



# Nature Champions Relaunch Information Session

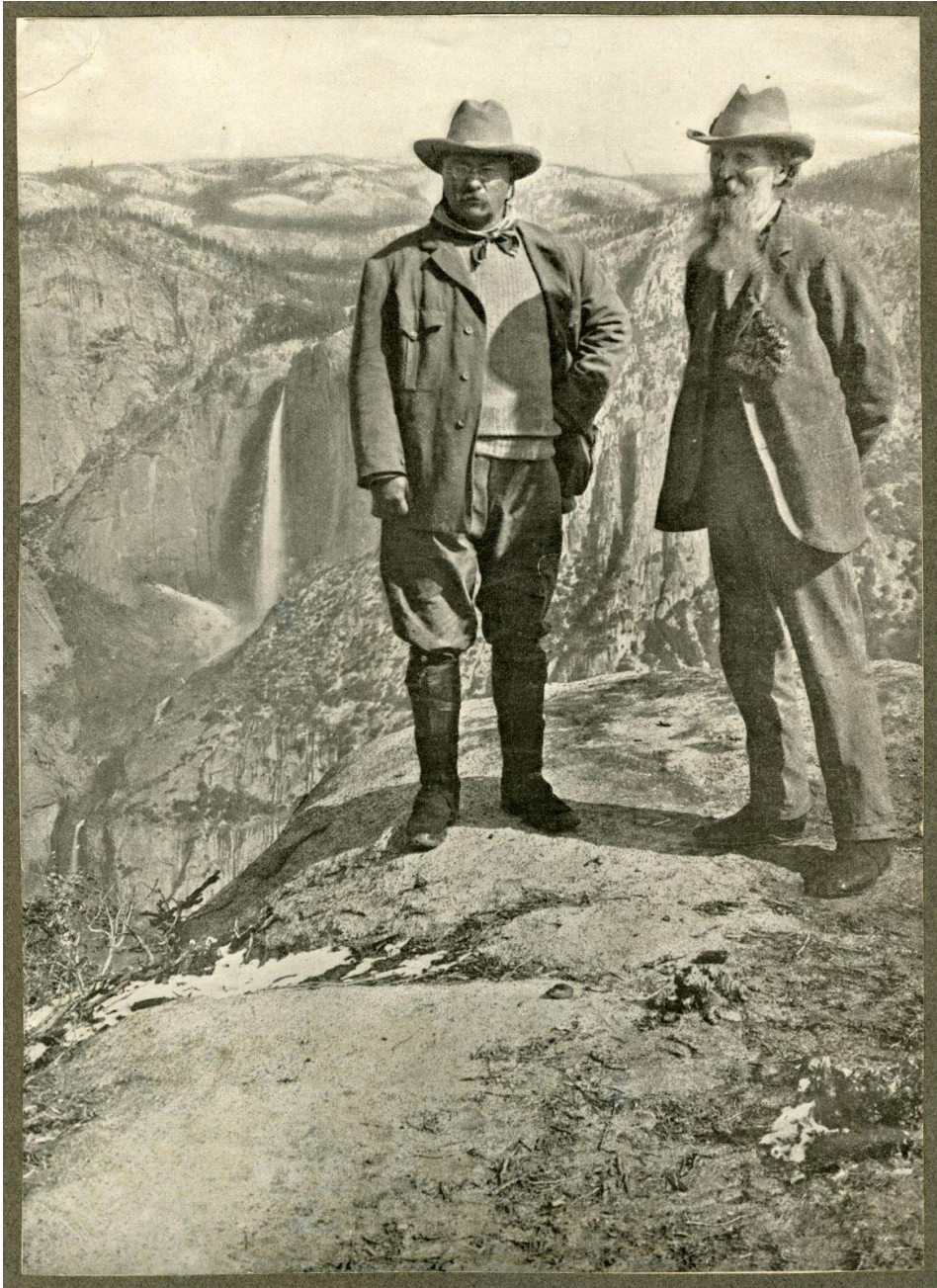
Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2026, 2-3:30pm

