

KINGHORN BIODIVERSITY MONTHLY REPORT - NOVEMBER 2022 by Robert Mill



Same day, effects of different weather. Left: Frost on leaves near the dam on my arrival at the Loch on a glorious sunny but chilly morning, 11.03 on 21 November. **Right:** The Craigencaht Mill stream still in flood and spilling over many yards of footpath, 11.37 on 21 November, a whole week after over 40 mm of rain had fallen on 14th. Photos Robert Mill.

Every month this year has been warmer than the long-term average throughout the UK and the latest statistics (Met Office, 2022) reveal that Autumn 2022 has been the third warmest on record, after those of 2011 and 2006. November 2022 had both unusually mild days (particularly around 11th—13th) and also exceptionally mild nights, with Scotland recording a new *minimum* temperature of 14.6°C which is higher than the average November daily *maximum*. However, in the last ten days or so the weather turned colder and there was ground frost when I visited the Loch on 21st. For much of the UK, November 2022 was wetter than average; this was especially true of parts of east and north-east Scotland, with some areas experiencing flooding. While Kinghorn escaped the very worst of this wet weather, there was nevertheless a short very wet spell in the middle of the month. Total rainfall for the month at SEPA's rainfall gauge at Kinghorn Loch was 98.8 mm, 151% of the November mean rainfall for the Loch which is 65.6 mm. November's rainfall represented almost exactly one-sixth of the total rainfall at the Loch so far this year (591.4 mm). 40.4 mm, 41% of the total, fell on a single day (the 14th), and 66.2 mm (exactly two-thirds) of the total fell on the four days between 15th and 18th (SEPA, 2022). On my visit on 21st, a full week after the heaviest of the rain, the mill stream was still overflowing on to the path from the jetty to Woodland Rise. Despite this, our part of Fife also enjoyed slightly above average sunshine during November whereas its extreme east was duller than average (Met Office, 2022).

November's twelve new additions to the Loch biodiversity list comprised 1 gall midge, 1 gall mite, 3 fungi, 4 lichens and, even this late in the year, three flowering plants. However, two incorrect or accidentally duplicated records were removed during one of my regular data checking exercises. Thus, the net increase was ten, from 1,463 on 30 September to **1,473** on 30 November. As usual, 'new Loch record' is abbreviated NLR, especially in photo captions.

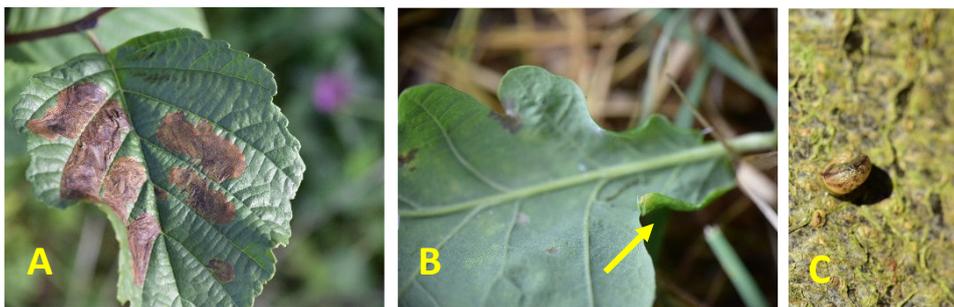
AROUND THE LOCH

Birds: Fifty different species were recorded at Kinghorn Loch and its environs in November, down on October's high figure of 61 but very good for the time of year. There was much less evidence at the Loch of obvious migration, which no doubt contributed to the lower species total. Neither **Chiffchaffs** nor **Blackcaps** were recorded, unlike in October. Adult **Great Crested Grebes** were not reported but one juvenile bird from this year's broods remained (seen from 22nd—30th, presumably also present earlier). Numbers of **Little Grebes (Dabchick)** reached at least 12 by the last week of the month. A **Water Rail** was seen skulking in thick waterside vegetation near the hide by Pauline Bell on 5th. **Grey Heron** was recorded by myself on 9th, Derek Chappell (Kinghorn District Wildlife Group [KDWG] Facebook page) on 10th and by Paul Williams on 23rd. The **Kingfisher** seen last month remained until at least 6th (Elaine O'Rourke and Jacqueline Davidson, KDWG). A redhead (female or juvenile) **Goosander** was on the Loch on 21st and about 4 or 5 **Tufted Duck** more or less

