

Working Together for Flame Shells: Maree Todd MSP and the Ullapool Sea Savers

My name is Calum - I'm the Octopus Ambassador for the Ullapool Sea Savers.

I'm Maya, and I'm the White-tailed Sea Eagle Ambassador for the Ullapool Sea Savers.

Hi, I'm Abigail and I'm the Seal Ambassador for the Ullapool Sea Savers.

Hello, I am Janis Patterson and I work with the Ullapool Sea Savers.

The Ullapool Sea Savers is a youth-led marine conservation charity based in the heart of Wester Ross Marine Protected Area and we work to show people just how much there is to love about the marine environment.

Each young Sea Saver becomes an ambassador for a specific species, known as 'Species Ambassadors' and this is loosely based on the Nature Champions initiative. Some Species Ambassadors have been lucky enough to meet their counterpart MSP Nature Champions, including Maree Todd.

My favourite thing about octopuses are just how smart they are and how similar their minds work to humans.

My favourite thing about white-tailed sea eagles is the incredible story behind their extinction and then successful reintroduction to Scotland.

I've learnt that seals can dive underwater for two hours.

Hi there, my name is Maree Todd, and I am the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, and I am the current Nature Champion for the Lesser Butterfly Orchid, which although it's under threat, it does grow in my constituency in both west Sutherland and Wester Ross.

I was also the Flame Shell Nature Champion in the previous session of Parliament. Now, Flame shells are named for their bright orange tentacles. These amazing wee molluscs form nests, which are like enormous beds or reefs of millions of individuals, which can support other organisms and provide nursery grounds for many species of fish and shellfish, including commercial stock.

As the then champion for the flame shell with Marine Conservation Society, I was quick to ask the Scottish Government about the damage to the Loch Carron flame shell reef caused by a scallop dredger in 2017. Thankfully, it has since become a permanent Marine Protected Area and it's now understood to be home to the world's largest flame shell bed!

I was delighted as the Flame Shell champion to join local fishermen, divers, marine scientists, school children, campaigners and, of course, the Ullapool Sea Savers as we celebrated this decision to make the protections permanent.