

SPECIES CHAMPIONS

Members of the Scottish Parliament lending political support to the protection of Scotland's threatened wildlife by becoming Species Champions

News Update
Autumn 2018



100 Day Challenge • Climate Change • Champions Outside • Group MSP Activities • Parliamentary Activity

MSPs take part in 100 Day Challenge to show support for their species

From June to September, the Species Champions 100 Day Challenge encouraged MSPs to participate in a series of actions to raise awareness about their selected species and the threats facing them as well as wider biodiversity concerns in Scotland. Over the 100 days, 60 MSP Species Champions engaged in a variety of activities, including Champions who were yet to meet their species.



The challenge culminated in a parliamentary event in September, which saw over 30 MSP Species Champions, LINK member organisations and other guests gathered to celebrate and to look ahead to the future of the initiative, and the challenges for biodiversity in Scotland, especially in the context of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy target deadline of 2020. The event was hosted by Graeme Dey MSP, Species Champion for Alpine-blue sow thistle and Woolly willow, who outlined his own experiences as Species Champion and commended the efforts of fellow MSPs for getting behind the initiative. Charles Dundas, LINK Chair, spoke of opportunities for Species Champions to engage and make a difference to environmental issues in Scotland. Following this event, Scottish Environment LINK urges MSP Species Champions to keep up the good work in standing up for Scotland's most threatened species in Parliament and beyond.

Meet Our Newest Species Champions:



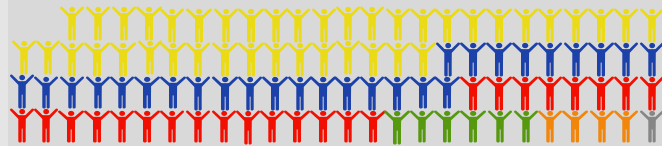
Michelle Ballantyne MSP
Species Champion for Atlantic Salmon with National Trust for Scotland



Dean Lockhart MSP
Species Champion for Corn Bunting with RSPB Scotland

There are now

102 Species Champions in the Scottish Parliament



Climate Change Bill and Biodiversity: Call for Species Champion Support

As the current Climate Change bill makes its way through parliament, Scottish Environment LINK and its members are asking for measures to protect and enhance biodiversity, and for ecosystem health to be fully considered. LINK members note that the urgency and breadth of action required to arrest biodiversity decline in Scotland has not translated across the emissions reductions target and other parts of the Climate Bill in its current form.

Scottish Environment LINK calls upon Species Champions to support our 7 core asks, including a target for net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest (see box on the right), in order to deliver an effective and robust Climate Bill, which will protect Scotland's amazing species.

Declining biodiversity can change the way an ecosystem functions and impact on how ecosystems deliver ecosystem services. In order to help Scotland's unique, varied and globally important biodiversity, we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit future climate change. This will ensure that our natural environment is in a healthier state and can continue to help us tackle climate change by sequestering carbon and performing other vital functions.

Across the species found in Scotland, 9% are at risk of becoming extinct in the UK and climate change is one of the key reasons for this decline (2016 State of Nature Report). The recent SNH report on the delivery of the 2020 global Aichi targets noted that climate change is particularly affecting our most sensitive and vulnerable habitats, including; uplands, wetlands, native woodlands, marine habitat areas and coastal habitats such as machair. SNH's report concluded that out of 20 biodiversity targets, Scotland is on track to meet only 7 by 2020.