**Please note that this session is being recorded.**



# Agenda

1. Setting the scene
2. Advocacy in the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament – *Juliet Caldwell, LINK*
3. Early engagement with MSPs
4. Nature Champions Relaunch Comms – *Oli Navarrate Zur, LINK*
5. Nature Champions Resources
6. MSP Recruitment 101
7. Gold standard Nature Champions
  - *Erin Shott, Plantlife*
  - *Rebecca Lewis, Buglife*
8. Questions and discussion



*Jackie Dunbar MSP, Nature Champion for the Sea Trout, on a walk along the River Don with colleagues from John Muir Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust. [2023]. Photo: Scottish Wildlife Trust*

*President Roosevelt and John Muir. [1903]. Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site.*

<https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/digital-library/o283095>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

# Setting the Scene

What are the most important issues facing Scotland today:

1. The cost of living
2. Health, social care and the NHS
3. The economy
4. Immigration
5. Housing
6. Poverty
7. Independence
8. Crime
9. Education
10. Taxation
- 11. The environment and climate change**

Source: [Polling conducted by Savanta for BBC](#) • Note: Fieldwork carried out 29 January to 6 February 2026. Based on the top (net) ranked issues out of 17 topics. Online survey of 2,136 people in Scotland aged 16 and above.

# Setting the Scene

- SNP still the largest party but with reduced support compared to 2021.
- Reform UK is a significant force on the regional list vote.
- The Scottish Greens and Liberal Democrats are polling higher than in previous cycles.
- The Scottish Conservatives have seen a notable decline in support.
- **Overall:** no party is projected to win a majority, increasing the likelihood of negotiated policymaking.

# Setting the Scene

- Significant changeover of Parliamentarians (42 stepping down)
- Key environmental advocates are stepping down or unlikely to be re-elected
- Incoming MSPs are not likely to be well-versed in policy issues affecting nature
- There are going to be MSPs who are concerned about nature but not concerned about the climate crisis

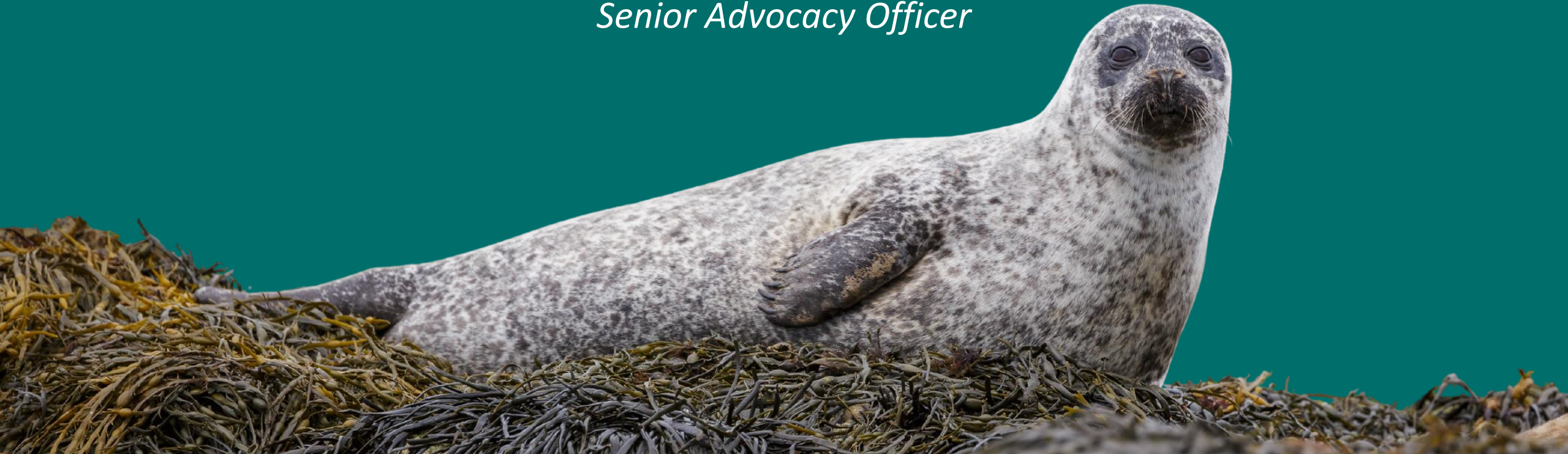
## **BUT**

- Nature Champions has a positive reputation among existing MSPs
- Initiative has a legacy of cross-party engagement and bringing together MSPs from differing positions
- Strong position to engage, educate and influence

