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Adventure grant supports citizen science on the remote Shiant Islands

A marine scientist based in Moray will travel to the remote Shiant Islands, a small group of islands in the Outer Hebrides, to undertake cetacean surveys with funding support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant.

Katie Dyke, 35, will travel from Moray to the Western Isles in July 2021, and from there on to the remote Shiant Islands, where she will spend a few weeks, self-supported, with a pair of binoculars and a notebook, counting and recording the species of marine mammals using the area. The data Katie collects will be shared with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Trust so it can be incorporated into existing, wider datasets. When in the Outer Hebrides, Katie will also work with North Harris Trust Rangers to offer training in whale and dolphin identification to people who live on the Western Isles.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Katie said: "I was literally speechless when I received the call saying I had been successful. I have been dreaming of this trip for some time and now it has been made possible thanks to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant. This trip will have a huge effect on me personally but above all I hope the cetacean data I collect will help understand how these amazing creatures use these important waters. I can't wait!"

Rosie Simpson of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "Katie's project, which combines adventure and citizen science in a remote Scottish location, coupled with her passion and expertise, made it an ideal fit for the Grant. This past year has been a difficult year for so many and we hope that by supporting individuals to undertake adventures closer to home we can inspire people to continue to connect with wild places when it is safe to do so."

Katie is one of six 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 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 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 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.

Grants of £200 to £2,000 are awarded annually on merit to individuals who wish to experience wild places in the spirit of Des Rubens and Bill Wallace and meet the grant criteria.

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>