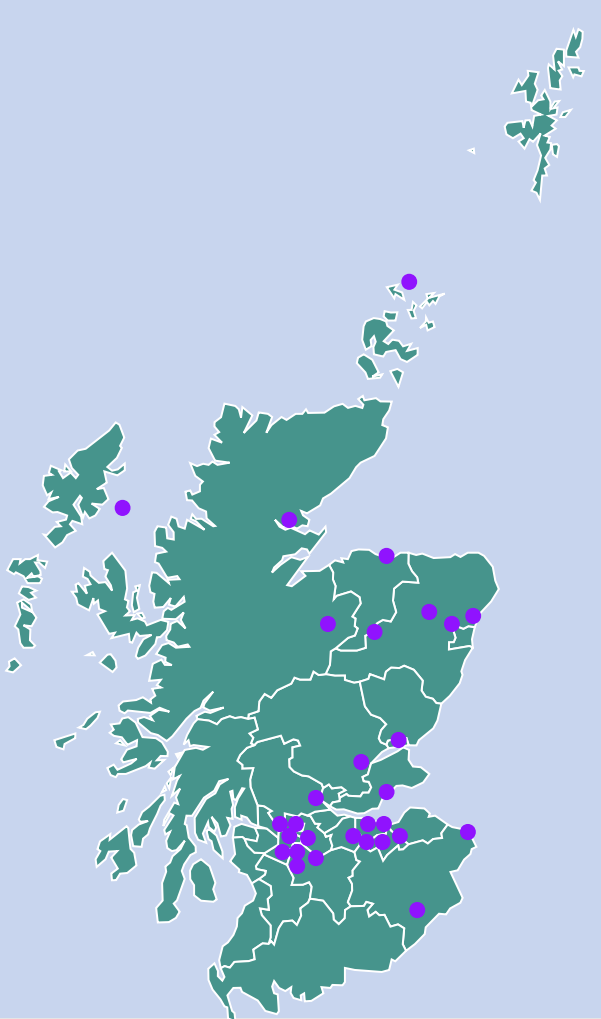
Scottish Environment LINK calls upon Species Champions to support LINK's asks to deliver an effective and robust Climate Bill, which will protect Scotland's nature. Many Species Champions have gone out to see their species, and will be aware of the impact that climate change may have on them, the broader ecosystems and the functions that rely on their health.

For more information, please visit www.scotlink.org

Scottish Environment LINK is calling for:

1. Introduction of net-zero emissions target for 2050 and ambitious interim targets
2. Strengthening legislation on the Scottish Land Use Strategy
3. Introduction of a Nitrogen Balance Sheet – to get a clear picture of nitrogen flows and losses
4. Establishing a target for increasing the area of agroforestry
5. Establishing a "sunset clause" for peat extraction
6. Setting a duty on Ministers to establish a National Ecological Network in line with commitments made in the Biodiversity Route Map
7. Monitoring of climate change impacts on marine ecosystems and incorporate them into the design and management of Marine Protected Areas

Species Champions Out and About



Maureen Watt MSP, Species Champion for Harbour porpoise visited WDC Spey Bay



Jenny Gilruth MSP, Species Champion for rowan visited Woodland Trust site near Largo



Joe FitzPatrick MSP, Species Champion for elm visited the Camperdown elm in Dundee



Liam McArthur MSP, Species Champion for Scottish Primrose visited Papa Westray



John Finnie MSP, Species Champion for aspen visited Woodland Trust site at Ledmore and Migdale



Alasdair Allan MSP, Species Champion for Manx shearwater visited the Shiant Isles



Daniel Johnson MSP, Species Champion for Bordered Brown lacewing looked for his species in Holyrood Park



Graeme Dey MSP, Species Champion for Alpine-blue sow thistle and Woolly willow visited the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh



Ash Denham MSP, Species Champion for ash tree visited Bawsinch and Duddingston nature reserve



Bill Bowman MSP, Species Champion for twinflower visited National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge near Braemar



Colin Smyth MSP, Species Champion for badger spoke at Scottish Badger Week at the Falls of Clyde nature reserve



Maurice Golden MSP, Species Champion for Arran whitebeam visited the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh



Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Species Champion for Rusty bog-moss visited Red Moss in Balerno



John Mason MSP, Species Champion for kestrel helped ring kestrel chicks at Drumpellier Country Park



Graham Simpson MSP, Species Champion for Bilberry bumblebee and holly has been out to see both species over summer



Clare Adamson MSP, Species Champion for Small pearl-bordered fritillary visited Greenhead Moss Community Nature Park



Monica Lennon MSP, Species Champion for Oak visited Cazdow Oaks near Hamilton



Tom Mason MSP, Species Champion for Northern damselfly visited National Trust for Scotland's Castle Fraser with Buglife staff



Rhoda Grant MSP, Species Champion for wildcat visited the Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaid



Fulton MacGregor MSP, Species Champion for Natterer's bat at a batwalk in his constituency



Gillian Martin MSP, Species Champion for yew, visited her species in Cultercullen



Patrick Harvie MSP, Species Champion for Red mason bee looking for his species at Woodland Garden in Glasgow



Sandra White MSP, Species Champion for kingfisher at Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow



Alexander Burnett MSP, Species Champion for Freshwater Pearl mussel looking for his species in the Dee Catchment

Group MSP Visits

St Abb's Head hosts Species Champions



In July, a group of MSPs visited the National Trust for Scotland's St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve for a tour of the Berwickshire site. Amongst the attendees were Christina McKelvie MSP who is the Species Champion for the white-beaked dolphin and Michelle Ballantyne MSP, Species Champion for Atlantic salmon. They were joined by local MSPs Paul Wheelhouse and Rachael Hamilton, who are also involved in the Species Champions initiative.