# Advocacy in the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Juliet Caldwell

*Senior Advocacy Officer*



# Early engagement with MSPs

## May

- **18<sup>th</sup> May** Nature Champions webpage live
- w/c 18<sup>th</sup> May - Email invitation to all MSPs

## June

- w/c 1<sup>st</sup> June - Relaunch comms 'wave' 1
- 4<sup>th</sup> June - Stand Up for Nature demo outside Parliament

## July – September

- Nature Champions member-led site visits

## September

- Nature Champions Motion
- w/c 6<sup>th</sup> September - Relaunch Comms 'wave' 2
- 1<sup>st</sup> Nature Champions Newsletter of the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## October - December

- Party Conferences
- Time for Reflection contribution
- Climate & Nature Leadership Programme – LINK supported events
  - Understanding the Nature Crisis
  - Group site visit 1: Terrestrial & Freshwater
  - Social drinks reception for staffers

## 2027 -

- Nature Champions Parliamentary Exhibition
- Climate & Nature Leadership Programme – LINK supported events
  - Group site visit 2: Marine

# Relaunch Comms

Olivia Navarrete Zur  
*Communications Officer*



# Resources

- Nature Champions webpage
- Newsletter
- Bluesky
- Nature Champions Welcome Guide
- Nature Champions Guide for LINK members
- Nature Champions Training Resources
- Badges
- Records & Actions Tracker

# MSP Recruitment 101

- 1 Nature Champions Coordinator and LINK member(s) decide to recruit a Nature Champion
  - 2 Nature Champions Coordinator and LINK member(s) research relevant MSPs for the species/habitat
  - 3 **Nature Champions Coordinator will send an email invitation to the MSP**
  - 4 MSP accepts/declines invitation
  - 5 MSP is formally introduced to the LINK host member via email and receives a species/habitat Factsheet and Welcome Guide from the Nature Champions Coordinator
  - 6 Nature Champions will share the announcement on social media
  - 7 LINK host members contact their Nature Champion to welcome them and to arrange for an initial meeting and/or engagement activity
- ↓

# Research relevant MSPs for the species/habitat

1. Can the species or habitat be found within the MSP's electoral constituency or region?
2. Does the species or habitat fit in with the portfolio or personal interests of an MSP?
3. Does the required level of commitment of a species or habitat match the expected level of commitment of an MSP?
4. Does the MSP have an appropriate voting/professional history to be able to sincerely champion this species?

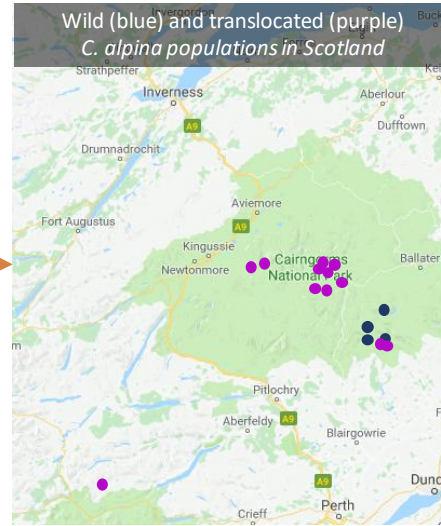
# 1. Can the species or habitat be found within the MSP's electoral constituency or region?

