



2009 Whitley Awards



“I’ve been making natural history films for over 50 years and during that short time the human population of the earth has increased three times. All those people need places to live, places for their food to be grown, and that has put increasing pressure on the natural world. As a consequence, animals and plants – everywhere – are under increasing threat of extinction. Fortunately there are people who are doing their best to try and prevent that disaster, and who can articulate real solutions. The Whitley Awards are there to help them.”

Sir David Attenborough, Trustee.



Welcome to the 16th Whitley Awards for International Nature Conservation. Since 1994, the Whitley Awards have supported the work of more than 100 conservation leaders in 50 countries. Their projects have expanded our knowledge of the natural world and helped safeguard the livelihoods of local peoples. The winners are from many different cultures and backgrounds, and face many challenges. But what they have in common is a commitment to conserving wildlife and the environment; and the determination and tenacity to succeed.

The finalists for 2009 are another group of extraordinary conservationists working to achieve great things through teamwork, vision and dedication. They are from Uganda, Mali, Thailand, Bulgaria, India, Kenya and Sri Lanka. Together they are working on a wide range of issues from insect conservation, to wetland protection, from gorilla research to community health.

2009 is proving to be a challenging year for conservation as the recession leads to an inevitable reduction in charitable giving. Whilst the work around the world remains just as urgent, just as challenging, just as relevant, the funding sources available to those working on the ground are ever more competitively sought. This is a crucial time for conservation and for charities such as the WFN who have no endowment capital and so raise all the funds they distribute each year.

Whitley Award winners have for more than a decade demonstrated how with a little support, profile and funding, international recognition can help them to scale up their proven local success to launch their work on a larger scale. They are making a measurable difference to species and habitats, and the local people who rely upon them, with relatively little. Now more than ever, the world can learn from this approach.

We are delighted to welcome the 2009 Whitley Award Winners.

Edward Whitley
Chair, Whitley Fund for Nature

WELCOME

Global economic change affects us all, including charities. When times are tight it is even more important to ensure the limited funds are used as effectively as possible. WFN has long been committed to efficient grant giving, and the last few months have been a time to take stock on the one hand of what has been learned to date, and on the other, of the difficult time ahead for conservation leaders, our grantees.

WFN relies on donations for all the grants we distribute. We keep overheads to a minimum, aiming for at least 90% of each donation to reach people on the ground. WFN is run by a small team equivalent to two full-time staff, and we are pleased to this year have raised £1 million. This funding is distributed through three types of targeted grant, from smaller Associate Awards, to our flagship prize – The Whitley Award – and Continuation Funding for our strongest previous winners (see page 14). In this way we ensure we are there to give help at the most crucial points in the careers of talented emerging conservationists.

Tonight we will give up to seven Whitley Awards of £30,000 each, and one of these winners will also win the overall Gold Award to result in £60,000 of funding over two years. This is only possible due to the generous support of our donors. We are enormously grateful to each and every one of you. Your donations enable us to continue to offer funding to some of the world's most effective conservation leaders at the very moment when many other sources of funds are drying up.

Georgina Domberger

Director, Whitley Fund for Nature

Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

We would like to thank you all for your stoic support over the past few months, which has come in many forms. The 'Friends' are vital to the vigour of the charity, and include all donors who are not Major sponsors or the donors of specific Awards. Funds from the Friends are pooled together to support a full Whitley Award and, if funds allow, Continuation Funding as well.

We would like to extend our greatest thanks to all our donors, including the many people who elected to remain anonymous. On behalf of all the winners and the WFN team, thank you for your support.

Catherine Faulks

Chair of the Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

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Whitley Fund for Nature is grateful to Scott Prenn, a strategic fundraising partnership that advises organisations how to fund their future. Scott Prenn have helped WFN to review their current situation and have provided recommendations for the future. www.scottprenn.com



Judging Process

The quest to find the winners of the Whitley Awards 2009 began seven months ago. At every stage we rely on the valuable input of our application screeners and Judging Panel, who offer their expertise voluntarily.