throughout the month (myself and Paul Williams), while Paul also noted **Goldeneye** and a male **Pochard** as being present from 22nd until the end of the month. I saw two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** on 16th, as well as the three common species (**Herring**, **Common** and **Black-headed**) that were present in varying numbers throughout. I saw a **Kestrel** hovering above the 'Great North Road' track (= 'Bramble Lane') on 9th and Paul Williams saw one at the hen run on 30th. A flock of 60 or more **Curlews** was present by the Rodanbraes track during the latter part of the month (Paul Williams on 22nd, 23rd and 30th). I heard **Redwing** calls in the woodland below the allotments on 21st and Paul Williams recorded the species at the Loch the following day. Pauline Bell and Jacqueline Davidson both saw **Great Spotted Woodpecker** at the hide, on 5th and 6th respectively (KDWG). Elaine O'Rourke took a superb photograph of a **Treecreeper** bathing in front of the hide on 4th (KDWG) while Paul Williams also saw one on 22nd. Jacqueline Davidson (KDWG) made the month's only records of **Goldcrest** (6th) and **Yellowhammer** (20th). The full list of birds recorded at the Loch during November 2022 is: *Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Common Gull, Common Magpie, Coot, Cormorant, Curlew, Dunnock, Farmyard / hybrid geese, Feral Pigeon, Goldcrest, Goldeneye, Goldfinch, Goosander, Great Crested Grebe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Greylag Goose (domestic), Herring Gull, Jackdaw (Eurasian), Kestrel, Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Little Grebe (Dabchick), Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Oystercatcher, Pheasant, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Redwing, Robin, Rook, Starling, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow, Tufted Duck, Water Rail, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.*

Mammals, amphibians and fish: Pauline Bell saw a **Stoat** at the hide on 5th (KDWG) and up to three **Grey Squirrels** were regular visitors there. Fresh **Mole** hills were also recorded in various locations during the month.

Invertebrates ('minibeasts'): Despite the predominantly mild temperatures and almost total lack of frost until



New invertebrate records from the Loch, November 2022. **A:** Blotches on Alder leaf caused by the gall mite *Acalitus brevitarsus*, 9th. **B:** Inrolling (arrowed) of the margin of an oak leaf caused by the gall midge *Macrodiplosis robori*, 16th. **C:** Very young Brown-lipped Snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*), 21st. Photos Robert Mill.

the last ten days or so, and plenty of flowers remaining in bloom, almost no invertebrates were seen around the Loch in November. No **butterflies** were reported and no **moth** trapping was done (as indicated in last month's report, George Guthrie's October trapping session was the last of the year). I did, however, find the mines of two leaf-mining

moths November but neither was a new record. These were **Apple Leaf Miner** (*Lyonetia clerkella*) on Wild Cherry and **Common Oak Midget** (*Phyllonorycter quercifoliella*) on Oak, both found on 4th. A **caddisfly** was found by Lee Brown but has not been identified. No **bees**, **wasps**, **bugs**, **beetles** or **hoverflies** were seen. The only **fly** records were the gall midge *Macrodiplosis robori* (NLR), whose tiny gall was found along the margin of an oak leaf on 16th, and the **Common Bluebottle**, *Calliphora vicina* (9th). A **gall mite**, *Acalitus brevitarsus*, which causes conspicuous oblong reddish or brownish blotches to form on Alder leaves; was another new Loch record (9th). Finally, a tiny snail found by myself on the bark of a tree on 21st was identified as a presumably very young **Brown-lipped Snail** (*Cepaea nemoralis*).