1

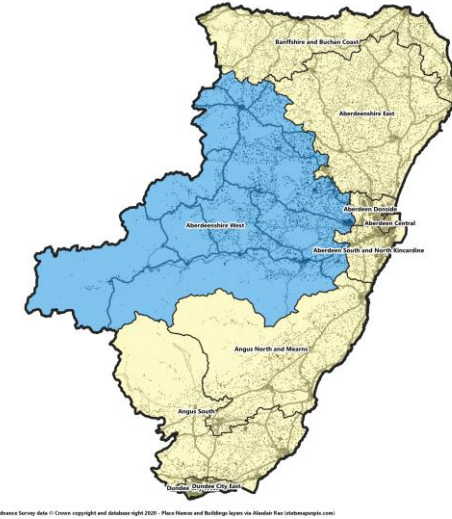
## Nature Champions: Alpine Blue Sow Thistle



Alpine Blue sow-thistle is a tall herbaceous perennial associated with Scotland's rare habitat of species-rich mountain grassland. It occurs naturally in four small mountain-ledge populations all within the Cairngorms National Park. Its restricted distribution reflects a legacy of long-term vegetation change, leading to the overall decline of its preferred habitat. It is categorised as Vulnerable in the Red Data List for Great Britain, receives protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is on the Scottish Biodiversity List. Research into Alpine Blue sow-thistle is part of the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme.



Provided by RBGE



### North East Scotland

**Region Profile**

# Constituencies  
**10**

List Seat 1  
**Liam Kerr (CON)**

List Seat 2  
**Michael Marra (LAB)**

List Seat 3  
**Douglas Lumsden (CON)**

List Seat 4  
**Maurice Golden (CON)**

List Seat 5  
**Maggie Chapman (GRN)**

List Seat 6  
**Tess White (CON)**

List Seat 7  
**Mercedes Villalba (LAB)**

ballotbox.scot

<https://ballotbox.scot/scottish-parliament/maps>

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## Nature Champions: Blanket Bogs



Blanket bogs are very rare habitats globally, with the UK and Ireland holding over 20%, most of which is in the north and west of mainland Scotland and the Western and Northern Isles, as it is a type of peatland found in places with cool, wet and, usually, oceanic climates.

Blanket bogs consist predominantly of water, with a myriad of Sphagnum moss hummocks and hollows interspersed throughout. The surface gives the appearance of 'patterned ground' when viewed from the air from the intermingling of vegetation and pool systems. Due to the wet and cool conditions, bog plants break down incredibly slowly to form a layer of peat which is typically 50 cm to 3 m deep in the UK, but can be more than 8 m deep. Due to the poor drainage, the peat develops a 'blanket' over large expanses of gently undulating ground. This distinguishes it from other types of bog.

**JNCC**

Home / Sites

### Airds Moss

Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Country	Scotland
Unitary Authority	South Western Scotland
Centroid <sup>1</sup>	N56.13252
Latitude	55.50277778
Longitude	-4.197222222
SAC EU Code	UK0030218
Status	Designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Area (ha)	1360.22

<sup>1</sup> This is the approximate central point of the SAC. In the case of large, linear or composite sites, this may not represent the location where a feature occurs within the SAC.

JNCC SAC Map

Search results for **Airds Moss**

Map showing the location of Airds Moss SAC in South Western Scotland.

sac.jncc.gov.uk

Search results for **KAT18 3LP**

Displaying 1 - 8 of 8 MSPs

You're represented by 8 MSPs. One constituency MSP who represents your local area and 7 regional MSPs who represent your larger area. You can contact either type of MSP about any issue dealt with by the Scottish Parliament.