October '08	Deadline for applications
November '08	Eligibility screen ends (Stage 1)
January '09	Paper Screen ends (Stage 2)
March '09	Judging Panel meeting to decide shortlist (Stage 3)
11th May '09	Shortlist interviews (Stage 4)

As in previous years, we have been amazed by the variety and standard of conservation work taking place around the world. All the finalists have overcome great challenges to reach the final stages of the Whitley Awards.

Whitley Award Judging Panel

Adrian Darby OBE

Former Chairman, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Dr. Glyn Davies

Director of Programmes, WWF-UK

Georgina Domberger

Director, WFN

Tim Dye

Trustee, WFN

Catherine Faulks

Trustee, WFN

Sara Morrison

Trustee Emeritus, WWF-UK

Mark Rose

CEO, Fauna and Flora International

Francis Sullivan

Deputy Head of Group Sustainable Development, HSBC

Edward Whitley

Chair of Trustees and Founder, WFN

Application Screeners

Georgina Domberger

John Laing

Dr. Mark Wright

Conservation Science Advisor, WWF-UK





Pruthu Fernando

Sri Lanka

Prithviraj Fernando is chairman of the Centre for Conservation and Research, based in Colombo, committed to making elephant conservation a reality beyond the boundaries of protected areas.

Pruthu first began studying southern Sri Lanka's elephants fifteen years ago for his PhD, attracted by their iconic status, role in biodiversity and their impact on human lives. The challenges presented by 5,000 elephants living alongside Sri Lanka's 20 million people puts them at the heart of socio-economic debate.



Asian elephants and people: Taking conservation beyond protected area boundaries

It has long been recognised that the Asian elephant is in trouble. Its population has been reduced by as much as 80% in most parts of its range in the past century. Unlike for many species in decline, the cause for its predicament has been well understood from the outset: a dramatic increase in human population resulting in the occupation of former elephant territories, and the demand for ivory. Most countries in Asia have responded mainly through legal protection, but also by seeking to restrict elephants to protected areas and by fencing off farmlands to protect crops.

These methods have also been applied in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, human-elephant conflict claims on average the lives of one human and three elephants every week of the year. At present, Sri Lankans who share land with elephants receive no benefits but often bear costs they cannot afford. This leads communities to press for elephants to be removed. Pruthu says *"In 2009, there are at least two elephant drives planned for this purpose"*.

It was Pruthu who first challenged the status quo. His work has demonstrated scientifically that Sri Lanka's elephant population cannot survive in the available

protected areas alone, and that a new system is called for, where elephants seasonally share farmlands, especially those under shifting cultivation. Unlike many scientists, Pruthu has done much more than simply generate science: he has been a vocal and articulate advocate of solving the problem.

CCR's most recent achievement has been to persuade Sri Lanka's Forest Department to begin opening its land to elephants, providing official protection to two thirds of the current elephant range. At a local scale, the introduction of electric fences in some areas is reducing damage to homes and kitchen gardens.

Pruthu has a deep empathy for the rural farming people. The next challenge is to work with 240 farming families to develop a working model, based on solid science. The team will help the farmers to defend paddy fields during cultivation – but then allow elephants into their fields once harvesting ends, so that the herds can move between patches of habitat and feed on left over harvest. If successful this approach could be widely replicated across Asia, with obvious benefits both to their people and their biodiversity.



Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

Uganda

Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health, a non-profit organisation working to protect the mountain gorillas of Bwindi, a remote and densely forested area in south west Uganda that is the only major stronghold of the species outside Rwanda. CTPH is unique, and works to prevent the spread of disease from wild animals to humans, and vice versa, by improving primary healthcare for people and animals in and around protected areas in Africa.

Gladys first learned about Uganda's

gorillas as a teenage wildlife advocate in Kampala where her passion for animals led to her starting a wildlife club at her school, setting up bird feeders and nature areas in its grounds, and organised trips to the Queen Elizabeth National Park.

