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Funding legacy supports Exeter student to survey Bornean orangutans with aid of drones

A 22-year-old Masters student at the University of Exeter has received funding support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant to evaluate the effectiveness of drones for surveying wild populations of critically endangered Bornean orangutans.

Cameron Goodhead will spend four months in the Sebangau National Park testing different flight methods to find the optimal method for gathering aerial data of orangutan nests in the tree canopy. The project aims to demonstrate a fast and reliable way of gathering population data on orangutans to prevent forests containing these endangered animals from being cleared by logging companies.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Cameron said: "I am absolutely delighted and honoured to have received this award, particularly as it comes from such a prestigious organisation, and in the memory of two inspiring adventurers. This award will make such a difference to my project, and will give me the opportunity of a lifetime to help save an iconic species. My utmost thanks to the John Muir trust for supporting my research."

Rosie Simpson of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "We wish Cameron all the best with his trip and hope the trials using the drones to gather data on orangutan populations can inform conservation management in the Bornean rainforest."

"Des and Bill lived active, adventurous, outdoor lives and would be delighted to know that their legacy is now helping Cameron with his scientific expedition."

Cameron is one of eight successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant. This grant was established 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.

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 60 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>