

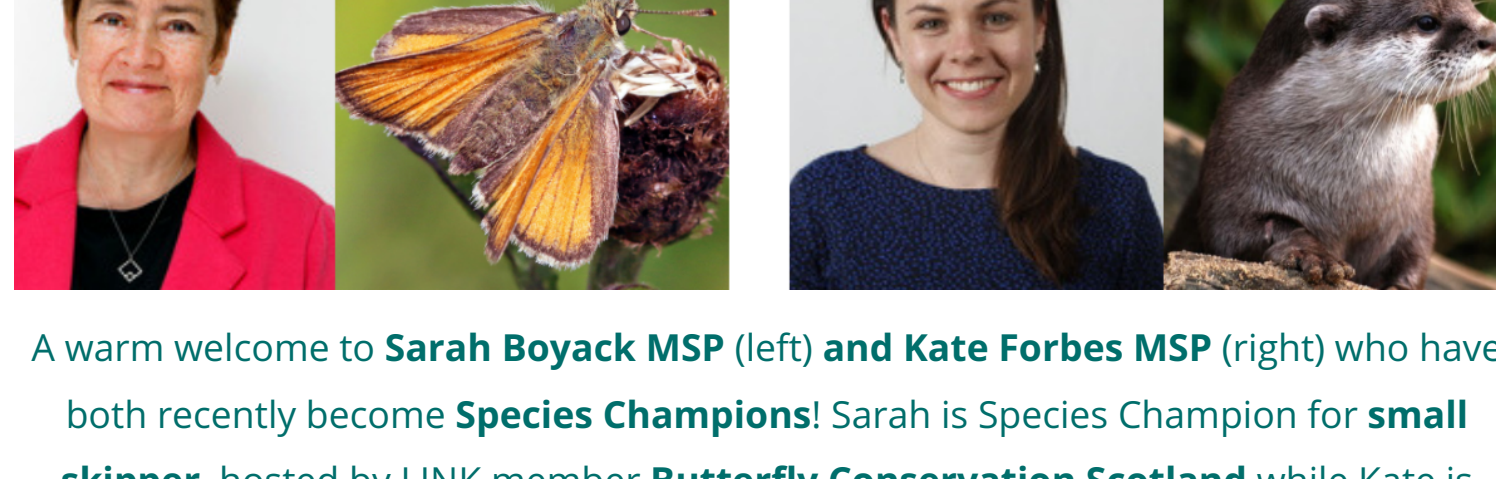
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### Members of the Scottish Parliament lending political support to the protection of Scotland's threatened wildlife by becoming Species Champions

There are now 104 Species Champions in the Scottish Parliament

### Meet Our Newest Species Champions



A warm welcome to Sarah Boyack MSP (left) and Kate Forbes MSP (right) who have both recently become Species Champions! Sarah is Species Champion for small skipper, hosted by LINK member Butterfly Conservation Scotland while Kate is Species Champion for otter, hosted by LINK member Scottish Wildlife Trust.



Scotland has some of the best remaining rainforest sites in Europe and we owe it to the world to protect them.

The combination of high rainfall and relatively mild year-round temperatures means woodlands on the west coast are very humid. This allows these woodlands to provide a refuge for some of the world's rarest bryophytes and lichens. There are plenty of opportunities for Species Champion MSPs to spot their species as some of these sites are dripping with biodiversity.

But Scotland's rainforest is in trouble and it needs policy support and resource allocation that promotes its restoration and expansion. As little as 30,000 hectares remain – a mere 2% of Scotland's woodland cover and only one-fifth of the area it could occupy according to climatic conditions.

The remnant oak, birch, ash, native pine and hazel woodlands are small, fragmented and isolated from each other. Almost all show little or no regeneration due to high levels of browsing; almost half are being choked with Rhododendron panicum and a fifth have been planted with exotic conifer plantations. They also face threats from diseases like ash dieback; as well as nitrogen pollution, infrastructure development, and climate change.

If we don't start taking serious and urgent action to support Scotland's rainforest, we face the risk of losing this globally-important habitat completely and the longer we wait, the harder it will become.