**How accurate is my postcode?**

Constituency MSP  
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley

**Elena Whitham**  
Scottish National Party  
MSP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Constituency)

Regional MSPs  
South Scotland

**Sharon Dowry**  
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Emma Harper**  
Scottish National Party  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Craig Hoy**  
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Carel Mechan**  
Scottish Labour  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Celin Smyth**  
Scottish Labour  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Martin Whitfield**  
Scottish Labour  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

**Brian Whittle**  
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party  
MSP for South Scotland (Region)

Google Maps

Search MSPs by postcode – [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

## 2. Does the species or habitat fit in with the portfolio or personal interests of an MSP?

### Scottish / Rivers

## Nature Champions: Rivers



Freshwater is vital to a huge amount of life on Earth, including human life. Rivers in Scotland are home to a great diversity of species, including plants, invertebrates, fish, birds and mammals. Rivers channels themselves provide a diversity of habitats that provide homes for an equally diverse array of species that are perfectly adapted to survive in the specific conditions provided by these unique habitat types. River habitat itself cannot just be defined by the channel itself but also by the surrounding embankment flood plains and riparian habitats which are not only vital for different life stages of the species that inhabit our rivers but as a buffer against pollution and the impacts of climate change.

### Chamber and committees

Motion ref. SSM-23583

#### Laura Goble, 2020 Nature of Scotland Award Winner

Submitted by: Colin Beattie, Midlothian North and Musselburgh, Scottish National Party.  
Date lodged: Thursday, December 3, 2020

Supported by: Tom Arthur, Jeremy Balfour, Bill Kidd, Monica Lennon, Richard Lyle, Fulton MacGregor, Ruth Maguire, Gillian Martin, Stuart McMillan, Gil Paterson, Stewart Stevenson, David Torrance, Sandra White

That the Parliament congratulates Laura Goble, who is a Community Woodland Ranger from Newbattle Abbey College, on winning the Youth and Education Award at the 2020 Nature of Scotland Awards; in recognition of her efforts with the Forest College programme, notes that Newbattle Abbey College is the national accreditation centre for the Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards and that Laura has worked extensively with schools in Midlothian, particularly with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to support them in enjoying the outdoors and learning new skills; understands that these awards help people of all ages improve their health and wellbeing and employment options; recognises that Laura also works in the community by carrying out riverfly surveying and opening up training to others to learn this skill; notes that she is also an active member of the Esk River Improvement Group, which is committed to improving the condition of the river; celebrates the project's success and the Forest College team's hard work which has resulted in this award, and wishes Laura and everyone involved with this work all the best.



### Chamber and committees

#### Votes and motions search

Use the search below to find out more about motions, who supported them, and how MSPs voted in Parliament.

Find out more about votes and motions

Votes search

Motion search

You are currently searching for votes. Use the Motions search to search for motions instead.

#### Filters Hide

Choose an MSP

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### Chamber and committees

Motion ref. SSM-18796

#### Keep Scotland Beautiful 's Upstream B Campaign

Submitted by: John Mason, Glasgow Shettleston, Scottish National Party.  
Date lodged: Tuesday, September 10, 2019

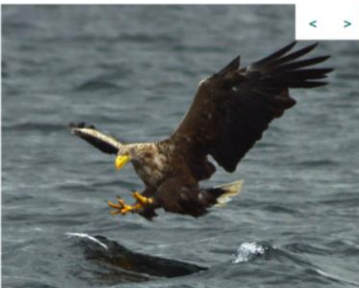
Supported by: Tom Arthur, Jenny Gilruth, Bill Kidd, Gordon Lindhurst, Richard Lyle, Fulton MacGregor, Ruth Maguire, Joan McAlpine, Mark McDonald, Stuart McMillan, Stewart Stevenson, David Torrance, Sandra White

That the Parliament recognises the Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) campaign, Upstream B, which urges people to take pride in the Clyde by taking action to stop litter on land ending up in the river; understands that 80% of marine litter begins on land, with 12.7 million tonnes of plastic litter making its way into the sea every year; recognises the environmental damage that plastic litter causes in rivers and seas; and supports KSB in its campaign to reduce the amount of plastic litter that ends up in Scotland's waters.

Search for Votes & Motions - searching for 'rivers', 'river', 'stream', Buglife', 'pollution'

### 3. Does the required level of commitment of a species or habitat match the expected level of commitment of an MSP?

**Nature Champions: White-Tailed Eagle**



The white-tailed eagle, the 'sea eagle', has been re-introduced to Scotland since 1975. The last phase ended in 2015, 99 years after it was originally driven to extinction, when the breeding population reached a landmark 100 pairs. Despite this huge success, the species remains vulnerable and is only just gaining a foothold in Eastern Scotland.

