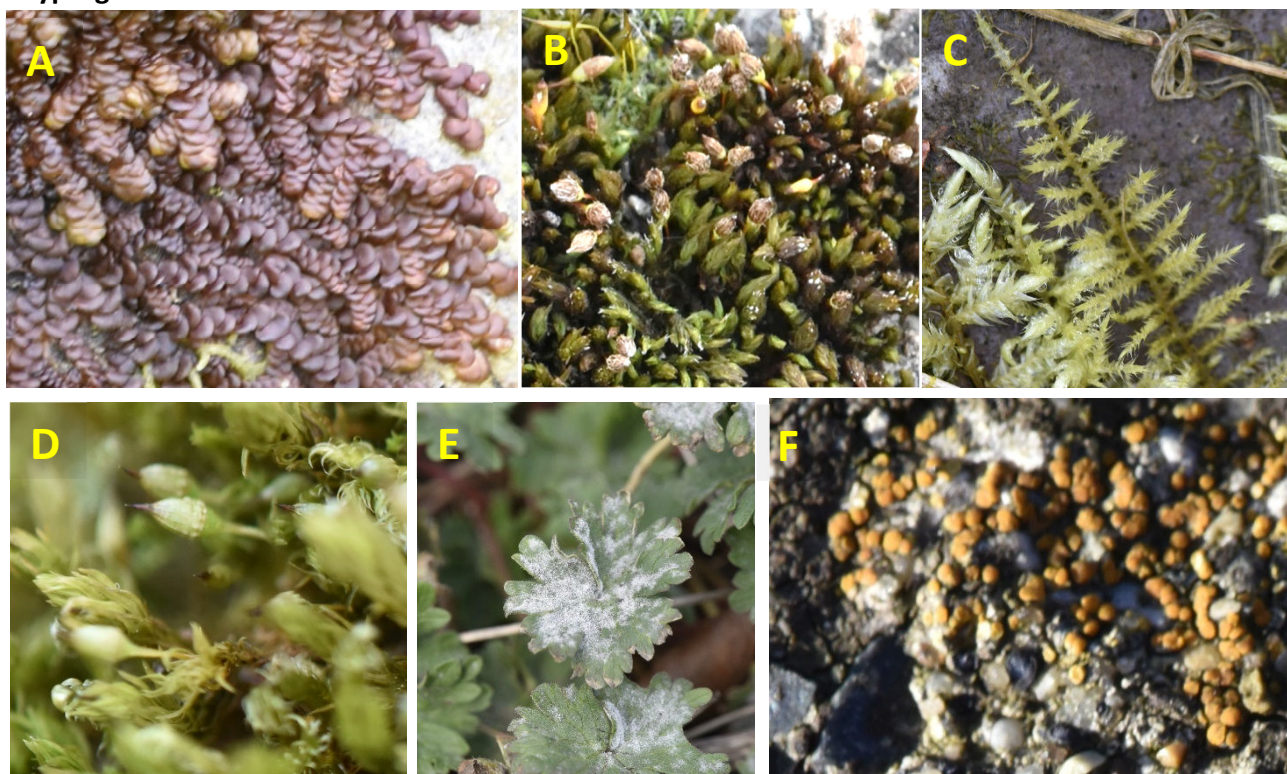


Kinghorn Loch flowering plants, March 2025. **A**, Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*), 8th, new Loch record. **B**, Narcissus cf. ‘February Silver’, 11th, new Loch record. **C**, Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) catkins, 8th. **D**, White Willow (*Salix alba*) catkins, 14th. **E**, Ivy-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica hederifolia* subsp. *hederifolia*), 11th. **F**, Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.) capitulum (‘flower-head’) with one Common Pollen Beetle (*Brassicogethes aeneus*) clearly visible near the centre (light blue arrow) and others hidden, 30th. All photos Robert Mill.

