

PRESS RELEASE

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Oban student to study Skye's marine mammals from a kayak backed by mountain men's legacy

Oban man Andrew Abraham is to circumnavigate the Isle of Skye – one of most hazardous kayak routes in Britain – to get up close to Hebridean marine mammals, backed by a fund set up in honour of two popular Scottish mountaineers who died in the alps.

The 26-year-old, who is currently working towards a PhD in Arizona, is researching the ecological, economic and social impacts of seal feeding by collecting samples of faeces for the Oban-based Scottish Association for Marine Science, based in his home town.

He will be supported by the Rubens-Wallace Grant, which was established in honour of two respected Edinburgh-based mountaineers who died in the Alps in two separate incidents ten years apart. . Bill Wallace, a former Treasurer of the John Muir Trust died in 2006 at the age of 73 while skiing; Des Rubens a 63-year old teacher was killed in a climbing accident in June 2016.

Andrew Abraham said: "I am delighted to be a recipient of the Des Rubens Bill Wallace Grant. The opportunity to undertake my research in the memory of two great Scottish explorers is both humbling and inspiring. I'm excited to communicate the ecological, economic and social ways in which our large mammal species benefit our coastal societies."

Toby Clark, the John Muir Award Scotland Manager who coordinates the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "We received a huge number of high calibre applications and Andrew's was only one of five which was successful.

Andrew's project fitted exactly with the ethos of the Rubens-Wallace Grant which seeks to combine adventure, science and education, so we are pleased to support this important environmental expedition. "

NOTES

ABOUT THE DES RUBENS AND BILL WALLACE GRANT

The John Muir Trust administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant for free. The grant aims to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild places of the world in ways which will benefit both the person, and the wild places themselves.

The grant commemorates two former Presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club who each led inspiring and adventurous lives.

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 named after the great Scots-American scientist, environmentalist, explorer, mountaineer, writer and campaigner who was born on the North Sea fishing village of Dunbar 180 years ago this month (April 23).

The Trust looks after some of Britain's most scenic famous scenic landmarks, including Ben Nevis, Helvellyn, part of the Skye Cuillin, part of the Knoydart and Assynt peninsulas, Sandwood Bay in the far north west corner and Schiehallion which towers over Highland Perthshire.

The Trust also runs the popular environmental scheme the John Muir Award across Scotland, England and Wales.

For more info about the Bill Wallace Grant, contact:

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