Stephen Moran Bursary Fund

Applicant Guidance Notes

The Stephen Moran Bursary Fund has been established by the Highland Biological Recording Group (HBRG) to support young people and early-career researchers undertaking research on invertebrates within the Highland Council area.

The Fund seeks to encourage the next generation of naturalists, field ecologists and conservation scientists by helping to remove financial barriers to participation in field-based research. It also recognises and celebrates the outstanding contribution made by Stephen Moran to biological recording, natural history and the mentoring of others throughout the Highlands.

The Fund provides financial support for projects that improve knowledge and understanding of Highland invertebrates while helping applicants develop practical scientific skills and experience

About Stephen Moran

Stephen Moran (1952–2024) was a founding member of the Highland Biological Recording Group and remained at the heart of the organisation for almost forty years.

A highly respected naturalist and biological recorder, Stephen made an exceptional contribution to the understanding of Highland biodiversity. His particular interests included true bugs (Hemiptera), barkflies (Psocoptera), beetles (Coleoptera) and plant galls. Over his lifetime he contributed nearly 30,000 biological records to the HBRG database and verified many more submitted by others.

Stephen served as editor of the HBRG Newsletter and later *The Highland Naturalist* for over three decades and became Chair of HBRG in 2018. He was also widely known for his willingness to share knowledge, mentor new recorders and encourage others to become involved in biological recording and natural history.

This bursary has been established in his memory and reflects his lifelong belief in supporting and inspiring future generations of naturalists.

Awards Available

Stephen Moran Bursary

- Value: up to £1,000
- Awarded annually, subject to available funds
- Supports research or survey work focused on invertebrates within the Highland Council area

Cairngorms Fieldwork Award

- Value: up to £500
- One-off award for 2027
- Supports fieldwork focused on invertebrates within the Cairngorms National Park within Highland

Applicants may apply for either award but cannot hold both awards at the same time.

Eligibility

Who Can Apply?

Applications are welcomed from individuals who:

- Are aged between 18 and 30 years old, or are early-career researchers;
- Are undertaking research focused on invertebrates;
- Are carrying out research within the Highland Council area;
- Have appropriate support from a supervisor, mentor, university department, conservation organisation or equivalent body where relevant.

The Fund particularly encourages applications from individuals:

- At an early stage of their scientific career;
- Facing barriers to participation in research or fieldwork;
- With strong links to the Highlands;
- Who can demonstrate that the award will make a significant difference to their ability to undertake the proposed work

Types of Projects Supported

Projects may include:

- Species recording and survey work;
- Ecological or behavioural studies;
- Taxonomic investigations;
- Distribution mapping;
- Monitoring of species or habitats;
- Research contributing to conservation management;
- Practical field studies that improve understanding of Highland invertebrates.

Projects may be undertaken independently or as part of a wider programme of study, provided the bursary funding clearly supports the applicant's own research activities.

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What Can the Funding Be Used For?

Awards may be used for costs directly associated with the approved project, including:

- Travel to and from field sites;
- Accommodation required for fieldwork;
- Field equipment;
- Sampling equipment;
- Research consumables;
- Training courses relevant to invertebrate identification or survey techniques;
- Subsistence costs directly related to fieldwork activities.

What Cannot Be Funded?

The Fund will not support:

- Tuition fees;
- Insurance costs;
- General living expenses unrelated to the project;
- Retrospective costs;
- Expenditure not directly linked to the approved project;
- Activities that fall outside the aims of the Fund.

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Application Requirements

Applicants must submit:

1. Application Form

Providing personal and contact details together with project information below

2. Project Proposal (Maximum 750 Words)

The proposal should explain:

- The aims of the project;
- The invertebrate group or groups being studied;
- The location of the work;
- Methods to be used;
- Anticipated outcomes;
- Any wider benefits to biological recording, conservation or scientific knowledge.

3. Personal Statement (Maximum 500 Words)

The personal statement should outline:

- Your background;
- Your interest in natural history and invertebrates;
- Relevant experience;
- How the bursary would support your development;
- How the project may contribute to your future education or career.



4. Project Budget

A simple breakdown showing how the award would be spent.

5. Supporting Statement

Where appropriate, applicants should provide a short endorsement from a supervisor, mentor, host organisation or similar supporter.

How Applications Will Be Assessed

Applications will be considered by an Assessment Panel appointed by the Stephen Moran Bursary Fund Working Group.

The Panel will consider:

- Relevance to the aims of the Fund;
- Contribution to knowledge of Highland invertebrates;
- Scientific quality and feasibility;
- Learning and development opportunities for the applicant;
- Likely impact of the bursary;
- Value for money.

In cases where applications are closely matched, the Panel may also consider how well an application reflects Stephen Moran's enthusiasm for biological recording, field observation and learning through practical experience.

The Panel's decision is final.

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Assessment Timetable

The anticipated annual timetable is:

Stage	Timing
Applications Open	1st November
Applications Close	31st January
Assessment Panel Review	February
Awards Announced	Early March
Project Completion and Reporting	Within 12 months of award

HBRG reserves the right to amend these dates if required.

Payment Arrangements

Successful applicants will receive:

- 70% of the award following formal acceptance of the bursary;
- The remaining 30% following receipt of a satisfactory end-of-project report.

Conditions of Award

Recipients must:

- Use the funding solely for the approved project;
- Undertake the project within the agreed timescale;
- Notify the Fund of significant changes to the project;
- Submit a final report;
- Provide a brief expenditure summary;
- Acknowledge support from the Stephen Moran Bursary Fund in presentations, reports and publications arising from the work. The Fund reserves the right to request repayment of funding where funds are knowingly used for purposes outside the approved project.

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End-of-Project Reporting

A short report should normally be submitted within twelve months of receiving the award, unless otherwise agreed.

The report should typically be between 1,000 and 2,000 words and include:

- Activities undertaken;
- Key findings;
- Species recorded;
- Skills gained;
- How the bursary supported the work;
- An expenditure summary.
- Photographs, maps and personal reflections are welcome but not mandatory.

Reports may be considered for publication within *The Highland Naturalist* or other HBRG communications, subject to agreement with the author.

Responsibilities of Award Holders

The Stephen Moran Bursary Fund provides financial support only.

Award holders are responsible for:

- Project planning and delivery;
- Health and safety arrangements;
- Risk assessment;
- Securing any permissions, licences or consents;
- Ensuring that any required insurance is in place.

The Fund does not supervise, direct or manage field activities and accepts no liability for project activities undertaken by recipients.

Highland Biological Recording Group

Further Information

The Stephen Moran Bursary Fund exists to support curiosity, learning and field-based discovery.

Applicants are encouraged to focus on projects that are realistic, achievable and capable of advancing knowledge of the remarkable invertebrate fauna of the Highlands while developing their own skills and experience as naturalists and researchers. HBRG are particularly interested in projects that look at under recorded species. In doing so, award holders help continue the legacy of Stephen Moran, whose lifelong enthusiasm for biological recording inspired many others to explore and understand the natural world.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity.