

Press Release



Adventure grant supports accessible nature exploration on West and East Highland Ways

March 2025

Following 10 years of recurrent hip problems, Christina Sinclair plans to solo backpack the West and East Highland Ways and document the process on YouTube.

30-year-old freelance Filmmaker/Assistant Producer and Presenter Christina plans to inspire people to rediscover nature, seek adventure in wild places and to not give up hope for a healthier planet. She aims to show the reality of biodiversity loss in Scotland, but also how these trends can be reversed with ecological restoration and rewilding.

Following two hip replacements and years of chronic pain, Christina is preparing to walk the West Highland Way while reflecting on how much of the landscape cannot support healthy biodiversity - referencing overgrazing, deforestation and land-uses like grouse moors and commercial forestry.

On the East Highland Way she'll show projects like Cairngorms Connect that bring together people, nature and landscape to create a healthier, more biodiverse future. She'll take a detour into Glenfeshie to compare it with barren Glencoe and challenge shifting baselines.

Christina's personal story of overcoming physical challenges will act as a mirror story for how Scotland's biodiversity has been suffering but could recover if given the right support. She has never undertaken a physical challenge like this before and hopes that her story can inspire others living with chronic pain or disabilities to find their own connection to nature.

Christina said: "I'm absolutely delighted to have been awarded a **Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant**! After spending the last 10 years struggling with mobility issues, I'm really excited to take on this project to reclaim my own health, but also to document the journey and raise awareness for the barriers that people with disabilities face accessing nature and biodiversity loss. When I learned that Bill Wallace himself had also undergone hip replacement surgery it felt like fate! I'm incredibly grateful for the funding and can't wait to get going."

The John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, said: "The grant panel is delighted to support Christina's plan to walk the West and East Highland Ways and are interested hear see her observations about biodiversity loss and nature accessibility in her YouTube series."

Christina is one of four successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2025. This grant was established to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild places in ways that will benefit both the person, and the wild places themselves.

Editor's Notes

About the John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a UK-based conservation charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing wild places. The Trust owns and cares for some of the UK's most iconic landscapes, including Ben Nevis, Schiehallion, Sandwood Bay and areas within Skye, Knoydart and Assynt. The Trust also runs the John Muir Award, an inclusive environmental award scheme that encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places.

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 adventurous footsteps and experience wild places. Projects should have an educational or scientific component and benefit wild places.

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 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>

johnmuirtrust.org