The Atlantic Woodland Alliance, a voluntary partnership of 19 organisations with a shared interest in Scotland's rainforest launched 'The State of Scotland's Rainforest' – a report that clearly outlines the danger this habitat is in and what we need to do to save it.

When possible to do so, the Woodland Trust would like to lead on organising a group site visit with interested MSP Species Champions. Please email Arina Russell, Woodland Trust Public Affairs Manager for Scotland, at arinarussell@woodlandtrust.org.uk if you'd like to take part.

By Arina Russell, Woodland Trust Public Affairs Manager for Scotland

### Global Assessment of IPES and State of Nature in Scotland Report 2019



There's no shortage of statistics and opinion when it comes to the environment – deciding what's important can be a challenge. But last year two reports appeared that give us new clarity and on the question of where humanity stands in relation to the natural world.

May saw the first Global Assessment of IPBES – the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Established by the UN, IPBES will do for nature what the IPCC reports did for climate change: gathering humanity's best expertise in a coherent form to guide our collective responses. IPCC reports have been challenging and political responses have too often been faltering. But the IPCC has focused minds as never before, giving those who seek progress a global reference, and policymakers meaningful targets to work towards. The IPBES report, with similar authority and reach, gives us our most accurate assessment of human impacts on global nature. It finds that we are losing biodiversity faster than ever before in human history. That 1 million species are at risk of extinction. However, it also concludes we can reverse declines in biodiversity, and we can utilise nature sustainably. Transformative change is a prerequisite for success, but that change is deliverable within broad socioeconomic realities if we enact a step-change in how we prioritise and resource innovative action.

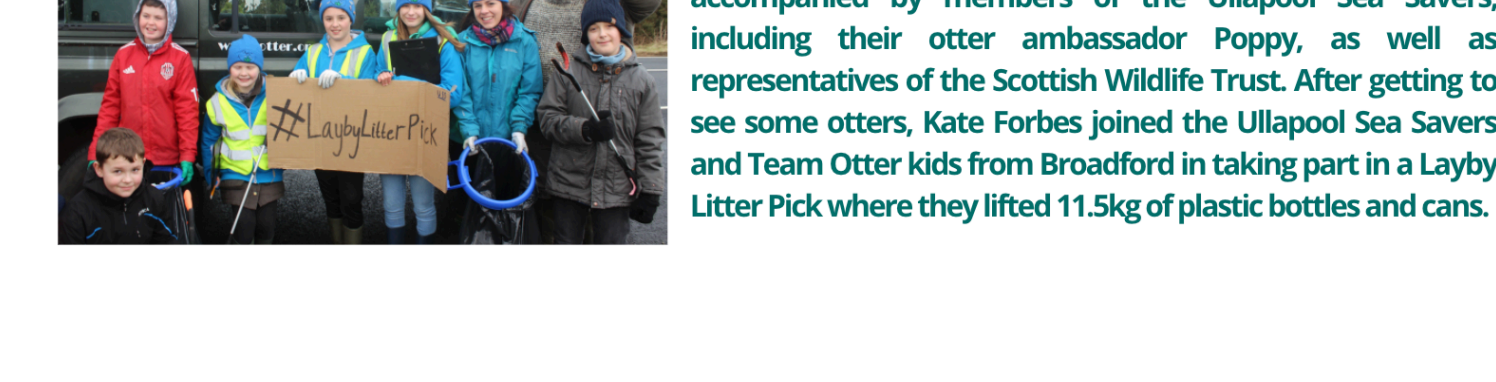
The second key report relates specifically to Scotland. The State of Nature in Scotland Report 2019 represents our most objective assessment of how biodiversity is faring in Scotland. It was the third such report (others in 2013 and 2016), produced by a wide partnership, including Scottish Environment LINK NGOs, research institutes, and this year, for the first time, the Scottish Government's nature agency SNH. It draws on data collected by thousands of dedicated expert volunteer naturalists, showing that the average abundance and distribution of Scotland's species has declined in recent decades and that the decline continues today. Since 1970 49% of species have declined in abundance, with 11% of Scottish species now classified as threatened with national extinction.