A total of 131 different plants (excluding ferns) was recorded around the Loch in March: 98 wild or naturalised, 31 cultivated and three species found both obviously cultivated and in a wild habitat. Of the 98 wild or naturalised species, 54 were in flower at some point during March, another two had both flowers and fruits, 9 were fruiting (mostly old ones persisting since last year), one had flower buds developing and the remaining 32 were found only in vegetative states. Two, **Summer Snowflake** (*Leucojum aestivum*), found on 8th, and **Narcissus** cf. ‘February Silver’, recorded on 11th, had not previously been found at the Loch. It’s difficult to gauge actual first-flowering dates in the second half of March because, due to holidays or recording elsewhere around Kinghorn, I made no visits between 14th and 30th. Some examples of when I first found species in flower around the Loch during March are (2024 dates in parentheses): **Shepherd’s Purse** (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), 30th (2024, 18 Apr); **Hairy Bittercress** (*Cardamine hirsuta*), 8th (2024, 7 Feb); **Glabrous Whitlow-grass** (*Erophila glabrescens*), 6th (19th); **Larch** (*Larix decidua*), 31st (11th); **Primrose** (*Primula vulgaris*), 6th (12th); **Blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*), 8th (11th); **Common Lungwort** (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) and **Weeping Willow** (*Salix x sepulcralis*), both 31st or earlier (11th); **Glory-of-the-Snow** (*Scilla forbesii*), 14th (24th); and **Red Campion** (*Silene dioica*), after

a short 'winter rest' when frosts killed off flowers persisting from 2024 into early January, 6th (12th). Of the 33 species found cultivated (including the two also in wild or naturalised situations), 21 were in flower, 3 in fruit and 9 vegetative.

Cryptogams:



Kinghorn Loch cryptogams, March 2025. **A**, Dilated Scalewort (*Frullania dilatata*) on willow, 6th. **B**, White-tipped Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum diaphanum*, dam, 3rd. **C**, Common Feather-moss (*Kindbergia praelonga*), 6th. **D**, Elegant Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum pulchellum*), tree branch, 6th. **E**, The powdery mildew *Podosphaera fugax* on Dove's-foot Cranes-bill leaves (*Geranium molle*), 6th, new Loch record and possibly new to Fife. **F**, the lichen *Protoblastenia rupestris* (orange blobs), 11th, new Loch record; a much enlarged crop from a small section of the original photo. All photos Robert Mill.

Thirteen different **bryophytes** were found around the Loch during March. All had previously been recorded but five of them were 'new to me' and my finds were confirmations of older records, mostly dating from 2011. These were the liverwort **Dilated Scalewort (*Frullania dilatata*)**, easily identified by the purplish colour of many of the shoots (the youngest growth is often green), and the mosses **Common Feather-moss (*Kindbergia praelonga*)**, **White-tipped Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum diaphanum*)**, **Elegant Bristle-moss (*Orthotrichum pulchellum*)** and **Bruch's Pincushion (*Ulota bruchii*)**. All except one (White-tipped Bristle-moss) were found on 6th March in various locations in or in one case not far from the marshy area at the west end of the Loch; the White-tipped Bristle-moss was found on the dam on 3rd. Bruch's Pincushion (see photo, top of page 1) was interesting as it was growing as an epiphyte surrounding the short shoots of blackthorn near one of the edges of the marsh. Only five different **fungi** and allies were identified around the Loch during March but one of these, the powdery mildew ***Podosphaera fugax***, was a new Loch record. Its hosts are species of crane's-bill (Geraniaceae) and I found it no less than four times during March, all on Dove's-foot Crane's-bill leaves: at one Loch location on 6th and 14th, at a second Loch site on 11th and elsewhere on 7th (see the Village, Beach and Coast section of this report). There are about 120 records across the UK; most are in England, with few from Scotland, all of them in the north (Skye, Strathpeffer, Fortrose and Hopeman: NBN Atlas, 2025a) with none from Fife, so these could well be the first Fife county records for the species. **Glistening Inkcap (*Coprinellus micaceus*)**, first found last year at the Loch, was found again this year at a different site on 8th.

No fewer than 20 **lichens** (plus some more as yet unidentified) were recorded at the Loch during March. One of them, ***Protoblastenia rupestris***, was a new Loch record despite apparently being a very common species, especially on man-made substrates like mortar and concrete. I found it on 11th, on the top of the same hydrant signpost as I had found another then new Loch lichen record, ***Sarcogyne regularis***, in 2023. (That species was still there on 11th among the various other lichens present with *Protoblastenia rupestris*).

