The iconic Scottish Black Grouse is the latest species to have been adopted under the hugely successful and popular Species Champion initiative which invites Members of the Scottish Parliament to lend their political weight to helping safeguard Scotland’s endangered creepy, crawlies, cuddly, fluffy and sea frolicking species.

With the Black Grouse being championed by Ken Macintosh MSP, the initiative has now hit a record 70 MSPs Species Champions, well over the half way mark and still gathering support with more Champions on the way. The initiative now has **70 MSP Species Champions**, looking after **85 unique species**.

The Species Champion initiative is coordinated by Scottish Environment LINK’s Wildlife Forum. Since 2012, they have invited MSPs champion species that are currently facing significant threats and the initiative has been recognised by the environment sector by being short listed for the upcoming Nature of Scotland Awards.

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

- **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;
- **Mary Scanlon MSP**, who was the first Champion to secure a Member’s Debate on her species, the Freshwater Pearl Mussel and it also short-listed for Politician of the Year Award at the Nature of Scotland Awards for all her dedicated work on her species;
- **Claudia Beamish MSP**, who is often seen wearing her Species Champion Foster moth scarf, whose pattern was inspired by the species and created by Art and Design pupil from Braes High School Falkirk; and
- **Graeme Dey MSP**, champion for the Woolly Willow and who signed-up well over 10 of his MSP colleagues to the scheme and advocates youth involvement.

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.

**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”.

Ken Macintosh MSP says:
“I was delighted to add my support to Scottish Environment LINK and that of so many Parliamentary colleagues in becoming Species Champion for the Black Grouse. I am conscious that despite being born and brought up in the highlands, I have become a townie at least one step removed from our fantastic natural environment and wonderful wildlife. Here is an initiative which can help develop understanding, improve our relationship with the land and highlight threats to such iconic species as the Black Grouse. Who would not wish to support it.”

ENDS
For more information please contact:

**Craig MacAdam**  
Convenor of LINK Wildlife Forum  
T: 01786 460360

**Rea Cris**  
Parliamentary Officer, LINK  
T: 01312254345

**Nick Underdown**  
Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer  
Scottish Environment LINK  
T: 07726362727

(Pictures available on request)

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) 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 Elegrass
- 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 Fergusson 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 Bordered Fritillary and Blue Whale
- Christina Mckelvie MSP: White Beaked Dolphin
- Annabelle Ewing MSP: Mountain Sibbaldia
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<th>Maureen Watt MSP</th>
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<td>Patricia Ferguson MSP</td>
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<td>Willie Rennie MSP</td>
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<td>Linda Fabiani MSP</td>
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