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CONTACT:

Alan McCombes

t: 01796 484936; m: 0771 744 2805;

e: alan.mccombes@johnmuirtrust.org



Mountain men's legacy helps fund student's Icelandic expedition to study vulnerable seabird colonies

A 28-year-old mature student at University of Glasgow is set to join a scientific research expedition to Iceland, 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.

Vanessa Barry, who is in her first year studying Marine and Freshwater Biology, has received support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant to travel this summer to Iceland's east coast to gather data on the fledging success of seabird colonies that have seen their food supplies reduced by warming oceans.

Vanessa will be based at Skálánes Nature and Heritage research station, which is close to breeding colonies of black-legged kittiwakes and fulmars, and hopes that this project will establish a foundation methodology for future researchers at Skálánes as well as the University of Glasgow.

On receiving news that her application had been successful, Vanessa said, "I am extremely grateful to the John Muir Trust for their generous contribution that will go a long way to helping this project go ahead. This grant gives me the opportunity to undertake a project that will contribute to a wider database of information on vulnerable Arctic species."

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. Vanessa's work in Iceland will provide insight into the long-term impact of climate change on our seabirds. We wish her all the best with this adventure and with her 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 while deepening our knowledge."

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

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 Craigroyston 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:

Rosie Simpson

Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant Administrator

John Muir Trust

01796 484966

rosie.simpson@johnmuirtrust.org

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