
Adventure grant supports birch tree and shrub study in Northern Mongolia.

22 February 2024

Paul Bartlett and his team will undertake an expedition to Mongolia to study native birch trees and shrubs, their habitat and companion species.

Paul and his team aim to gain a better understanding of these native plants by studying them in the wild in partnership with botanists from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. During their remote expedition, they will also collect seeds to bring back to the UK for propagation and further research. These species are so far understudied by western science and there is much confusion over identifying individuals and where hybrid species may have occurred, making Pauls research an exciting venture into plant biology.

They will hike for several days into the mountains to study plants in various ecological and geological climates, camping at each study site to collect samples while having a minimal impact on the surrounding environment. Upon their return, plants raised from seeds collected will be planted in the National Collections at Stone Lane Gardens and shared amongst other Botanic Gardens for research and education.

On receiving the news of the grant offer Paul said: “I am delighted to be awarded a grant from the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace grant. Working for a small charity where funding is limited, this support is vital for the success of our Mongolian plant study expedition.”

Sophie Mackaness of the John Muir Trust, who administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: “The grant panel were excited to support a novel expedition to study a range of plants for which western science knows so little about. Paul’s passion for plant biology and ecology is clear and we are excited to hear about his results.”

Paul’s project is one of six successful applicants to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2024. 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 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 its UK-wide environmental award scheme, the John Muir Award.

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>

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