

Press Release



Adventure grant supports sound project in Polish forest

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Suzannah Scott-Moncrieff plans to record and contrast a forest ecosystem in Poland with a Sitka spruce plantation close to home.

Scottish Borders based art therapist Suzannah Scott-Moncrieff (48) has an interest in the intersections between mental health and the climate crisis.

Suzannah's plan is to listen to and record (in music, words and drawing) a densely alive ecosystem Poland's primeval Białowieża Forest, with the aim of contrasting its unruly wildness with the quietly homogenous experience of a Sitka spruce plantation in Scotland.

She describes the ancient Polish forest as Europe's last primeval woodland and the closest remnant of the forest that once covered much of Scotland and anticipates discovering new sounds, patterns, and sensations - some exhilarating, some disorienting - that may unsettle her predictable ways of listening and thinking.

Suzannah said: "By translating the contrasting experiences - one, in the last wild and ancient forest in Europe, and the other in the Sitka spruce plantation behind my house - into music, art and words, I hope to create work that captures an ancient forest's aliveness, honours the emotional weight of planet-wide biodiversity loss, and reflects the transformative power of wild, unpredictable places and what monoculture can silence.

"I am absolutely delighted to receive the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant. It offers me the chance to journey to one of Europe's last remaining primeval forests and to expand my creative and ecological work in ways I could only have imagined. My sincere thanks for this extraordinary opportunity."

The John Muir Trust, which administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, said: "The grant panel is delighted to support Suzannah's journey to the Białowieża Forest in Poland, and we look forward to hearing about the results of her project."

Suzannah's project is one of seven successful applications to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2026. 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 for the benefit of all. 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 £500 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