

Press Release

Embargoed until: Thursday 31st October 2013, 15:00

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



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(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) 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	Woolly Willow
Dave Stewart MSP	Great Yellow Bumblebee
Angus MacDonald MSP	Bog Sun Jumper Spider and Eelgrass
Alison Johnstone 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 Grahame 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

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David Torrance MSP
Willie Coffey MSP
Stuart McMillan MSP
Gordon MacDonald MSP
Kenneth Gibson MSP
Christina McKelvie MSP
Annabelle Ewing MSP
Maureen Watt MSP
Patricia Ferguson MSP
Willie Rennie MSP
Linda Fabiani MSP
Bruce Crawford MSP
John Scott MSP
Nigel Don MSP
Michael Russell MSP
Richard Lyle MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
Lewis Macdonald MSP
Mike MacKenzie MSP
Adam Ingram MSP
Sandra White MSP
George Adam MSP
Jime Eadie MSP
Colin Keir MSP
Roderick Campbell MSP
James Dornan MSP
Kevin Stewart MSP

Common Lizard
Cranberry
Basking Shark
Bordered Brown Lacewing
Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Blue Whale
White Beaked Dolphin
Mountain Sibbaldia
Harbour Porpoise
Manx Shearwater and Fin Whale
Nathusius Pipistrelle
Frog Orchid
Slow Worm
Grayling
Kittiwake
Corncrake
Andrena ruficrus
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
Curlew
Common Skate
Firework Anemone
Violet Oil Beetle
Flame Shell
Water Vole
Killer Whale
Harbour Seal
Risso's Dolphin
Sei Whale

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