

Press Release

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The Nature of Politics: Species Champions Go Wild in the Scottish Parliament

Today the award-winning Species Champions initiative is relaunched in the Scottish Parliament with the announcement of the first 48 Champions.

From the iconic Red squirrel and Bottlenose dolphin, to little-known treasures like the Flame shell and Bordered brown lacewing, Scottish Environment LINK are asking MSPs to become champions for wildlife.

The State of Nature Report, launched last week, revealed that Scotland's fish, mammals, fungi, birds, invertebrates, trees, plants, amphibians and reptiles are under threat as never before.

Intensive agriculture, damaging development, over-exploitation of natural resources, invasive species and climate change all put pressure on Scotland's unique and globally important ecosystems.

Craig Macadam, Director of Buglife Scotland, said, "When did you last look for creepy-crawlies under a stone? How many of Scotland's 93,000 species could you name? We're looking for champions to rekindle our excitement about nature's diversity and our understanding of its importance to our health, wealth and wellbeing.

"MSPs will learn about how they can contribute to the conservation of their species in parliament and by supporting practical action in the community."

Graeme Dey MSP, Chair of the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform Committee and Species Champion for Woolly willow, said "I would encourage all of my MSP colleagues, the relatively new and longer serving ones, to get involved in this programme. Not only is it highlighting a hugely important subject matter. It is also good fun!"

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy by 2020. This will be a particular focus for the work of Species Champions in the current parliament.

Champions can take action for their species in Parliament by asking questions, tabling motions, holding debates, and in discussions in committee. They can also raise awareness of their species in their constituency and further afield.

There are still over 80 MSPs who have yet to join the scheme and take up species. One question in particular is a matter for keen speculation. Rob Gibson, former chair of the Environment committee, retired at the end of the last session. His species, Rusty bog moss or *Sphagnum fuscum* still awaits a champion. Who will be the Scottish Parliament's new moss boss?

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Editors' Notes

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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

(2) The Species Champions website is at <http://www.scotlink.org/work-areas/species-champions/> and on Twitter @SpeciesChampion

(3) The following members of Scottish Environment LINK support the Species Champions initiative: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Froglife Trust (Scotland), Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, Plantlife Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish Badgers, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Wild Land Group, Woodland Trust Scotland, Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

(4) Species Champions is supported by a Yorkshire and Clydesdale Bank Spirit of the Community Award.

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