In much of Europe, white-tailed eagles thrive in close association with humans, yet poisonings and, in one case the felling of an active nest tree, still occur in Scotland, mostly on or in close proximity to intensively managed grouse moors. These pose a very real threat to the species' long term status.

Images: Jacob Seirink CC BY 2.0

News / Poisoning of White-Tailed Eagle reveals need for reform

## Poisoning of White-Tailed Eagle reveals need for reform

Wed 29 Jul, 2020

The revelation that a White-Tailed eagle found dead in the Cairngorms is found to have been poisoned shows the Scottish Government must go further to tackle wildlife crime around grouse moors, Scottish Green MSP Mark Ruskell has said.

Police Scotland have confirmed the satellite tracked bird had been poisoned with pesticide as they investigate the crime.

Greens environment spokesperson Mark Ruskell is the special champion for the White-Tailed eagle, also known as the sea eagle, of which there are only around 150 breeding pairs in Scotland.

"This is a very serious crime against a species reintroduced extinct. Sadly, this is only the latest in a long list of raptors I'm afraid recent tweaks to wildlife crime maximum sentences around detection and prosecution of these crimes.

"There needs to be real action to address this war against wildlife of this, but we've seen from the reaction to the Scottish Government that the driven grouse shooting industry is resistant to ever

**"There needs to be real action to address this war against wildlife"**  
Mark Ruskell

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First Name

Last Name

**Mark Ruskell**  
Scottish Green Party  
MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife (Region) 2016 - present day  
Former MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife (Region) 2003 - 2007

### About Mark Ruskell

<b>Contact details</b>	<b>Mark is a member of 2 committees</b>
<b>Committees</b>	<b>Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee</b> Member
<b>Cross-party groups</b>	<b>Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee</b> Member
<b>Parliamentary and Government Roles</b>	What is a committee?
<b>Party Roles</b>	
<b>Previous roles</b>	
<b>Register of interests</b>	

THE TIMES Today's sections Past six days Explore Times Radio


SEPTEMBER 23, 2020 / 8:02 PM / UPDATED 16 YEARS AGO

## Lamb-eating sea eagles upset Scottish farmers

By Reuters Staff 3 MIN READ

LONDON (Reuters) - Sheep farmers in remote northwest Scotland are furious about a sea eagle reintroduction programme, saying the huge birds of prey are damaging their livelihoods by killing 200 lambs in the past year.

The Scottish Crofting Foundation said some crofts, small farms producing mainly lamb or beef, had seen lamb numbers fall over the past five years because of the sea eagles' diet.



White-tailed eagles have killed up to ten of Ian Blackford's 60 lambs in the past month

IMAGE: POTTER/ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES

**Mark Ruskell MSP - Scottish Greens**  
30 July 2020

There was yet another example this week of Scotland's monumental failure to look after nature whilst we have time to shut down grouse moors in Scotland.



THENATIONAL.SCOT  
**SNP minister 'angered' by 'barbaric' killing of sea eagle on grouse moor**  
SCOTTISH ministers are coming under pressure to bring in licensing for grouse moors sooner rather than later

# 4. Does the MSP have an appropriate voting/professional history to be able to sincerely champion this species?

1

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Displaying 316 questions [Show Answers](#) Order by Date

**Question ref. S6W-07799**

Asked by: Hamilton, Rachael, Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Date lodged: 4 April 2022

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress of the actions set out on page 8 of *Beyond the Glen, A strategy for the Scottish Venison Sector to 2030*.

Current Status: Answered by Mairi Gougeon on 21 April 2022

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**Question ref. S6W-06738**

Asked by: Hamilton, Rachael, Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Date lodged: 24 February 2022

To ask the Scottish Government what animal welfare assessment it has undertaken regarding any stalking of pregnant hinds by Forestry and Land Scotland contractors.