VILLAGE, BEACH AND COAST



Kinghorn area wildlife, March 2025. **A**, One of 14 Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) at South Glassmount, 21st. **B**, Reed Bunting, Seafield, 13th. **C**, Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), Seafield Tower-Kinghorn coast path, 13th. Photos Paul Williams.

As well as my Loch visits, I made visits to the village on 7th and 19th, the golf course and Grangehill on 9th, Mid/North Mire on 11th, and the coastal path on 18th. Paul Williams (PW) recorded birds and occasional mammals along the coast path between Seafield and Kinghorn, and elsewhere, on seven dates between 10th and 26th, and I have also incorporated records of birds from Pettycur and elsewhere by various people on the eBird website.

Land mammal records included a **Brown Hare** that I saw bounding across one of the fields north of Mid Mire on 11th, a dead **Rabbit** that I found, obviously killed by a predator, near the Kinghorn golf clubhouse on 9th, and two sightings of **Roe Deer** by Paul Williams: the first by the B923 south of the Loch on 12th, and the second being of 14 in fields near South Glassmount on 21st. Up to three **Harbour Porpoises** were off the Harbour View in Kinghorn on seven days between 2nd and 17th, according to the sightings board.

Pink-footed Geese flew over Kinghorn on 31st. Five **Mute Swans** were at Pettycur on 19th (Christopher Rodger, eBird: hereafter abbreviated CR) and two **Shelduck** were there the previous day (CR). As well as all the Loch records, two **Mallards** were on Burnside Pond (3rd and 8th) and another two were off the coastal path on 23rd (PW). **Eiders** were seen frequently along the coast until 23rd, peak counts at Pettycur being 80 on 1st (Iain Downie, eBird: ID) and 91 on 19th (CR). **Long-tailed Ducks** also remained off the coast until at least 20th, with 9 off Pettycur on both 18th and 19th (CR). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen off Pettycur and the coastal path throughout, with 69 counted at Pettycur by CR on 18th and 67 the following day. Apart from the Loch records, CR saw 6 **Great Crested Grebes** at Pettycur on 18th and 4 the next day. **Wader** species often noted along the coast between Pettycur and Seafield during March were **Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Knot, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper** and **Redshank**; in addition, two **Golden Plover** flew east off Pettycur on 18th (CR). High counts at Pettycur by CR included 436 Oystercatcher (18th); 37 Curlew (18th & 19th), 83 Bar-tailed Godwit (19th) and 156 Redshank (19th), while PW counted 15 Sanderling at Seafield on 21st and more than 30 Purple Sandpipers there the day before. Seven **Kittiwakes** were off Pettycur on 18th and 19th (CR) and one off Seafield on 21st (PW). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (a migratory species) were recorded at Pettycur or Seafield from 18th (CR, PW) as well as at the Loch. **Common Guillemots** (up to 5), **Razorbills** (14-15) and a single **Puffin** were all off Pettycur on both 18th and 19th (CR) while PW also noted Razorbill off the Kinghorn-Seafield Tower coastal path (20th, 23rd) and a single Puffin off Seafield on 26th. Five **Red-throated Divers** were off Pettycur on 18th (CR) while on the same day PW saw the

species off the Kinghorn-Seafield Tower coast path, as well as one at Seafield on 26th. **Fulmar** counts included 15 at Pettycur on 1st (Zhuofei Lu, eBird), 14 counted by myself on the Kinghorn cliff (7th) and smaller numbers later on including one at Seafield (21st, PW). **Gannets** were noted off Pettycur on 18th (CR) and off the coast path by PW on 20th and 21st. **Sparrowhawk** was noted along the coast path by PW on 10th and 13th while I heard a **Tawny Owl** hooting in daytime at Grangehill on 9th; on the same day I also saw two **Ravens** fly across from lower Grangehill towards Whinnyhall. **Chiffchaff** was recorded along the coastal path near Kinghorn on 21st and 23rd (PW). Lastly, PW recorded **Reed Bunting** at Grangehill on 10th and along the Seafield—Kinghorn coastal path on 13th, 18th and 20th.

