

Press Release

Embargoed until: 6pm 24 February 2016

Standing for Species: Championing Wildlife in the Scottish Parliament

The 76 MSPs who have participated in the Species Champions Initiative were thanked this evening for their work during the current parliament to support Scotland's threatened wildlife. Scottish Environment LINK held a reception in Holyrood hosted by Rob Gibson MSP.

Rob Gibson, who is MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, is Species Champion for the Rusty bog moss and known affectionately by fellow MSPs as the 'Moss Boss'.

Rob Gibson said, "Being the species champion for the Rusty Bog Moss has been a pleasure as the Flow Country is our best example. Climate change and biodiversity play such a part in our sustainable future. Sphagnum Fuscum, the Rusty Bog Moss is a clue to healthy peat."

Joyce Macmillan, President of LINK, spoke about the achievements of Species Champions. They have, for example, been responsible for the first ever debates in the Scottish Parliament on invertebrates, and the recent debate on the Celtic Rainforest, a Scottish habitat of global significance. They have put forward 36 motions in parliament to highlight the importance of and threats to species from the mighty Basking shark to the rare and delicate Scottish primrose. They have also raised awareness amongst their constituents.

Mary Scanlon, MSP for Highlands and Islands, said, "It's been a real pleasure being species champion for the Freshwater pearl mussel. There has been so much to learn, lots of opportunities to explain how important they are to the rivers they're found in and to highlight the dangers faced by this incredible species from pollution and illegal poaching."

Mike Russell, MSP for Argyll and Bute, said, "Being a species champion gives me the chance to talk about the great things in our environment and how we can protect and enhance them. Being species champions for both the Corncrake and the Tree lungwort focuses and give practical expression to my passion for the environment and challenge me to find ways to help the bird and the lichen - though not always at the same time!"

Eleanor Harris, Species Champions intern at Scottish Environment LINK, said, "Scotland's nature is not just important in its own right: it is fundamental to our social and economic welfare. The increased awareness of this value which the

Species Champions initiative has generated is tremendous. We will be re-launching the initiative after the elections, when we hope current Champions who are re-elected will lead the way in ensuring the whole parliament is involved in the scheme."

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Editors' Notes

(1) 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.

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899). LINK is core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.

www.scotlink.org

(2) The Species Champions website is at <http://www.scotlink.org/work-areas/species-champions/> and on Twitter @SpeciesChampion

(3) The following members of Scottish Environment LINK support the Species Champions initiative: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Froglife Trust (Scotland), Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, Plantlife Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish Badgers, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Trust Scotland.

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