Current Status: Answered by Mairi McAllan on 10 March 2022

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**Question ref. S6W-06737**

Asked by: Hamilton, Rachael, Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Date lodged: 24 February 2022

To ask the Scottish Government how much Forestry and Land Scotland has spent on deer stalking contractors for the management of deer populations on its land in each of the last five years.

Current Status: Answered by Mairi McAllan on 8 March 2022

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**Question ref. S6W-06728**

Asked by: Hamilton, Rachael, Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Date lodged: 24 February 2022

To ask the Scottish Government how much deer fencing has been installed by Forestry and Land Scotland on new plantations in each of the last five years.

Current Status: Answered by Mairi McAllan on 8 March 2022

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**Question ref. S6W-06736**

Asked by: Hamilton, Rachael, Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Date lodged: 24 February 2022

To ask the Scottish Government whether it has consulted local deer management groups on being part of Forestry and Land Scotland's deer management plans.

Current Status: Answered by Mairi McAllan on 8 March 2022

2



Sand dunes are a dynamic and important habitat along the long Scottish coastline. Coastal habitats (sand dunes, cliffs, saltmarsh and saline lagoons) are a big part of Scotland's landscapes. Sand dunes are created by wind blown sand collecting around debris or vegetation along the shoreline. These dunes naturally dunes are known as 'volley dunes' and are colonised by salt tolerant species. There are also 'mould dunes' that are created with active sand movement but are less salty, and 'feeder dunes' that are an important and major component of sand dune systems. Dune slacks are low lying nutrient low areas that are seasonally flooded and are important habitats for waterfowl, birds and many scarce invertebrates.

Scotland has more than 20,000 ha of sand dunes - 71% of UK's coastal sand area. Sand dunes are vital as the habitat most at risk in Europe. Sand dunes play a vital role in coastal protection, as they grow they shelter inland habitats from the sea, wind during storms and coastal flooding. The total sand dune area without machair would be about 30,000 ha.

Sand dunes are home to a variety of species, from important birds and flowers to dune slacks, such as the sand dune orchid (Laccaria maritima) and sea purslane (Petalaphura maritima), garden burs, great crested newts, waterjack trout, chough and kestrel, to name a few.

This specialised habitat needs careful management, particularly the control of invasive scrub. Amphibian and reptile conservation underpins such management and co-ordinator regular monitoring to maintain a complete record of the highly vulnerable populations of these two threatened species.

**Action Needed**

- Promote careful management, including removal of non native species such as sea buckthorn.
- Raise awareness of the importance of this habitat.
- Work with partners to ensure the Climate Ready Scotland climate change adaptation programme 2019-2024 is fully implemented, in

**Threats**

- Inappropriate developments
- Dunes becoming more densely covered by vegetation and scrub.
- Habitat degradation, 6,000 ha converted to conifer plantations.
- Climate change impacts (e.g. a major concern is coastal erosion).

## Chamber and committees

### Motion ref. S5M-08620 Coul Links

Submitted by: John Finnie, Highlands and Islands, Scottish Green Party.  
Date lodged: Friday, November 3, 2017

Supported by: Claudia Beamish, Iain Gray, Ross Greer, Patrick Harvie, Alison Johnstone, Mark Ruskell, Tavish Scott, Andy Wightman

That the Parliament notes that a major planning application for an 18-hole golf course and associated infrastructure has been submitted to the Highland Council; further notes that the proposed golf course is on and adjacent to Coul Links, which forms the southern part of the Loch Fleet Site of Special Scientific Interest, part of the Dornoch and Loch Fleet Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site; acknowledges the concerns of conservation organisations across Scotland and locally regarding not only the potential impact that this will have to this highly protected site but also doubts concerning stated potential economic benefits, and considers that, at a time when Brexit has caused considerable anxiety regarding environmental protections, granting permission for this development could send a dangerous message to developers that Scotland's highly protected sites are open to development at the expense of the environment.

