
Adventure grant supports solo research expedition into the cultural history of Scotland's Mountains.

21st August 2022

Photographer and writer to research cultural history of Scotland's mountains with funding from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant.

Alex Boyd, 37 from North Ayrshire is undertaking a month-long solo walk through Scotland's mountains as part of his research for writing a book on the cultural history of Scotland's mountains. Inspired by the Japanese writer Kyūya Fukuda, who wrote the iconic '100 Mountains of Japan' in 1964, Alex hopes to tell the story of the men and women who visited Scotland's high places and depicted them through painting, poetry or in song. The list of mountains Alex plans to feature in his book is based on cultural relevance rather than height. While well-known mountains such as Schiehallion and Ben Nevis appear, so do Eaval on North Uist - a hill of relatively small stature but of huge cultural significance for islanders. Alex is currently completing a PhD on The Scottish Defence Estate and the Environment and has previously published books on the Scottish landscape including *St Kilda - The Silent Islands* which was shortlisted for a Saltire Literary Prize.

Alex hopes that by focusing on the cultural significance of Scotland's mountains, his book will attract new audiences into appreciating our wild places. The project will look at ways of accessing and experiencing high places which do not rely on having to physically visit or climb them. Following his walk which takes place this summer, Alex will spend the later part of 2022 undertaking further research, writing and developing photographs taken on the trip. He hopes to have the book ready for publication in 2023.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Alex said: "I'm absolutely delighted to receive the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant which will allow me to complete an exploration of the mountains of Scotland. The grant will make a big difference to my project as it provides the support I need to experience the peaks that inspired some of our greatest artists, musicians and writers. I hope I can live up to the example that Des Rubens and Bill Wallace set for all those that explore the outdoors."

Jenny Seaman of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "The grant panel were inspired by Alex's thoughtful project and alternative take on accessing and engaging with Scotland's mountains. We are delighted to be able to support his research and hope his work encourages new audiences to take an interest in Scotland's wild places."

Alex Boyd 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 Craigryston High School in Edinburgh 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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