

**PRESS RELEASE:**

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## **Legacy of Edinburgh mountain men sends 15-year-old Lasswade school student to Mexico to join scientific field trip of a lifetime**

A 15-year-old student of Lasswade High School is set to join an exciting scientific research expedition to Mexico, thanks to a grant set up by the John Muir Trust in memory of two inspirational Edinburgh mountaineers who died ten years apart in the Alps.

Blaine Ferguson, who is studying for his Nat 5 exams, has received support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant to go on a once-in-a-lifetime research expedition in the jungle of the Calakmul Reserve.

Blaine will be learning about how to gather data in the field, completing surveys on trees, birds, large mammals and herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians). Whilst away he will also complete a reef and forest ecology course. On return he plans to use his experiences to inspire other young people to become conservation volunteers.

Proud of his traveller roots, Blaine hopes this experience away will stand him in good stead to fulfill his ambition to become the first member of his family to go to university.

"I'm delighted and grateful to be a recipient of the Des Rubens-Bill Wallace Grant towards my expedition to Mexico," he said. "I feel this will be one of the best experiences in my life. The complete immersion in nature conservation will allow me to experience first-hand something I could never achieve in a classroom setting."

Rosie Simpson of the John Muir Trust who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "We've been delighted with the number and quality of applications this year, Blaine did well in what is a competitive application process; we wish him all the best with this adventure and his future studies.

"Des and Bill lived active, adventurous, outdoor lives and would be delighted to know that their lives have opened the door to a new generation of conservation-explorers to follow their dreams."

Blaine is one of six successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant this year. This grant was established to help people gain life-changing experiences in wild places that have scientific or educational value.

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

### **ABOUT THE DES RUBENS AND BILL WALLACE GRANT**

The John Muir Trust administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant for free. The grant was set up in honour of Bill Wallace, who died of heart failure in February 2007 while skiing in the Alps at the age of 73 with two artificial hips, and Des Rubens, a popular teacher at Craigmoynton High School in Edinburgh who was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident at the age of 63.

Since the grant was established in 2007, initially in honour of Bill Wallace, it has supported almost 50 people from all walks of life, from students to scientists, from grandmothers to gardeners, take part in life-changing adventures of educational or scientific value in some of the wildest places in the world.

The John Muir Trust looks to support projects, adventures or expeditions that reflect the ethos of both men and give others an opportunity to follow in their footsteps.

### **ABOUT THE JOHN MUIR TRUST**

The John Muir Trust is a membership based conservation charity dedicated to the experience, protection and repair of wild places. The Trust was founded in 1983 and was inspired by the life and works of John Muir (1838-1914), the Scots-born founding father of modern conservation and the inspiration behind national parks. We operate in Scotland, England and Wales and are the guardians of some of the finest wild places in the UK including Ben Nevis, Helvellyn and Schiehallion.

#### **For more info about the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, contact:**

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<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/grants-and-awards/the-bill-wallace-grant>