Her interest was fuelled further when she won a scholarship to train at the Royal Veterinary College in London and heard lectures about Africa's great apes and their conservation needs. At 25, she became Uganda's first wildlife veterinary officer with a brief that included protecting the health of gorillas in Bwindi where eco-tourism was rising and increasing the level of contact between gorillas and people.

There, Gladys proved that cross-infection is possible when in 1996 and again in 2000 she traced an outbreak of scabies in the mountain gorillas to the local community where access to healthcare and health education was extremely limited.

Today, CTPH is addressing the issue by galvanising local people to adopt better health and hygiene approaches which benefit them and the gorillas, and enthrusing them to help with surveys and

Mountain Gorilla conservation through public health

monitoring through community-led outreach and education. She is helping the community to improve facilities to attract ecotourists and ensure that tourists themselves do not bring disease to the gorillas.

The next step of her work is to develop house visits in order to contact the people living in the most remote homes bordering the park, and the 500 or so people who see gorillas most often. Many challenges remain. In March this year, concerns were raised about virulent new strains of diseases, such as polio, entering Uganda prompting a mass new vaccination programme. The good news is that Gladys and her team are now prepared to respond to crises. She is working to train local people in gorilla health monitoring, cultivating a winning attitude to conservation and public health in local communities.





M. D. Madhusudan India

Dr. Madhusudan is Director of Nature Conservation Foundation, a young NGO that has grown quickly to become one of the most respected in India.

His work focuses on the Western Ghats – the world's most densely populated biodiversity hotspot, supporting 350 people per square kilometre. It is also home to an estimated 350-500 tigers alongside 15,000 elephants and a host of other endangered wildlife.

So much wildlife alongside so many people has led to increasing tension over space. Despite being prohibited by law, local people rely greatly on subsistence use of the forest. Madhu's research gives growing evidence that such use is often not sustainable. At the same time, proximity to parks imposes heavy costs on the same local communities when they suffer agricultural and livestock losses to wildlife.

Madhu and his team work to combine science with practical conservation action to resolve conflict. Nationally, he is part of a



Making good neighbours: Conflict reduction between people and endangered wildlife

Government-backed project to map the distribution of large mammals and identify new conservation areas, whilst regionally he researches the ecology and economics of agro-forestry sites close to reserves. At grassroots level, he works with farmers around the Bandipur Tiger Reserve on a pilot community-based conflict mitigation project.

Madhu's community work was partly inspired by an elderly couple he met whilst conducting wildlife research. Over time he learned they were entirely dependent on crops from a tiny plot of rented land, paid for in grain. Each day, the man and his wife laboured in the field; each night, the man climbed a 'look-out' tree to deter marauding elephants.

"One morning, I found the couple disconsolate. The night before, the exhausted man had nodded off briefly yet in those few moments, their entire crop had been destroyed, leaving them with nothing ... For someone raised in the city, like me, it showed the true harshness of marginal life and the high cost our very poorest people pay for wildlife conservation."

Madhu and his team work with families whose farms border protected areas to

develop solutions, such as solar-powered electric fences to protect crops. Before the fence went up a year ago, families were losing about a quarter of their crops to elephants; this year, they've lost none.

A more productive farm reduces the likelihood of communities illegally using the park for grazing or fuelwood. Madhu is working with park officials to improve policy and increase social equity, whilst at the same time expanding his work to help more families, and the wildlife they live alongside, become good neighbours.





Dino Martins

Kenya

Dino Martins is Chairman of the Insect Committee of Nature Kenya, a researcher at the National Museums of Kenya and a PhD fellow at Harvard. Growing up in rural Kenya, he was interested in nature from an early age. *“Watching birds and animals, and especially insects, was what I looked forward to, and continue to look forward to, everyday.”*

Where others strive to conserve Kenya’s famous national parks and big iconic species, Dino’s focus is on the insects that flourish in tiny forest remnants and at farmland edges. These small wild areas support thousands of species of frogs, butterflies, orchids and trees, providing essential ecosystem services and, most critically, crop pollination. Insects contribute to food security, yet they are often overlooked in conservation.

