

Raptor Persecution UK

Scottish Raptor Study Group holds Parliamentary reception to discuss details of grouse moor reform Bill

RaptorPersecutionUK
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News
scottish parliament

The Scottish Raptor Study Group (SRSG) was generously hosted at the Scottish Parliament earlier this week by John Mason MSP, for a drop-in reception to discuss the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill, which is currently at Stage One of its progress through Parliament.



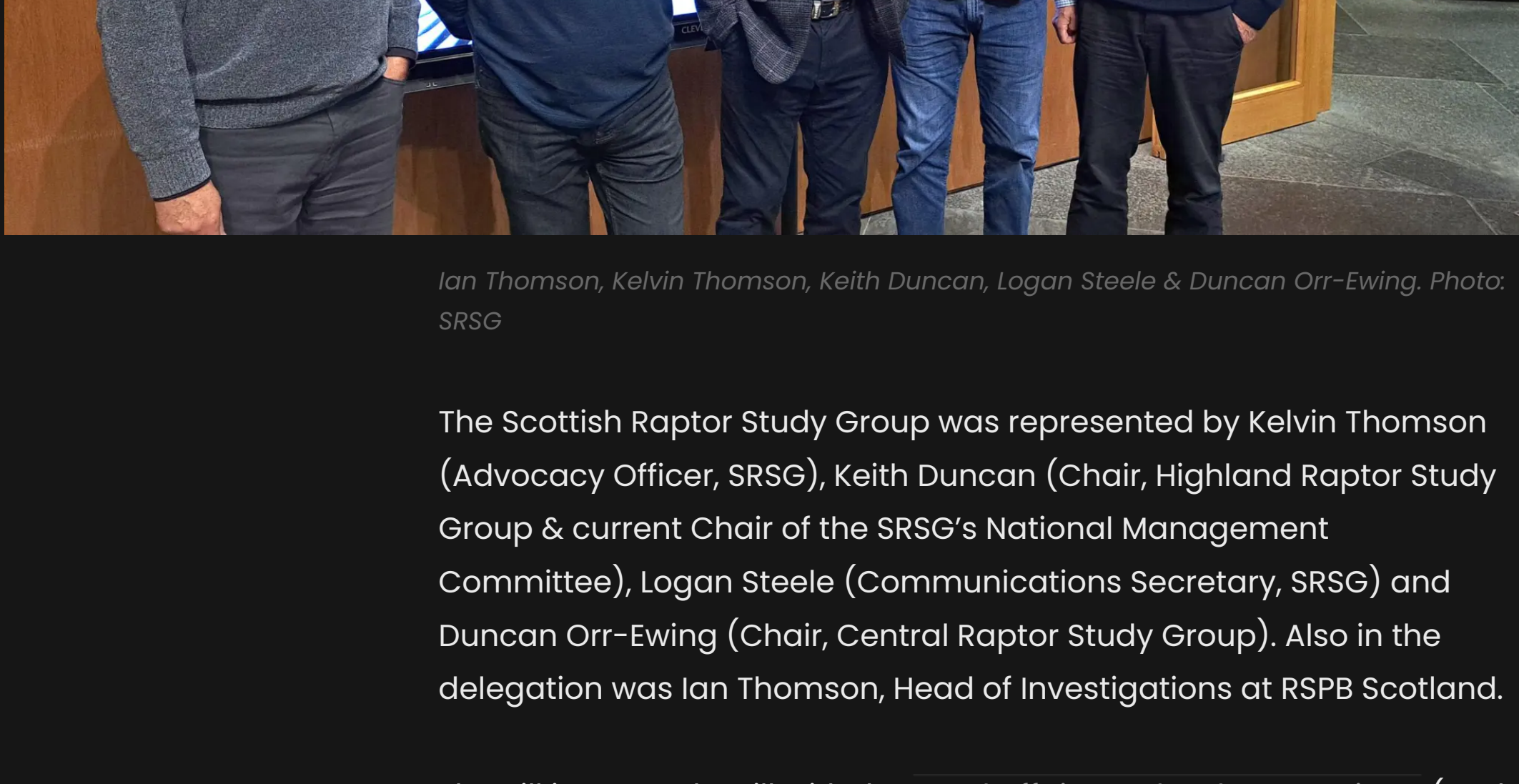
SRSG Chair Keith Duncan and John Mason MSP. Photo: SRSG

For new blog readers, this is the Bill that has been introduced by the Scottish Government in response to the recommendations made in the 2019 Werritty Review and is designed to bring in licensing for grouse moor management and introduce measures (such as a revoked licence) to put an end to the illegal killing of birds of prey on grouse moors.

MSPs in attendance at the reception included Edward Mountain (Conservative), Findlay Carson (Conservative), Rachael Hamilton (Conservative), Colin Smyth (Labour), Rhoda Grant (Labour), Jim Fairlie (SNP), Bob Doris (SNP), Elena Whitham (SNP), John Mason (SNP) and Ariane Burgess (Green).

The SRSG viewed the event as a valuable and productive meeting, attracting cross-party MSPs and discussions focused on the following key themes:

- The raptor persecution data that underpin the Scottish Government's decision to bring in the Bill;
- Whether or not the proposed licence period should be greater than one year;
- Issues around white tailed sea eagles, ravens and sheep;
- How the licensing regime should operate and the amount of administration involved;
- How any revocation or suspension of a licence might happen and discussion of the existing General Licence restrictions and what evidence NatureScot would be looking for when considering a sanction on a grouse-shooting estate;
- Concern around potentially vexatious claims;
- In which specific areas birds of prey are being persecuted or 'disappearing' in suspicious circumstances;
- Change to burning dates (finishing earlier than the current regulations allow);
- And how the Bill is now encompassing more areas (i.e. SSPCA powers and snaring).



Ian Thomson, Kelvin Thomson, Keith Duncan, Logan Steele & Duncan Orr-Ewing. Photo: SRSG

The Scottish Raptor Study Group was represented by Kelvin Thomson (Advocacy Officer, SRSG), Keith Duncan (Chair, Highland Raptor Study Group & current Chair of the SRSG's National Management Committee), Logan Steele (Communications Secretary, SRSG) and Duncan Orr-Ewing (Chair, Central Raptor Study Group). Also in the delegation was Ian Thomson, Head of Investigations at RSPB Scotland.

The Bill is currently still with the Rural Affairs & Islands Committee (and interesting that a number of Committee members attended this reception) as they continue to prepare their Stage One report, which will then be debated in Parliament.

The date of that Stage One debate keeps being put back, mainly to accommodate the most recent consultation (the latest in a long, long line!) on proposed new powers for the SSPCA and a proposed ban on snaring, which the Rural Affairs Committee would like to include in its report.

It is currently anticipated that the debate will take place in mid-late December, prior to the Xmas recess (which begins on 23 Dec 2023), but don't hold your breath!

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