

Press Release



Adventure grant supports documentary duo

March 2025

Aleks Domanski and Yvonne Reddick's latest film will feature mountain animals and mountain people affected by climate change in Sierra Nevada, California.

Aleks and Yvonne are researching, writing, presenting and producing a 60-minute documentary film titled *Forest Fires and Snowshoe Hares*. Their film will tell the story of how three iconic species – the Californian condor, the snowshoe hare, and the black-backed woodpecker – are coping with climate change and feature the people who are taking action to protect them.

Filmed in the Sierra Nevada - an area of California that conservationist, activist and writer John Muir was passionate about exploring and protecting – the documentary will showcase scientific research at the forefront of protecting landscapes from the harmful effects of climate change. By showing National Park staff and volunteers contributing to projects such as trail repair and tree planting, they hope to celebrate efforts to protect wild places and mitigate climate change impacts.

Aleks said: "The Des Rubens and Bill Wallace grant will support essential logistics and equipment for our filming expedition and enable us to tell the story of some of the most unique and threatened species on the planet.

"Climate change, its impact on people, wild places and animals is universal but the polar and mountain ranges of the world are disproportionately affected. From Scotland and the Peak District, now to the mountains of North America's Pacific seaboard, our film work encourages compassion for wild places dear to John Muir and champions their protection. This grant is crucial in helping us do this.

"In the wake of the recent devastating LA wildfires there has never been a more pressing time for this project and we are deeply grateful for the support of the **Des Rubens Bill Wallace Grant**."

Yvonne said: "I'm thrilled to receive this very generous contribution to our film project. Filming in the Sierra Nevada is a long-held dream for me and Aleks, and it's an honour to be upholding the adventurous legacy of John Muir, Des Rubens and Bill Wallace.

"I'm excited about filming species affected by climate change, and the people who protect them. We hope to draw attention to Californian condors, snowshoe hares, black-backed woodpeckers, the challenges they face, and efforts to safeguard their future."

The John Muir Trust, which administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, said: “The grant panel is excited to support Aleks and Yvonne’s documentary about the effects of climate change in the Sierra Nevada – and we look forward to seeing the resulting film.”

Aleks and Yvonne’s project is one of four successful applications 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