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## About Donald Cameron

<b>Contact details</b>	<b>Donald's register of interests</b>
<b>Committees</b>	MSPs must provide details of their financial interests in the Register of Interests. They make an initial statement on becoming or being returned as an MSP. This is then updated with any changes they provide.
<b>Cross-party groups</b>	Here is the register for Donald Cameron. The date of their initial statement was 07 June 2021.
<b>Parliamentary and Government Roles</b>	<b>Remuneration and related undertaking</b>
<b>Party Roles</b>	I am a non-executive director of Edinburgh Worldwide Investment Trust a PLC (of Calton Square, 1 Greenside Row, Edinburgh EH1 3AN) listed on the London Stock Exchange, which is an investment company within the meaning of section 833 of the Companies Act 2006. I attend 5 board meetings per year, lasting half a day each, and receive remuneration of between £25,001 and £30,000 per annum.
<b>Previous roles</b>	Until 2 November 2021, when I retired from the role, I was a non-executive director of Murray Income Trust, a PLC (of 7th Floor, 40 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 2BY) listed on the London Stock Exchange, which is an investment company within the meaning of section 833 of the Companies Act 2006. I attended 5 board meetings per year, lasting half a day each, and received remuneration of between £25,001 and £30,000 per annum. [Amended interest 8 November 2021]
<b>Register of interests</b>	<b>Gifts</b>
	No registrable interests
	<b>Overseas visits</b>
	No registrable interests
	<b>Controlled transactions</b>
	No registrable interests
	<b>Heritable property</b>
	I own Achnacarry Estate, a landholding in the Highland local authority area which supports a commercial, forestry and agricultural business, with income from: residential property lets; agricultural and crofting lets (including agricultural subsidy); holiday lets (including income from boating/ fishing/ caravans/ camping); fish-farming rental; renewable energy (hydro-electric/ biomass heating); telecoms sites; deerstalking/ shooting; and utility wayleaves. The approximate value of the estate is between £8,490,001 and £8,500,000. In the tax year 2020-2021, the property yielded a gross annual income in the range £830,001 to £840,000. This is a gross figure and does not take account of costs and losses to the business.
	<b>Interest in shares</b>
	Until 10 December 2021 I owned 9.45 per cent of Green Highland Renewables (Achnacarry) Limited, a company which was created to invest in the development, construction and maintenance of three hydro-electric schemes on Achnacarry Estate (see under Heritable Property above). These were ordinary shares which had a market value of £700,000. [Amended interest 13 December 2021, Ceased interest 13 December 2021]
	<b>Voluntary</b>
	I am a non-practising member of the Faculty of Advocates (Parliament House, Edinburgh, EH1 1RF), meaning I am unable to accept instructions and will accordingly undertake no work as an Advocate during my time as a MSP.
	I am a trustee of Lochaber Rural Education Trust.

[Register of Interests](#)

# Research relevant MSPs for the species/habitat

1. Can the species or habitat be found within the MSP's electoral constituency or region?
2. Does the species or habitat fit in with the portfolio or personal interests of an MSP?
3. Does the required level of commitment of a species or habitat match the expected level of commitment of an MSP?
4. Does the MSP have an appropriate voting/professional history to be able to sincerely champion this species?
5. What do your colleagues know about them? Have they been a species champion before?
6. What are they like to work with?
7. Who is available?!

# 'Gold standard' Nature Champions

Erin Shott

*Advocacy Officer (Rainforests), Plantlife*

Rebecca Lewis

*Scotland and Northern Ireland Manager, Buglife*





## Native Woodlands

Native woodlands are central to Scotland's character and lands and plant species that have been growing in Scotland since the important and threatened native woodland ecosystems include Scotland's rainforest.

Hear from Joanne White MSc, Nature's Champion for Scotland's Rainforest, about how internationally important woodlands!



Hear from Joanne White MSc, Nature's Champion for Scotland's Rainforest, about how internationally important woodlands!

Hear from Joanne White MSc, Nature's Champion for Scotland's Rainforest, about how internationally important woodlands!





# Questions and Discussion