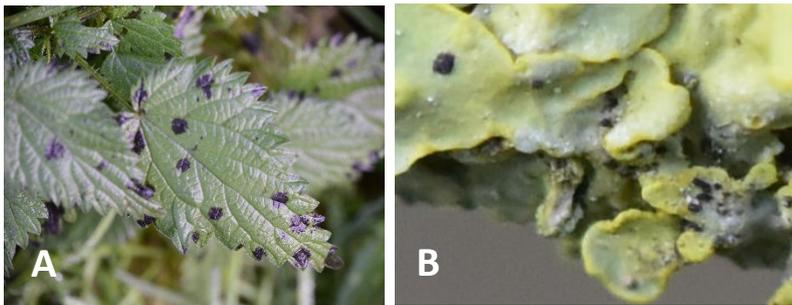
Flowering plants and ferns: Five **ferns** were recorded during November: **Bracken**, **Common Polypody**, **Male Fern** and **Wall-rue** by myself at various locations, and another fern that Derek Chappell (KDWG) by chance photographed on a tree stump upon two Magpies were perched (10th). Because of the narrowness of its fronds and until I can locate the plants myself, this is assumed meantime to be **Maidenhair Spleenwort** (*Asplenium trichomanes*). However, the tree stump habitat is extremely unusual for the species (and indeed for most British *Asplenium* species), which normally prefers its roots to be in contact with rocks or walls (Page,



New Loch plant records, November 2022. **A & B**, Chinese Mugwort (*Artemisia verlotiorum*): **A**, flowers, 21st; **B**, leaves, 9th. FIRST FIFE RECORD. **C**, Western Hemlock-spruce (*Tsuga heterophylla*), 21st. **D**, Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*), 21st, very late flowering with malformed or rain-damaged flowers (there should be five petals but the few present all had at least one missing). Photos Robert Mill.

1997), as on the walls near Craigencaft Farm. I noted 64 wild **flowering plant** species still in flower during November, a comparatively small reduction of 15 from October's figure of 79 given the time of year, and a reflection of the exceptionally mild autumn we have had this year. I also found no fewer than 52 cultivated species in flower, which was actually a marked increase on October's 34. Some of this may be attributed to more thorough recording in November but some was definitely due to certain species beginning to flower again after a 'rest' – a 'second spring' effect caused by the ongoing mild weather. The most extreme example of out-of-season flowering was a normally spring-flowering *Crocus* cultivar that began to flower on 17 November, only four weeks after the bulbs had been planted! No fewer than three species were added to the Loch's vascular plant list during November. The most significant was **Chinese Mugwort (*Artemisia verlotiorum*)**. I found the two plants much earlier in the year but, unknown to me then, it is an exceptionally late-flowering species and flower buds only began to appear at the beginning of November. By the middle of the month it was bloom which allowed me to get my identification verified by Sandy Edwards, BSBI recorder for Fife, who told me that it was the first Fife record for this species. The other two new plant records were both made on 21st: the conifer **Western Hemlock-spruce (*Tsuga heterophylla*)**, previously unnoticed in the woodland near the hen run, and **Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*)** of which I found one plant with out-of-season flowers (in poor condition, lacking one or more petals) beside a narrow track by the allotments, from which it was presumably a 'throw-out' that had established itself.