MSPs were joined by LINK Marine Group members NTS, RSPB Scotland and MCS, as well as Mario Ray, a representative from the nearby St. Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve. The visit took place at the height of the seabird breeding season. St Abb's Head is one of the most accessible places to see seabirds in mainland Scotland and is an important site for kittiwakes, guillemots and razorbills.

Calum Duncan, Convenor of the LINK Marine Group and Head of Conservation in Scotland at the Marine Conservation Society said: "As part of the LINK Species Champion 100 day Challenge, we were delighted to be joined by MSPs to celebrate Scotland's incredible marine life at the St Abb's Head seabird colony."

Holyrood Batwalk



In early September, Species Champion MSPs Annie Wells (common pipistrelle), Finlay Carson (Leisler's bat), Fulton MacGregor (Natterer's bat) and staff representing George Adam MSP (soprano pipistrelle) joined Bat Conservation Trust and LINK staff on a bat walk around Holyrood Park in Edinburgh.

Using bat detectors to pick up their echolocation calls, MSPs managed to see and hear the common pipistrelle foraging overhead among trees in the park. Additionally, MSP champions got to see a number of species up close, thanks to Jean from Tayside Bat Group, who brought in some bats who are under their care.

Parliamentary Activity

Hedgehog Awareness Week

"That the Parliament notes, Hedgehog Awareness Week 2018 takes place between 6 and 12 May; and aims to encourage people to take steps to raise awareness of the hedgehogs' plight"

Ruth Maguire MSP, Species Champion for Hedgehog lodges a motion on Hedgehog Awareness Week 2018



Wildlife Crime

"To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports of poaching of protected pearl mussels in Loch Assynt, and what plans it has to prevent such poaching taking place."

Alexander Burnett MSP, lodged a PQ, on the poaching of Freshwater pearl mussels in Loch Assynt.



Boating Wildlife Awareness Week

"That the Parliament recognises Boating Wildlife Awareness Week, which takes place between 11 and 15 June 2018; understands that the week aims to promote responsible boating to minimise disturbance to marine wildlife"

Stuart McMillan MSP, Species Champion for Basking shark lodged a motion to recognise the aims of Boating Wildlife Awareness Week.



Action Oak Partnership

"To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken in its role as a partner in the Action Oak Partnership."

Monica Lennon MSP, Species Champion for Oak lodged a PQ on Government involvement with the Action Oak Partnership.



Restoring the Caledonian Pinewood Forest

"That the Parliament recognises that only 1% of the original Caledonian Pinewood forest remains today across Scotland, that the Caledonian Pinewood Recovery Project, being implemented by Trees For Life, aims to save these remnant pinewoods; notes that the project sees Trees for Life working in partnership with the Woodland Trust Scotland"

Joan McAlpine MSP, Species Champion for Scots Pine lodges a motion commending the Caledonian Pinewood Restoration Project



World Oceans Day 2018

"That the Parliament recognises World Oceans Day on 8 June 2018, which this year highlights the damage caused to the world's oceans from plastic pollution; agrees that the seas around Scotland are invaluable to many endangered species, including orcas."

Tavish Scott MSP, Champion for Orca, lodged a motion for World Oceans Day 2018



State of the World's Birds 2018

"That the Parliament notes the publication of the report, State of the World's Birds 2018, which provides a comprehensive look at the health of bird populations; considers that the decline in Scotland's puffin populations is a matter of concern; and urges for continued efforts in Scotland to reduce the adverse effects of human activity on the wider environment."

Claire Baker MSP, Species Champion for Puffin lodged a motion noting the publication of the State of the worlds birds 2018 report.



Curlew Conservation

"To ask the Scottish Government:

- What steps it is taking to provide appropriate agri-environment measures to support farmers and land managers carrying out conservation action for the curlew.
- How it expects its new Biodiversity Challenge Fund to support the protection of curlews.

Lewis Macdonald MSP lodged a series of PQs concerning his Species, Curlew.



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www.scotlink.org/work-areas/species-champions



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