

PRESS RELEASE

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Edinburgh tree doctor heads to Panama rain forest thanks to local mountain men's legacy

Seth Ratcliffe, a freelance arborist and horticulturalist from Edinburgh has won a grant in honour of two mountaineers that will help him carry out research in the heart of the Panamanian rain forest.

Seth will work with staff at the Conservation Bocas del Toro Field Station, set in a tropical archipelago in the Caribbean, to investigate emergent rain forest tree epiphyte diversity. It will involve scaling what are called the 'big walls' of tree climbing, and studying epiphytes, which are plants that grow out of other plants.

Des Rubens, a popular teacher at Craigroyston High School was killed in June 2016 while climbing in the Alps. Bill Wallace, also from Edinburgh, was a former Treasurer of the John Muir Trust who died in 2006 at the age of 73 while skiing in the Alps. The grant established in their honour is run by the John Muir Trust.

Seth said: "This grant has taken me one step closer to an adventure I have dreamt about since I first started climbing trees. I am humbled that my project was deemed worthy and want to give my most heartfelt thanks to the John Muir Trust and the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant. I hope to do Des and Bill proud."

Toby Clark, the John Muir Award Scotland Manager who coordinates the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "We sifted through a huge numbers of high calibre applications and Sam was only one of five who were successful. This is a project that both Bill Wallace and Des Rubens would have been proud to support, combining advanced climbing skills with serious scientific research.

"We're pleased we've been able to support this worthwhile environmental expedition and wish Seth all the best in this great adventure. "

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>