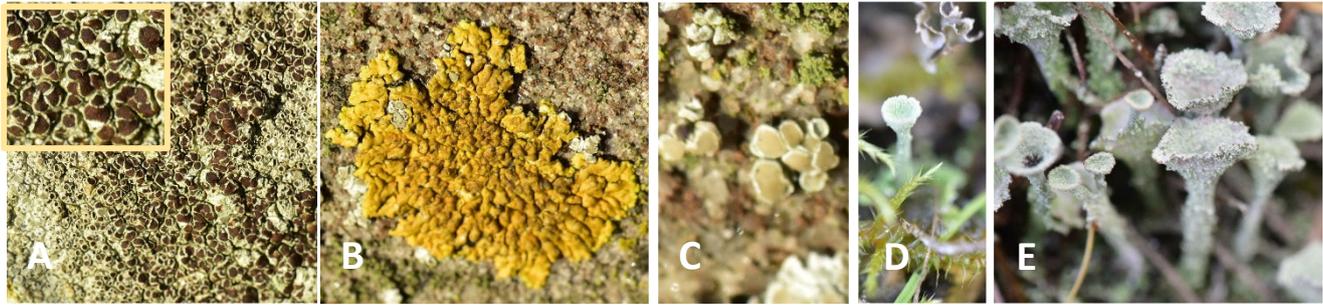
Cryptogams



New fungal records, November 2022. **A**, Nettle Leaf Spot (*Ramularia urticae*), 21st, NLR. **B**, Black spots and dots on thallus of Orange Lichen (*Xanthoria parietina*) caused by the lichenicolous fungus *Arthonia parietinaria*, 9th, NLR. Photos Robert Mill.

The only **moss** identified during November was **Grey-cushioned Grimmia (*Grimmia pulvinata*)**, whose neat cushions, bearing young capsules with stalks bent to hide them in the cushions, were found on the dam wall with a second as yet unidentified moss on 4th. Fifteen **fungi** were found in November, of which 14 have been identified and three are new Loch records: **Bitter Bracket (*Postia stiptica*)** on a dead pine tree (9th), **Nettle Leaf Spot (*Ramularia urticae*)** on Stinging Nettle leaves (21st)

and the lichenicolous fungus ***Arthonia parietinaria*** which forms black dots on the thalli and sometimes the fruiting bodies of the orange lichen *Xanthoria parietina* (9th and 16th in different sites around the Loch). One of last month's new records, **Conifer Mazegill (*Gloeophyllum sepiarium*)** was re-found not just on the original log (9th and 16th) but on a second one some metres away (9th) on which **Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*)** was also growing. Three **powdery mildews** were found; none were new records. A second Lochside locality for the Alder leaf rust ***Melampsorium hiratsukanum*** was also found, near the sluice (16th).



November 2022 lichen records at the Loch. **A**, *Lecanora campestris*, 4th, NLR (inset top left, fruiting bodies [apothecia] enlarged). **B**, *Calogaya decipiens*, 4th, NLR. **C**, *Lecanora polytropa*, 4th, NLR. **D**, *Cladonia fimbriata*, single fruiting body [podetium] among moss and the lichen *Peltigera hymenina* (small part of *Peltigera* thallus visible at top right), 9th, NLR. **E**, *Cladonia grayi*, 9th, re-identification of one of March 2022's NLRs. Photos Robert Mill.