Exceptionally few **invertebrates** were noted during my March walks, other than what I saw at the Loch. They included a **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** on 8th, more persistent old **Robin's Pincushion** galls along the coastal path on 18th and a swarm of **Winter Gnats** at Mid Mire on 11th.



Kinghorn area plants, March 2025. **A**, Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), coastal path, 18th. **B**, Common Scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*). **C**, Glabrous Whitlow-grass (*Erophila glabrescens*), north of Grangehill Farm, 9th. **D & E**, probable Hairy Whitlow-grass (*Erophila majuscula*), North Mire, 11th (hairy lower stem arrowed in light blue in photo **E**). **F**, Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), early flowering stage, North Mire, 11th. Photos Robert Mill.

More **flowering plants** were noted during March than in February. Of 75 species noted flowering during all my walks at the Loch and elsewhere, only 21 were only found at localities in around Kinghorn village or along the coastal path; the other 54 species were found only at the Loch (31) or at the Loch plus other sites (the other 23). On my coastal path walk on 18th, I was able to revise last month's count of flowering **Stinking Hellebore** (*Helleborus foetidus*) stems slightly upwards, to 53. **Common Scurvy-grass** (*Cochlearia officinalis*) was in flower at Kinghorn on 7th and along the coastal path (18th). **Glabrous Whitlow-grass** was flowering in Kinghorn (7th, 18th) and at Grangehill (9th) while on 18th at another village location I also found Whitlow-grass in flower but it was not practical to take photographs to identify the precise species within the complex. On 11th at North Mire, I found another whitlow-grass that had very short (almost invisible) leaf-stalks, stems densely hairy in the lower part and with scattered hairs as far as the lowest pedicel, and distinctly purplish (not green) sepals – all characters matching those of the least common species in the complex, **Hairy Whitlow-grass** (*Erophila majuscula*). There are two records of this from Fife in NBN Atlas (from near St Andrews and Anstruther), and a cluster in the Edinburgh area including one by the Water of Leith just south of the Botanic Garden, which is due south of the Burntisland/Kinghorn area (NBN Atlas, 2025b), so its occurrence at North Mire would not be

improbable. **Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)** started flowering by the Burnside Path on 30th. **Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*)** was in flower at its previously known location in the Grangehill area on 9th and **Wood Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sylvatica*)** was just beginning to flower at Grangehill that day, as was **Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)**. The **Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*)** on the harbour wall was flowering on 7th, and **Slender Speedwell (*Veronica filiformis*)** had begun flowering in the grass between the golf course and the council houses on 18th although a big patch found in 2021-2024 beside the golf course seemed to have disappeared. **Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*)** was now beginning to flower, both at North Mire (11th) and Doo Dell (18th). **Alexanders (*Smyrniolum olusatrum*)** was by now well in flower along the coast path (18th) but plants within the village had still not started flowering when found on 7th and 19th, possibly because their locations were more shaded .



Kinghorn village cryptogams, 7 March 2025. **A**, Common Pocket-moss (*Fissidens taxifolius*). **B**, Crescent-cup Liverwort (*Lunularia cruciata*) at one of two newly-found localities. **C**, the powdery mildew *Podosphaera fugax* on Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*) near Castlehill Walk the day after I found it at the Loch on the same host. Photos Robert Mill.

Bryophytes noted in the village during March (4 mosses, 2 liverworts) were mostly very common species. The most notable moss was **Common Pocket-moss (*Fissidens taxifolius*)** which I found on 7th (and 19th) on a dark, very shaded bank next to a narrow footpath; I had previously only found it at Kinghorn Loch, on very shaded damp soil. Also on 7th, I found two additional village sites for **Crescent-cup Liverwort (*Lunularia cruciata*)**, as well as finding it again at the previously-known location. By far the most notable of the three **fungi** I noted during March was the mildew ***Podosphaera fugax***, which I found on leaves of Dove's-foot Crane's-bill at the Glamis Road (W) end of Castlehill Walk on 7th as well as at two Loch sites on 6th and 11th. **Alexanders Rust (*Puccinia smyrnii*)** was found on its host, *Smyrniolum olusatrum* on 7th and 19th in the village and by the coastal path on 18th. Four **lichens** were also noted in the wider Kinghorn area during March despite me giving little attention to them.

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