In response to the first IPBES assessment, the First Minister stated that the crisis facing biodiversity is as serious as the climate emergency. Growing awareness of these twin climate and biodiversity crises is emerging across society. Nature-based solutions to the climate emergency, actions delivering both for nature and for carbon, are being developed. The next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is being planned, and Scottish Environment LINK looks forward to strategic and collaborative co-design engagement. We can and must collectively build new approaches that will halt species loss in our country. And we look forward to MSP Species Champions playing exciting and innovative roles in achieving that shared goal.

By Paul Walton, Head of Habitats and Species, RSPB Scotland

### Species Champions Out and About

We are thrilled to see Species Champions learning about, engaging with and visiting their species. With 49% of species having declined, and one in nine species facing extinction in Scotland, we need action for nature like never before.



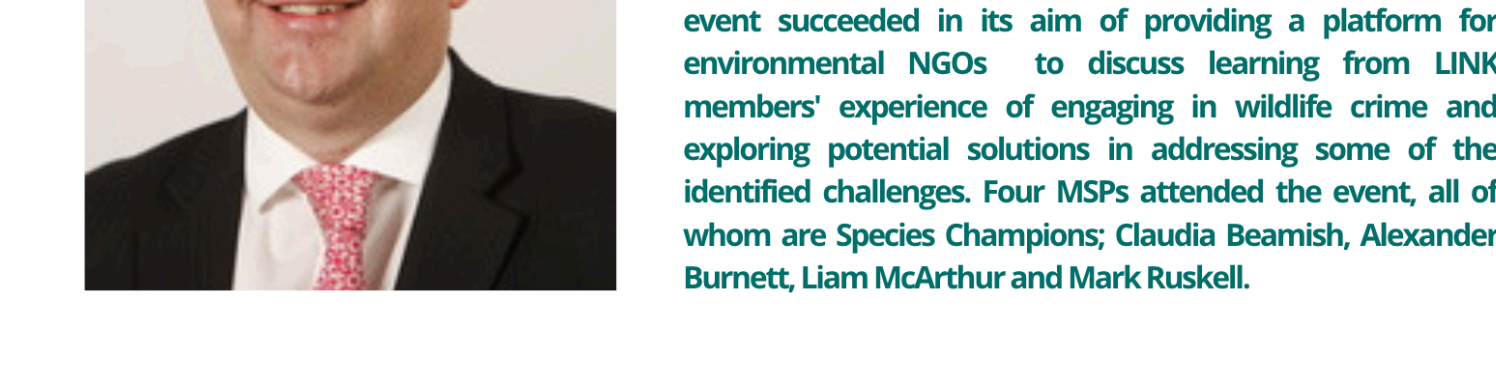
#### Otters on the Isle of Skye

Kate Forbes MSP, Species Champion for the otter with Scottish Wildlife Trust, visited the International Otter Survival Fund in Broadford on the Isle of Skye in order to learn more about otters and the threats they face. Kate Forbes was accompanied by members of the Ullapool Sea Savers, including their otter ambassador Poppy, as well as representatives of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. After getting to see some otters, Kate Forbes joined the Ullapool Sea Savers and Team Otter kids from Broadford in taking part in a Litter Pick where they lifted 11.5kg of plastic bottles and cans.



#### Kinclaven Bluebell Wood

Graham Simpson MSP, Species Champion for holly with Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) visited Kinclaven Bluebell Wood where he took part in a mass tree planting event as part of WTS's Big Climate Fightback campaign. Graham Simpson planted holly as well as other tree species.



#### Wildlife Crime: (1999-2019) a 20-year review

On October the 1st, Colin Smyth MSP, Species Champion for the badger with Scottish Badgers, chaired an event organised by Scottish Environment LINK's Wildlife Crime Group. The event succeeded in its aim of providing a platform for environmental NGOs to discuss learning from LINK members' experience of engaging in wildlife crime and exploring potential solutions in addressing some of the identified challenges. Four MSPs attended the event, all of whom are Species Champions, Claudia Beamish, Alexander Burnett, Liam McArthur and Mark Ruskell.



