

Adventure Grant supports Scottish Horticulturalist on study tour of the traditional ‘apple forests’ of Kazakhstan.

21st August 2022

A young horticulturalist will travel to the Tien Shien mountains to research the unique ecosystem of the traditional apple forests, with funding support from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant.

Rory Pyper, 26, from Fife, recently completed a 2-year National Trust for Scotland Heritage Garden apprenticeship at Priorwood garden, Melrose - home to an orchard of national significance. His passion is for pomology, the science of growing fruit and nuts. Rory is currently undertaking a year-long ‘Elizabeth Hess’ Botanical Horticulture traineeship with Tresco Abbey Gardens in Cornwall and has secured a place to study for a degree in Botanical Horticultural at the Royal Bontanic Gardens Edinburgh, beginning this Autumn.

The once rich tradition of orchards has sadly degraded in Scotland over the last century. Rory hopes his research will enable him to contribute to the restoration of traditional orchards and apple growing in Scotland through a career in practical conservation and science communication. Rory will spend a week at the Botanical Garden of Almaty, Kazakhstan meeting with field botanists and conservationists before travelling to the fruit forests in the Tien Shien Mountains where he will spend a further 3 weeks studying this unique ecosystem.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Rory said: “Wildness should not be pushed to the fringes, our uplands and coastlines, there is a pressing need for it to be brought closer to home so that it is of benefit to the greatest proportion of the population. I think that by improving the state of our traditional orchards [among other related measures] we can work to achieve that. I’m hoping to share the insights I gain from this study trip to Kazakhstan in Scotland to work towards this end.”

Jenny Seaman of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: “Rory clearly has a huge passion and enthusiasm for the study of historical orchards and their traditional management. The grant panel were impressed by Rory’s commitment to his research and are thrilled to be able to support this young horticulturalist on a study tour of the Tien Shien apple forests.”

Rory is one of eight successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2022. 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.

Editor's Notes

About The John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a leading voice for the UK's wild places. Its stewardship of some of Britain's most iconic wild places, including Ben Nevis and Helvellyn, is guided by three freedoms; ensuring nature has the freedom to repair itself, people have the freedom to enjoy the benefits, and communities have the freedom to thrive. For 40 years, the Trust has advocated for the protection of wild places by evidencing their benefit to society. Driven by the belief that wild places are for everyone – it also provides opportunities for people from all walks of life to engage with nature through the John Muir environmental award scheme.

ABOUT THE DES RUBENS AND BILL WALLACE GRANT

The grant commemorates two former Presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, who each led inspiring and adventurous lives. It was set up to give others an opportunity to follow in their footsteps and experience wild places. Projects should be adventurous, have an educational or scientific component and benefit the wild places themselves. In the decade since its inception the grant has made over 60 awards to a wide variety of recipients.

Bill Wallace, died of heart failure in February 2007 while skiing in the Alps at the age of 73 with two artificial hips. Des Rubens, was a popular teacher at Craigroyston High School in Edinburgh and was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident at the age of 63.

Grants are for £200 to £2,000 and open to UK applicants of all ages. Closing date for applications is 15 January each year. Further details on how to apply: <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/grants/des-rubens-and-bill-wallace-grant>

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