
Adventure Grant supports solo research expedition to the remote islands of St Kilda.

21st August 2022

The Des Rubens and Bill Wallace grant funded a young researcher to survey whales, dolphins and porpoises around the uninhabited islands of St Kilda in order to better understand and protect these species.

Emma Stone, 28 from Orkney, travelled to St Kilda in July to record the presence and absence of marine mammals around the islands. She has a BSc in Zoology and MSc in Environmental Science and now works in marine conservation for Whale and Dolphin Conservation. Emma will spend 19 days on St Kilda in an entirely self-supported, solo expedition – with permission from the National Trust for Scotland which owns and manages the archipelago. During this time she collected data from key vantage points around the islands. On the ground data collection such as this can be expensive, particularly in such a remote location. The research Emma collected will now be shared with conservation charities as well as Shorewatch, a well-established citizen science programme focused on collecting marine data around the coast of Scotland.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Emma said: "I'm absolutely delighted to receive support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant for my upcoming study trip to St Kilda, where I'll be conducting surveys of whales and dolphins. It's always been a dream of mine to travel to St Kilda, to experience its remoteness and learn more about the people who once called this place home. I hope this expedition reinforces my love for nature and my drive and enthusiasm in protecting what we have, at a time when the planet's future feels very uncertain. "

Jenny Seaman of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "The grant panel were inspired by Emma's passion for her work and the dedication she has shown in planning a solo, entirely self-supported research trip to such a remote location".

Emma is one of eight successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2022. This grant was established to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild places in ways which will benefit both the person, and the wild places themselves.

Editor's Notes

About The John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a leading voice for the UK's wild places. Its stewardship of some of Britain's most iconic wild places, including Ben Nevis and Helvellyn, is guided by three freedoms; ensuring nature has the freedom to repair itself, people have the freedom to enjoy the benefits, and communities have the freedom to thrive. For 40 years, the Trust has advocated for the protection of wild places by evidencing their benefit to society. Driven by the belief that wild places are for everyone – it also provides opportunities for people from all walks of life to engage with nature through the John Muir environmental award scheme.

ABOUT THE DES RUBENS AND BILL WALLACE GRANT

The grant commemorates two former Presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, who each led inspiring and adventurous lives. It was set up to give others an opportunity to follow in their footsteps and experience wild places. Projects should be adventurous, have an educational or scientific component and benefit the wild places themselves. In the decade since its inception the grant has made over 60 awards to a wide variety of recipients.

Bill Wallace, died of heart failure in February 2007 while skiing in the Alps at the age of 73 with two artificial hips.

Des Rubens, was a popular teacher at Craigryston High School in Edinburgh was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident at the age of 63.

Grants are for £200 to £2,000 and open to UK applicants of all ages. Closing date for applications is 15 January each year. Further details on how to apply: <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/grants/des-rubens-and-bill-wallace-grant>

Contact

Sophie Harrison, Media Communications Officer

t: 07864 671292

e: sophie.harrison@johnmuirtrust.org

www.johnmuirtrust.org

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