#### Living Seas

Gail Ross MSP, Species Champion for seagrass and red squirrel with the Scottish Wildlife Trust hosted the Living Seas event, as part of Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020. The event involved the unveiling of a new seagrass banner by the Ullapool Sea Savers Project Seagrass which was dedicated to Andy Jackson of SubSea TV.



#### Great British Beach Clean 2019

Over the 20th-23rd of September 2019 an incredible 2905 volunteers, including 11 MSP Species Champions, headed to 146 beaches across Scotland to take part in the Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean. This 26 year running citizen science project involves volunteers completing a beach clean and a litter survey over a 100m stretch of beach. Over the four days a whopping 67,300 litter items were removed and surveyed showing that in Scotland we are finding nearly 500 items of litter on average for every 100m of surveyed beach. It was fantastic to see Species Champions heading out to support local volunteers and we hope they will use the information gathered to push for the policy changes our beaches need to see these numbers drastically dropping in the future.

Find out more [here](#)

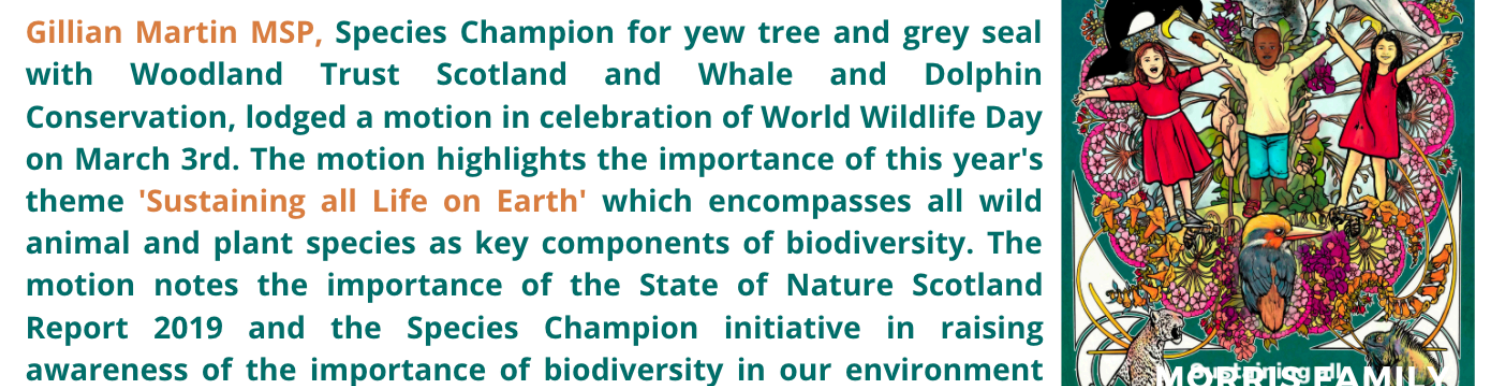
### Species Champions in Parliament



#### World Wetlands Day 2020

A members' business debate ahead of World Wetlands Day 2020 allowed for Species Champions to discuss the importance of Scotland's precious wetlands in relation to their species' habitats. Two MSP Species Champions who contributed to the debate were Gillian Martin MSP (right), Species Champion for yew tree and grey seal with Woodland Trust Scotland and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, respectively, and Emma Harper MSP (left), Species Champion for natterjack toad with FrogLife. The MSP Species Champions highlighted the importance of protecting wetlands in order to support both biodiversity and endangered species' habitats. All 9 MSPs who participated in the debate were Species Champions.

Find out more [here](#).



#### World Wildlife Day 2020

Gillian Martin MSP, Species Champion for yew tree and grey seal with Woodland Trust Scotland and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, lodged a motion in celebration of World Wildlife Day on March 3rd. The motion highlights the importance of this year's theme 'Sustaining all Life on Earth' which encompasses all wild animal and plant species as key components of biodiversity. The motion notes the importance of the State of Nature Scotland Report 2019 and the Species Champion initiative in raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity in our environment and promoting action in the Scottish Parliament.



