

## Mountain men's legacy funds scientific study into the hearing of a unique Highland butterfly



The Large Heath butterfly (*Coenonympha tullia*) whose range is restricted to wet boggy habitats chiefly in the Scottish Highlands will be the focus of new scientific research into how insects detect and respond to sound.

The project will be led by Dr Erica Morley, a scientist from the University of Bristol who has previously carried out bioacoustics research in a range of locations from St Kilda to New South Wales.

The data-gathering project will cover sites in three areas of the Highlands: Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty and Argyll and will involve the recruitment of two research assistants with the ability to offer science-based field skills as well as wider experience of working in wild places.

The project has been supported by an award from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant – a memorial run by the John Muir Trust to celebrate the lives of two legendary mountain men from Edinburgh.

Bill Wallace died in the Alps in 2006 while skiing – with two artificial hips – at the age of 73. Des Rubens, a popular 63-year old teacher at Craigoyston High School, was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident. Both men had been former presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

Dr Morley (pictured below) said: "I am delighted to have been awarded the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant to help us study the sensory ecology of butterfly hearing.

"Little is known about the hearing of butterflies, especially of small species from temperate climates like Scotland. This project will provide insight into how their ears work and what they might be listening to in their natural environment."

