Champions of Champions

Scotland’s threatened wildlife has had a massive boost in support this week. Ten new ‘Species Champions’ joined the 53 MSPs already lending their political support to the country’s threatened biodiversity.

Less cuddly or cute species have been chosen, such as the Violet Oil Beetle, the Flame Shell and Common Skate – and there has been a real boost for our marine species such as the Killer Whale and the Harbour Seal.

The Species Champion initiative is coordinated by Scottish Environment LINK’s Wildlife Forum. Since 2012, they have invited MSPs to choose from a list of 93 species that are currently facing significant threats to champion their cause in the Scottish Parliament. At a celebratory event held today in Holyrood it was announced that an impressive 75 out of the original 93 have now been ‘adopted’.

MSPs have been ‘beavering away’ at their work as species champions, including:

- Mary Scanlon MSP, who was the first Champion to secure a Member’s Debate on her species, the Freshwater Pearl Mussel;
- Rob Gibson MSP, now affectionately known to LINK as the ‘Moss Boss’, working with IUCN UK Peatland Programme to secure conservation efforts for the Rusty Bog Moss; and
- Graeme Dey MSP, champion for the Woolly Willow and who has signed-up many of his MSP colleagues for the scheme.

LINK is currently looking for resources to extend the scheme from the political field to new audiences including youth groups and businesses. All Champions are asked to learn about their species, work closely with a designated environmental organisation, and raise the threats to their species wherever it is required. The initiative is also pulling in support from community groups such as Fife’s Knitted Nature, a local community of keen knitters celebrating the rich biodiversity on their doorstep.

Deborah Long, Chair of Scottish Environment LINK and Programme Manager at Plantlife Scotland said: “Scotland’s wildlife is world class and the support we’ve received from MSPs in highlighting the importance of species and their role in our future has been fantastic. The half a million members of Scotland’s environmental groups can take comfort from the fact that our representatives in Holyrood are joining this scheme. We’re going to re-double our efforts to have every MSP adopt a species and to roll the scheme out across the country.”

Craig Macadam, Director of Buglife Scotland said: “From the tiny Bog Sun Jumper spider to the mighty Killer Whale, Species Champion MSPs are recognising the importance of Scotland’s unique wildlife. Through their efforts, these species now have a voice in the Scottish Parliament, but others are still waiting for a champion”.

Graeme Dey MSP said: “The is a hugely important initiative as the level of sign up from MSPs illustrates.”

ENDS
Editors’ Notes

1) Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland’s voluntary environment community, with over 30 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

2) LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899). LINK is core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts. www.scotlink.org

3) Scotland failed to meet its biodiversity target in 2010. The Scottish Government is now aiming to halt biodiversity loss by 2020, as per the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/

4) To mark the Year of Natural Scotland, Fife’s Knitted Nature was created to celebrate the rich diversity of life on their doorstep through an ambitious knitting project inviting knitters across Fife to take part. With their knitting needles, they plan to recreate animals, plants, birds, fungi and invertebrates which are iconic, threatened and play an important role in our ecosystem. Once completed, the knitted creations will travel around Fife in 2013 as art and learning installations. They’ll be escorted by local enthusiasts, wildlife experts, artists and writers. https://www.facebook.com/FifesKnittedNature/info

5) LIST of Species Champions

- Rhoda Grant MSP - Golden Eagle and Wild Cat
- Rob Gibson MSP - Rusty Bog-moss
- Dave Thompson MSP - Sandeel
- Liam McArthur MSP - Scottish Primrose
- Dennis Robertson MSP - Capercaillie and Corn Bunting
- Aileen McLeod MSP - Red Squirrel
- Graeme Dey MSP - Wooly Willow
- Dave Stewart MSP - Great Yellow Bumblebee
- Angus MacDonald MSP - Bog Sun Jumper Spider and Eelgrass
- Alison Johnston MSP - Brown Hare
- John Wilson MSP - Great Crested Newt
- Drew Smith MSP - Common Toad
- Elaine Murray MSP - Tadpole Shrimp and Natterjack Toad
- Claudia Beamish MSP - Sea Trout and Forester Moth
- Claire Baker MSP - Puffin and Lesser Butterfly Orchid
- Fiona McLeod MSP - Pond Mud Snail
- Mary Scanlon MSP - Freshwater Pearl Mussel
- Jamie McGrigor MSP - Narrow-Headed Ant and Marsh Fritillary
- Nanette Milne MSP - Twin Flower
- Christine Graham MSP - House Sparrow
- Bill Kidd MSP - Red Kite and Common Pipistrelle
- Richard Simpson MSP - Small Blue
- Alex Ferguson MSP - Native Oyster
- John Lamont MSP - Northern Brown Argus
- Chic Brodie MSP - Chequered Skipper
- Jayne Baxter MSP - Brown Long-eared Bat
- Jim Hume MSP - Noctule Bat and Leatherback Turtle
- Murdo Fraser MSP - Natterer’s Bat and Juniper
- Stewart Stevenson MSP - Spiny Lobster
- Alison McInnes MSP - Bottle Nose Dolphin
- Aileen Campbell MSP - Large Heath Butterfly
- Joan McAlpine MSP - Adder
- Graeme Pearson MSP - Leisler’s Bat
- Richard Baker MSP - Common Frog
- Patrick Harvie MSP - Minke Whale
David Torrance MSP          Common Lizard
Willie Coffey MSP           Cranberry
Stuart McMillan MSP         Basking Shark
Gordon MacDonald MSP        Bordered Brown Lacewing
Kenneth Gibson MSP          Pearl Border Fritillary and Blue Whale
Christina McKelvie MSP      White Beaked Dolphin
Annabelle Ewing MSP         Mountain Sibbaldia
Maureen Watt MSP            Harbour Porpoise
Patricia Ferguson MSP       Manx Shearwater and Fin Whale
Willie Rennie MSP           Nathusius Pipistrelle
Linda Fabiani MSP           Frog Orchid
Bruce Crawford MSP          Slow Worm
John Scott MSP              Grayling
Nigel Don MSP               Kittiwake
Michael Russell MSP         Corncrake
Richard Lyle MSP            Andrena ruficrus
Clare Adamson MSP           Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
Lewis Macdonald MSP        Curlew
Mike MacKenzie MSP          Common Skate
Adam Ingram MSP             Firework Anemone
Sandra White MSP            Violet Oil Beetle
George Adam MSP             Flame Shell
Jim Eadie MSP               Water Vole
Colin Keir MSP              Killer Whale
Roderick Campbell MSP       Harbour Seal
James Dornan MSP            Risso's Dolphin
Kevin Stewart MSP           Sei Whale