**Twinflower**  
Bill Bowman MSP, Species Champion for twinflower with Plantlife Scotland lodged a motion which welcomed the money received by Plantlife Scotland from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which will enable vital conservation work to be carried out in the Cairngorms to save the twinflower plant and other rare species.

**Protection of Woodlands**  
Rachael Hamilton MSP, Species Champion for alder with Woodland Trust Scotland asked a Parliamentary Question on how woodlands can be brought back into favourable condition in order to support biodiversity and what consideration has been given to reduce levels of invasive non-native species.

**The Green Blue**  
Stuart McMillan MSP, Species Champion for basking shark with Marine Conservation Society lodged a motion highlighting the importance of Scotland's coastline and island waters in relation to The Green Blue, the environmental awareness initiative developed by the Royal Yachting Association and British Marine which aims to promote a sustainable boating community.

**Atlantic Salmon**  
Michelle Ballantyne MSP, Species Champion for Atlantic salmon with National Trust for Scotland lodged a motion congratulating the Peebles Salmon Anglers Club on taking over the lease of the Crown Water beat in Peebles. This has allowed for the maintenance of healthy salmon stocks and the conservation value of salmon fishing as a means of monitoring the numbers and swim wild salmon stocks.

**Red Squirrel**  
Gail Ross MSP, Species Champion for red squirrel with Scottish Wildlife Trust asked a Parliamentary Question on what action is being taken to protect the red squirrel through encouraging local authorities to provide appropriate signage to warn drivers of their presence in areas of woodland.

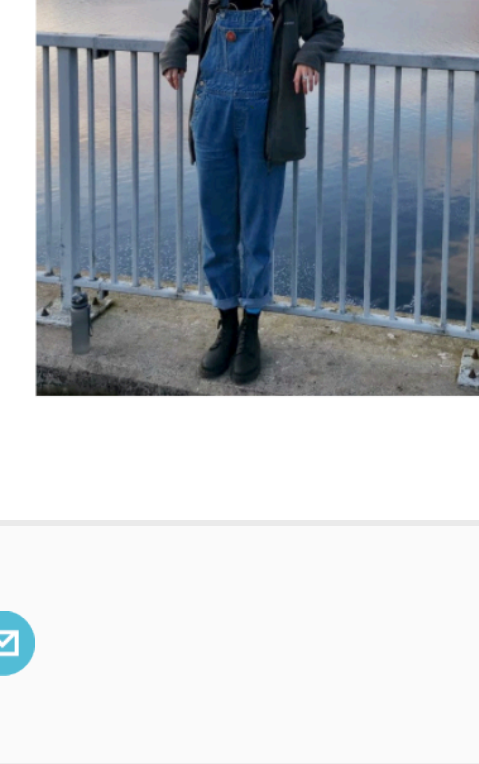
**Ythan Community Trust**  
Gillian Martin MSP, Species Champion for yew tree and grey seal with Woodland Trust Scotland and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, lodged a motion commending the Ythan Community Trust for its continuing efforts to improve access at the Newburgh Links to encourage viewing of the grey seals without disturbing the animals.

**World Curlew Day**  
Lewis Macdonald MSP, Species Champion for curlew with RSPB, lodged a motion in celebration of World Curlew Day (21 April 2020). The motion commends the annual event which aims to raise awareness of the various species of curlew and the threats they face around the world.

**World Bee Day**  
Gillian Martin MSP, Species Champion for yew tree and grey seal with Woodland Trust Scotland and Whale and Dolphin Conservation lodged a motion in celebration of World Bee Day. The motion congratulates how bees support the growth of trees, flowers and other plants, which serve as food and shelter for creatures. The survival of bees is integral to a healthy and balanced ecosystem.

### LINK Species Champion Coordinator

Juliet Caldwell has joined LINK as the new Species Champion Coordinator. Juliet works part-time and her usual working days are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If you'd like to arrange a meeting with Juliet you can contact her on the email below.



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.

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