

## Unloved species desperate for a date

Threatened and endangered wildlife in Scotland are looking for Parliamentary affection this Valentine's Day. 93 species have been selected by Scottish Environment LINK's Wildlife Forum as being in particular need of some political tender loving care, due to a range of pressures such as habitat fragmentation, climate change and pollution. The resulting list is part of its Species Champion initiative, which aims to pair up MSPs with these unloved species. So far 23 MSPs have committed to the initiative, but this leaves 60 species still desperately in need of such a relationship, according to the organisers.

They include attractive-sounding species from across Scotland such as the Slender Scotch Burnet, Tall sea pen, Dark Bordered Beauty, Irish lady's tresses and the Golden specklebelly. However, organisers admit that other species have less immediate appeal, with names such as Spiny lobster, Drooping saxifrage, and a rare bat, Nathusius pipistrelle.

Organisers say that each species, no matter how 'uncuddly' they might be, would greatly benefit from the attention and support of an MSP to ensure that Scotland acts strategically to protect its threatened biodiversity. The Species Champion initiative will be launched formally in Spring.

**Deborah Long**, Programme Manager at Plantlife Scotland and chair of Scottish Environment LINK said: "These species have been neglected, which is why they are so desperate for a date with a Scottish politician. Cute, cuddly and iconic animals often receive the most public attention, but we hope to play political matchmaker for some lesser-known, sometimes quite uncuddly, but equally important species. Each species is a symbol of Scotland's precious, but threatened biodiversity. MSPs have already shown a real desire to help Scotland's wildlife and the Species Champion initiative is an opportunity for our generation of Scotland's politicians to develop a collective expertise to address the challenges facing the fauna and flora of our country."

**Craig MacAdam**, Director of Buglife Scotland said: "We are delighted by the early interest shown by MSPs to become Species Champions and we hope that the initiative will lead to long-lasting relationships between MSPs and their chosen species."

ENDS

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**Notes for editors:**

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 30 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. [http://www.scotlink.org/public/about/link\\_is.php](http://www.scotlink.org/public/about/link_is.php) Collectively, the LINK network includes approximately half a million memberships.

Scotland failed to meet its biodiversity target in 2010. The Scottish Government is now aiming to halt biodiversity loss by 2020, as per the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

LINK's Wildlife Forum is running the Species Champion initiative to increase awareness of the value of Scotland's Nature. Asking MSPs to adopt a species to champion in Parliament helps build stronger relationships between Scotland's iconic wildlife and our Parliamentarians.

MSPs who have signed up to become a Species Champion are listed below.

Rhoda Grant MSP for Highlands and Islands (Scottish Labour): **Golden Eagle**

Rob Gibson MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross (Scottish National Party): **Rusty Bog Moss**

Dave Thompson MSP for Skye Lochaber and Badenoch (Scottish National Party): **Sandeel**

Liam McArthur MSP for Orkney Islands (Scottish Liberal Democrats): **Scottish Primrose**

Dennis Robertson MSP for Aberdeen West (SNP) **Capercaillie; Corn Bunting**

Aileen McLeod MSP for South Scotland (Scottish National Party): **Red Squirrel**

Graeme Dey MSP for Angus South (Scottish National Party): **Woolly Willow**

Dave Stewart MSP for Highlands and Islands (Scottish Labour): **Great Yellow Bumblebee**

Angus MacDonald MSP for Falkirk East (Scottish National Party) **Bog Sun Jumper Spider; Eelgrass**

Alison Johnstone MSP for Lothian (Scottish Green Party): **Brown Hare**

John Wilson MSP for Central Scotland (Scottish National Party): **Great Crested Newt**

Drew Smith MSP for Glasgow (Scottish Labour): **Common Toad**

Elaine Murray MSP for Dumfriesshire (Scottish Labour): **Tadpole Shrimp; Natterjack Toad**

Claudia Beamish MSP for South Scotland (Scottish Labour): **Sea Trout**

Claire Baker MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife (Scottish Labour): **Puffin; Lesser Butterfly Orchid**

Fiona McLeod MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Scottish National Party): **Pond Mud Snail**

Mary Scanlon MSP for Highlands and Islands (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): **Freshwater Pearl Mussel**

Jamie McGrigor MSP for Highlands and Islands (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): **Narrow-Headed Ant**

Nanette Milne MSP for North East Scotland (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): **Twin flower**

Christine Graham MSP for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale (Scottish National Party): **House sparrow**

Bill Kidd MSP for Glasgow Anniesland (Scottish National Party): **Red Kite; Common pipistrelle**

Richard Simpson MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife (Scottish Labour Party): **Small Blue**

Alex Fergusson MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): **Native Oyster**

An updated list can be found here: <http://www.scotlink.org/public/work/species-champions.php>

The Species Champion initiative will be launched formally in Spring to promote the Year of Natural Scotland.

[http://www.visitscotland.org/business\\_support/advicelink/year\\_of\\_natural\\_scotland.aspx](http://www.visitscotland.org/business_support/advicelink/year_of_natural_scotland.aspx)