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Nature Champions
Autumn Newsletter



Nature Champion for the Bog Sun-jumper Spider, **Martyn Day MSP**, searched for these rare peatland specialists with Buglife near Fallin.

Image: Martyn Day

Welcome Nature Champions both old and new to the **first Nature Champions Newsletter of the 7th Scottish Parliament!**

We'd like to say a huge thank you to every MSP who has signed up to become a Nature Champion. This Parliament will be critical in meeting our national and international nature and climate commitments, and it is fantastic to have so many MSPs raising awareness of our extraordinary natural environment in Holyrood already.

I'm delighted to say that, so far, a whopping 77 MSPs from all parties have become Nature Champions - representing everything from oyster beds to wildcats! There are of course many more species and habitats to champion and please do encourage your colleagues to participate. The previous Parliament saw 104 MSPs become Nature Champions - can this be beaten?!

The Nature Champions Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter for MSPs and their Scottish Environment LINK member hosts to catch up on all the activity of the past few months. We also feature a handful of articles highlighting exciting conservation or political developments, as well as upcoming events and opportunities.

In this issue, you can find out about recent Nature Champions visits (above) and review the motions and questions lodged in relation to champions' species or habitats (below). You can also hear from Darryl Cox at Bumblebee Conservation Trust about **the importance of citizen scientists** and LINK's Esther Brooker provides an explainer for the **new inshore fisheries consultation**. Finally, you can find a list of upcoming events, including next week's Parliamentary briefing event, **Tackling the Nature Crisis**, along with **LINK's Festive Reception**. October's planned Nature Champions Group Visit to Loch of the Lowes was sadly blown off course by Storm Austen, but we'll soon a share a new date for early in the new year.

Thank you, as ever, for being a voice for nature in the Scottish Parliament!

Andy Marks
Parliamentary Officer, Scottish Environment LINK
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Nature Champions in Holyrood



It's been a busy few months for Nature Champions in Holyrood!

In September, **Nature Champion for Scotland's Rainforest, Jenni Minto MSP**, led a Members' Business Debate to recognise the importance of Scotland's rainforest, the thousands of rare species that depend on these internationally important ecosystems, and the organisations and partnerships leading on their regeneration. **Nature Champion for Ancient Woodlands, Graham Simpson MSP**, also name-checked his habitat, as well as his previously championed native tree species. Watch the full debate above!

You can also find some recent motions and questions raised about Nature Champions' species and habitats below:

Paul McLennan, Nature Champion for the Atlantic Puffin: S7M-00333 - Securing the Future of Bass Rock and Craigleith

Graham Simpson, Nature Champion for Ancient Woodlands: S7W-00632 - A register of ancient woodlands

Kayleigh Kinross-O'Neill, Nature Champion for the Northern Gannet: S7M-00571 - World Seabird Day

Ariane Burgess, Nature Champion for Atlantic Salmon: S7M-00190 - Scotland's Wild Atlantic Salmon is An Icon in Peril

Liam McArthur, Nature Champion for the Great Yellow Bumblebee: S7M-01622 - Support for Citizen Scientists and Biodiversity Monitoring Infrastructure

Willie Rennie, Nature Champion for Lowland Raised Bogs: S7M-00704 - International Bog Day

Emma Roddick, Nature Champion for Capercaillie: S7O-00219 - Capercaillie Emergency Plan 2025-2030

Jenny Young, Nature Champion for Paths: S7M-00668 - East Loch Lomond Path Shortlisted for Britain's Favourite Path 2026

Graham Simpson MSP, Nature Champion for Ancient Woodlands: S7M-01422 - Protecting Scotland's Most Precious Woods and Trees

Alexander Burnett, Nature Champion for the Red Squirrel: S7M-01344 - 2026 Great Scottish Squirrel Survey

Amanda Bland, Nature Champion for Road Verges: S7O-00354 - Local government action to improve road verge management

Ariane Burgess, Nature Champion for Atlantic Salmon: S7W-01451 - Wild salmon strategy: implementation plan

Heather Anderson, Nature Champion for Community Green Space: S7M-01706 - Celebrating 60 Years of Community Gardening

Citizen Science and the Great Yellow Bumblebee



What does getting to know your Nature Champion species look like? For Great Yellow bumblebee champion Liam McArthur MSP, it has involved bumblebee spotting, celebrating special places for his species, and taking action in Parliament.