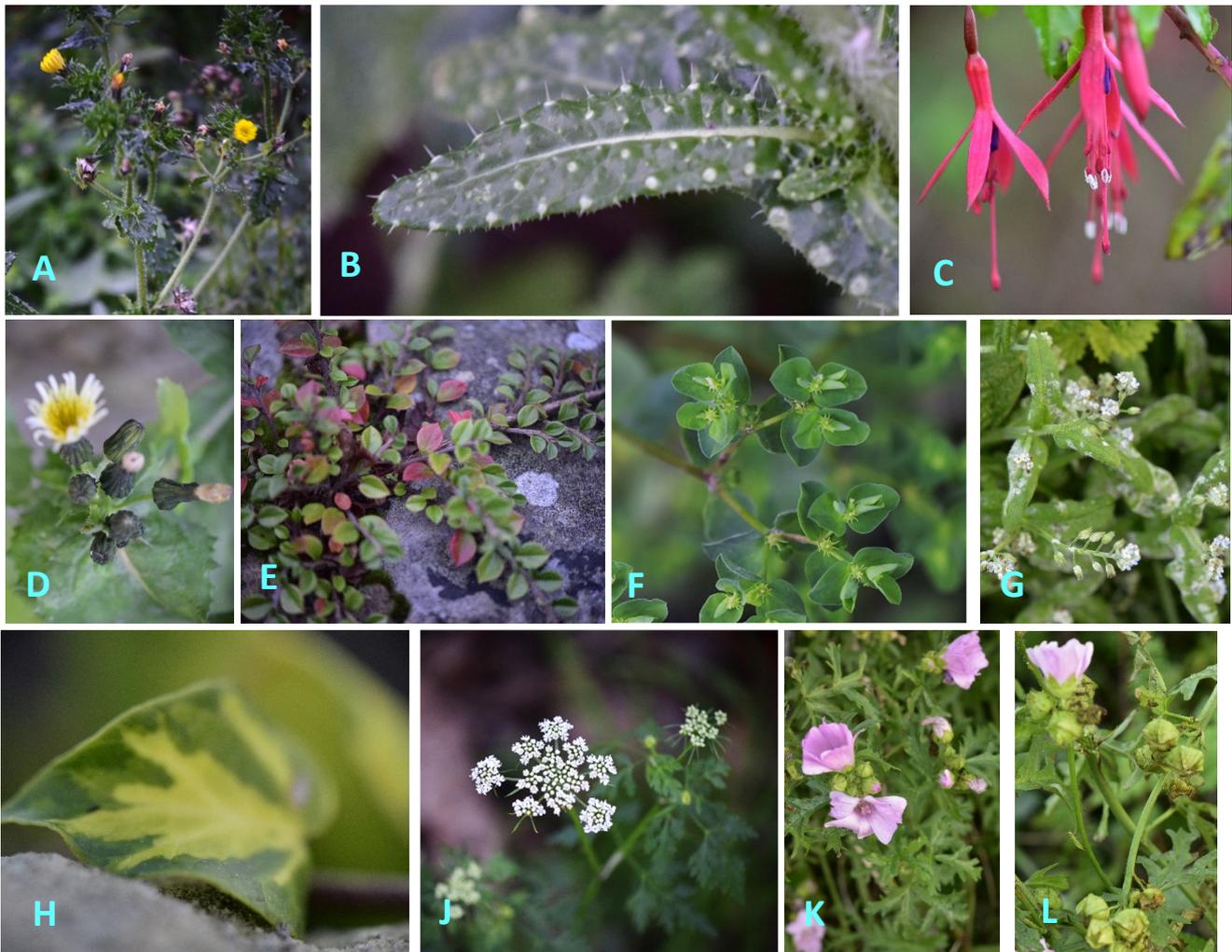
Ten **lichens** have so far been identified out of a larger number seen and photographed during November. Four of them represent new records and one is a re-identification of one of March 2022's new lichen records. Three of the four new records were found on 4th, close together on one low wall just behind The Ecology Centre building, whose lichens I had not previously examined. These were an orange lichen now called ***Calogaya decipiens*** (= *Caloplaca decipiens* in less up-to-date literature), and two *Lecanora* species, ***Lecanora campestris*** with dark reddish-brown apothecia (fruiting bodies) on a conspicuous pale grey crust, and ***Lecanora polytropa*** with creamy-green apothecia from a scarcely visible thallus. The fourth November new lichen record was of a 'pixie-cup' lichen, ***Cladonia fimbriata*** (9th), which was fruiting among moss and the 'dog lichen' ***Peltigera hymenina*** where I had originally found the latter last year, in short grass on the top of a low wall just south of the steps leading down from the 'Throne Viewpoint' not far from The Ecology Centre. Also on 9th, I obtained more photos of another 'pixie-cup' lichen which I had first found on a north-facing bank beside the 'Great North Road' track on 7 March this year and had identified it as *Cladonia pyxidata*. From the newer photos I have concluded that it was not that species but is ***Cladonia grayi***; *C. pyxidata* is often confused with it and with other allied species and has not yet been genuinely found in the vicinity of the Loch.

VILLAGE, BEACHES AND COASTAL PATH Unlike recent months, there were no reports of **Bottlenose Dolphins** or other cetaceans off our stretch of coastline during November. However, both **Common (Harbour) and Grey Seals** were seen off the coastal path from Seafield to Kinghorn by Paul Williams, who also saw **Rabbit** and **Roe Deer** along the coast path.

