



# Species Champions

MPs standing up for our most threatened wildlife

Newsletter Issue 2 | Winter 2017

## Project Update

As it enters its second year, the Westminster species champion project is going from strength to strength. Eight MPs have signed up since last summer's newsletter, bringing the total to 38.

It's been fantastic to see MPs such as **Rachael Maskell**, **Therese Coffey**, **Kerry McCarthy** and **Angela Smith** speaking up for their species in Parliament. In December the Fishing Industry debate heard **Scott Mann** raise the critical level of bass stocks. And of course **Oliver Colvile** has been a regular champion in Parliament – mentioning hedgehogs on at least 7 occasions!

With the Government's draft 25 year plan for the Environment soon to be released for consultation, and the opportunities and challenges for nature posed by Brexit, now is a key time for MPs to speak out for their species.

In March, we're looking forward to celebrating those champions who have made a real impact (for more details, see overleaf).

**MP Species Champions**  
are invited to  
**The Annual Awards Reception**  
Wednesday 22 March 2017, 6.30 p.m.  
Macmillan Room, Portcullis House  
RSVP: [philippa.goodwin@rspb.org.uk](mailto:philippa.goodwin@rspb.org.uk)

## Targeted species conservation pays dividends:

### Fen orchid (Norman Lamb) and Cirl bunting (Sarah Wollaston)

2016 was a great year for the fen orchid. More than 12,000 specimens were recorded in the East of England – a dramatic increase from around 1,000 in 2012. Plantlife's trial move of plants to new sites was a success, with many flowering in the summer, paving the way for future relocations. These gains were boosted when the Planning Inspectorate upheld the Environment Agency's decision to stop local water abstraction near Catfield Fen – thereby safeguarding one of only three remaining fen orchid sites in England. Although the species remains vulnerable, targeted funding and direct intervention by Plantlife, in association with Butterfly Conservation and the RSPB, offers a bright future for this species.

Last year there was cause for celebration when it was revealed that collaborative conservation work had lifted the UK cirl bunting population to over 1,000 pairs, bucking the overall downward trend for most farmland birds. Once widespread, declines in food and nest site availability meant that by the late 1980s just 118 pairs remained, confined to an area of

south Devon. Twenty five years ago a ground-breaking conservation project began which saw RSPB working in partnership with local farmers and Natural England to encourage land management practices that would benefit cirl buntings. With the support of the farming community we hope that numbers will continue to grow.



▲ Cirl bunting and fen orchid

## Do your bit for Invasive Species Week

**When humans move species into areas where they are not naturally found, the introduction of new predators, competitors and novel diseases to an ecosystem can be devastating for local wildlife, so much so that invasive non-native species are now considered one of the principal drivers of global biodiversity loss, second only to habitat loss.**

In the UK 'variegated yellow archangel' is a popular garden plant, but if introduced to the wider countryside it spreads rapidly, outcompeting native plants. This invasive species is often found at sites where native spreading bellflower, championed by **Bill Wiggin**, also grows.

From 27-31 March over 150 organisations will come together to raise awareness of invasive non-native species as part of Defra's third annual Invasive Species Week.



▲ **Variegated yellow archangel**

Why not get involved and make a biosecurity pledge to do what you can to prevent the spread of invasive species, and then tweet about it using #InvasivesWeek. For more information visit the GB non-native species secretariat website at [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org).

### Who are the Species Champion MPs so far?

- Harriett Baldwin • Richard Benyon
- Jake Berry • Steve Brine
- Neil Carmichael • Therese Coffey
- Oliver Colvile • Tracey Crouch
- Jon Cruddas • Mark Garnier
- Peter Heaton-Jones
- Kevin Hollinrake • Norman Lamb
- Charlotte Leslie • Caroline Lucas
- Scott Mann • Rachael Maskell
- Kerry McCarthy • Huw Merriman
- Caroline Nokes • Neil Parish
- Claire Perry • Jess Phillips
- Rebecca Pow • John Pugh
- Angela Smith • Caroline Spelman
- Gary Streeter • Desmond Swayne
- Derek Thomas • Kelly Tolhurst
- Anna Turley • Charles Walker
- Matt Warman • Bill Wiggin
- Gavin Williamson • Sarah Wollaston
- Daniel Zeichner

### Want more information?

For more information on the Species Champions project visit our microsite at: [www.buglife.org.uk/specieschampions](http://www.buglife.org.uk/specieschampions)

## Annual Reception for Species Champions

**MP species champions, along with special guests, are invited to a reception and award ceremony to mark the first year of the species champions project.** MPs will receive an update on their species and hear



more about what needs doing to improve their prospects.

There will be a presentation of awards for best species champion in several categories: the Best Parliamentary Champion, that is the MP who has done the most to raise the profile of their species in Parliament, a Species Award for the MP whose species fared best in the past year, and the Muddy Welly award for actions in the field!

The reception is to be held in the Macmillan Room, Portcullis House, Westminster at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday 22 March.

## Fun Fact

**While we struggle to help the survival of the most threatened species, it's worth remembering how long they might live – if they were given the chance.**

The Natterjack toad for instance could happily live to 40, while the maximum age of a Manx shearwater recovered by ringers is almost 51. The greater horseshoe bat would rest content with 30 candles on his birthday cake. But the most impressive of all is the European Eel, which has reached 85.



Species Champions in England is coordinated by:



Working in partnership with:

**The Angling Trust, The People's Trust for Endangered Species and The British Hedgehog Preservation Society**