In July, Liam joined the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and RSPB Scotland in Orkney to get better acquainted with the Great Yellow bumblebee, learning how to catch, identify and record bumblebees and seeing the species for himself. He also presented Great Yellow bumblebee Champion Site awards to RSPB Brodgar and RSPB Onziebust, recognising their work to help this rare species through habitat management and monitoring.

But Liam's championing hasn't stopped in the field. He has now taken the issue of biodiversity monitoring to the Scottish Parliament, lodging a motion recognising the vital contribution made by citizen scientists and environmental charities to understanding how Scotland's wildlife is faring.

As Scotland moves towards statutory targets for nature recovery, robust evidence will be essential to measure progress. The motion highlights the vital role of long-term monitoring initiatives such as the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's BeeWalk scheme in providing that evidence.

There's still time for Nature Champions to lend their support. If you're an MSP, **please consider adding your name to motion S7M-01622 before 24th November**, and help send a clear message that recovering Scotland's nature also means investing in the evidence and people needed to track its recovery.

Darryl Cox
Senior Science and Policy Manager, Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Images © Bumblebee Conservation Trust



Explainer: Inshore Fisheries Consultation



Scotland's marine environment is facing significant and well-documented decline. Seabird populations have fallen dramatically in the last 40 years, important habitats such as seagrass meadows and native oyster reefs have been reduced, and the UK continues to fall short of environmental targets for marine environmental health. Healthy seas are essential, not only for wildlife but also for sustainable fisheries, tourism, recreation and coastal communities.

To help address these challenges, the Scottish Government is consulting on proposed fisheries management measures for inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Priority Marine Features (PMFs). The proposals aim to ensure fishing activity is compatible with conservation and recovery goals by protecting vulnerable habitats and species from damaging practices, particularly bottom-towed fishing gears such as trawling and dredging.

Scotland already has a network of more than 200 MPAs, but many sites still lack management measures necessary to deliver their conservation objectives. Scientific evidence and international best practice show that effective management is essential if MPAs are to achieve their intended purpose and support marine ecosystem recovery and, the stronger and more inclusive those measures are the more positive the outcomes.

The current consultation forms part of a process that has been underway for more than 15 years under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Scottish Environment LINK broadly supports the consultation's stronger management option, which it believes offers the greatest potential for biodiversity recovery and long-term ecosystem benefits. At the same time, any displacement of fishing activity from MPAs needs to be addressed to prevent wider environmental impacts and to provide support for affected businesses through a just transition approach.

Importantly, these proposals are not the same as the Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA) proposals, which were withdrawn in 2023. Rather than creating new protected areas, these proposals focus on implementing management measures within already designated sites, while allowing sustainable activities to continue where compatible with ecological conservation and recovery goals.

We encourage all MSPs to engage with their local stakeholders on this consultation, share information and support informed participation in what will be an important decision for Scotland's marine environmental and coastal communities. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss LINK's position further.

Esther Brooker
Senior Marine Advocacy Officer, Scottish Environment LINK

Image © Paul Naylor marinephoto.co.uk

Save the Date! Upcoming Events



Tackling the Nature Crisis: A Guide for MSPs
Tuesday 24th November, 6-8pm
Committee Room 3 (The Fleming Room)

Join the Scottish Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Scottish Environment LINK, for a briefing event on Tackling the Nature Crisis, kindly hosted by Jenni Minto MSP.

The event will bring together MSPs, public officials, the environmental sector and the whisky industry to explore what the nature crisis means for Scotland's environment, communities and economy - and how to proactively respond over this Parliament.

The evening will include short talks, a Q&A and discussion, followed by an opportunity to continue conversations over canapés and drinks - with whisky generously provided by The Macallan. Slàinte!

LINK Festive Reception
Wednesday 9th December, 5-8pm
Augustine United Church, 41-43 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh

Deck the halls, LINK's annual Festive Reception is soon upon us! One of the most relaxed and convivial events in the calendar, LINK's Festive Reception is a great opportunity to get to know members of Scotland's environmental community over a mince pie. This event usually includes the presentation of LINK's MSP Nature Champion of the Year award, which will return in December 2027.

Email andrew@scotlink.org to RSVP. Festive jumpers not essential, but always welcomed!

Nature Champions Group Visits
Early 2027

The postponed Group Visit for Nature Champions to SWT Loch of the Lowes will be re-organised for spring 2027. More information will follow in due course.

Scottish Environment LINK would like to thank Nature Champions for your support and for being the voice for Scotland's threatened species and habitats in the Scottish Parliament.

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