Paul's November bird list for the coastal path and Seafield area amounted to 42 species, the most notable being three **Little Auks** on 24th (photos on KDWG Facebook page) and one on 30th. Other birds seen by him there in November were a small flock of **Common Scoter** (30th), **Goosander**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Kittiwake** (one on 24th), single **Red-throated Divers** on 24th and 30th, various waders including **Purple Sandpiper** (also seen there by myself on 14th) and **Ringed Plover**, a **Rock Pipit** on 24th, **Tree Sparrow**, **Reed Bunting** and **Yellowhammer**. As in October, Paul also saw three **Red-legged Partridges** in the field opposite the Alcan entrance, just beyond Kinghorn Loch (30th).

Graham Sparshott's three bird migration watches in November were from East Braes (11th and 26th) and Pettycur car park on 18th (<https://www.trektellen.org>). The Pettycur visit was notable on account of a vast number (**880**) of **Shags** being present off the car park, as well as two **Little Gulls**. Also seen that day were 194 **Kittiwake**, 27 **Long-tailed Ducks** (several also seen by myself there on 19th), 8 **Red-throated Divers**, 33 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, three **Great Skuas** and two **Arctic Skuas**, among other species. Some **finch** migration was taking place at East Braes on 11th, when four **Crossbills** passed over as well as 17 **Siskin** and 9 **Goldfinches**. On 26th, six **Little Auks** went southwest as well as 24 **Razorbills** and/or **Common Guillemots** and there was more finch migration as 41 **Siskin**, 14 **Lesser Redpolls** and small numbers of **Chaffinches**, **Goldfinches** and a **Linnet** flew over in a south-westerly direction.

On 11th, 12th and 29th I explored different parts of the village. Along the Burnside Path on 11th, I found two more plants of **Wild Clary (*Salvia verbenaca*)**, additional to the one I found in October, as well as a second Kinghorn record for **Bristly Ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*)**, first found at the Loch (see October 2022



Village plants, November 2022. **A & B**, Bristly Ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), Burnside Path, second Kinghorn record, 11th. **A**, habit; **B**, leaf. **C**, Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*), top of Doo Dell path, 29th. **D**, An unusual form of Smooth Sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) with the ray florets whitish instead of yellow, Barclay Road, 12th. **E**, seedling of Wall Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), beside Mill Burn, 11th. **F**, Petty Spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*), Glamis Terrace, 12th. **G**, Field Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*), Doo Dell Path, 29th. **H**, Persian Ivy (*Hedera colchica*) 'Sulphur Heart', Church by the Sea, 12th. **J**, Fool's Parsley (*Aethusa cynapium*), clifftop path near railway station, 12th. **K & L**, Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*), clifftop path near Harbour View. 29th: **K**, flowers. **L**, fruits. All photos Robert Mill.

report). These have all been communicated to the Fife plant recorder. Other commoner species still in flower along the Burnside Path that day and the next were **Field Pansy** (*Viola arvensis*), **White Campion** (*Silene latifolia*), **Fool's Parsley** (*Aethusa cynapium*) and **Narrow-leaved Vetch** (*Vicia sativa* subsp. *nigra*), among numerous others. A small seedling of **Wall Cotoneaster** (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) was found on a wall opposite the converted mill beside the Mill Burn on 11th. The next day, **Petty Spurge** (*Euphorbia peplus*) was found where Glamis Terrace joins Barclay Road. A variegated ivy found on the north boundary wall of the churchyard of the Church by the Sea (12th) resembled **Hedera colchica** (**Persian Ivy**), in particular its cultivar 'Sulphur Heart'. **Black Nightshade** (*Solanum nigrum*) was still flowering at the top of the steps down to the lifeboat station (12th); another plant of Black Nightshade was found in front of the Sealoft Residency building (29th). **Fuchsia** (*Fuchsia magellanica*) was still flowering at the top of the Doo Dell path network on 29th, as were **Field Forget-me-not** (*Myosotis arvensis*) and **Musk Mallow** (*Malva moschata*) on the cliff-top opposite.

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