Only 1.7 % of Kenya remains forested, with islands of trees in a sea of rural subsistence agriculture. For millennia people have farmed around wilder patches.



People, Plants and Pollinators: Uniting conservation of insects and sustainable agriculture

However, increasing pressures are being placed on these areas due to changing farming systems, charcoal production and, more recently, climate change.

Dino’s work is driven by the knowledge that Kenya’s population is booming, people need food and there’s pressure to adopt agri-chemical methods even though sustainable farming is viable. Biodiversity is at risk, with knock-on effects for small farms and their incomes.

A key element of Dino’s work is education. Once, in southern Kenya, he found passion-fruit farmers crushing bees with their hands, to keep them away from their flowers. *“But the reason there were no yields on certain crops was because they*

were killing off the pollinators. Once I explained this, they had bumper yields. Now everyone there recognises the value of insects, especially pollinators”.

He is also tapping local expertise – such as the West Kenyan farmer who has discovered how to harvest honey from stingless wild bees, without destroying a single nest. *“It is local people like this who need to be supported and encouraged to scale-up the amazing things they are doing. He is able to sell his honey and, of course, his bees are pollinating his crops”.*

Dino has researched the biology of pollinators all over East Africa including those affecting acacias, coffee, papaya, and vanilla. He is developing a long-term programme with schools immediately adjacent to the most biodiverse areas of Kenya, getting kids involved in insect monitoring. He now plans to create a live pollinator exhibit at public sites for farmers, school children and the general public to increase awareness of the importance of insects.

He adds: *“Life is fragile and intricately inter-connected. If pollinators die off, human beings won’t be far behind.”*





Bourama Niagate

Mali

Bourama Niagate is the Founder of AMEPANE, a Malian NGO working to improve the livelihoods of local people and conserve wildlife at Bafing Faunal Reserve. Mali is Ranked 173rd out of 177 nations in the United Nations Human Development Index, and Bafing is one of its poorest regions. Overhunting is a problem, and giraffes and elephants have already disappeared from the ecosystem. Projects such as the construction of the Manantali dam in the 1980s have contributed to ecological disruption. The dam – the biggest in West Africa – eliminated the floods that had provided free irrigation for half a million farmers.

Bourama's work focuses on an area close to the borders with Senegal and Guinea. He first visited the species-rich Bafing area in 1986 when UNESCO funded a feasibility study into creating a reserve in the aftermath of the dam. The dam project attracted workers from outside the area, provoked development pressure and

disrupted traditional lifestyles and teachings, such as hunting patterns that allow nature to recover. Poverty means that bushmeat trading, poaching and overgrazing are inevitable as families struggle to survive in a place where hunger is a constant.

Much of Bourama Niagate's work today is driven by the Malian sayings: "*An empty stomach does not wait*". With a raft of partners, including the Born Free Foundation, he is attempting to improve healthcare, education, incomes and living standards so that Bafing communities feel less need to over-exploit their wild plants and animals and have a better understanding of the value of habitat protection.



Conservation and Community outreach at Bafing Reserve

Bourama has worked in the Bafing ecosystem for the last 25 years and has developed a strong relationship with the Malian government. Successes to date include educational outreach to the communities of Bamafélé and Koundian and capacity-building, as well as publication of the first Malian guide of wild fauna.

Bourama's team now aims to identify measures to enhance the conservation of species in danger of local extinction, such as the African wild dog and the Derby Eland, and to collect new data on species that could be central to future ecotourism, such as chimpanzees. As well as expanding educational work in schools and amongst the community, greater protection and enforcement will be achieved through the training of rangers and eco-guards.

In 2007, Bourama Niagate's achievements to date were recognised when he was awarded the French National Order of Merit. He is the first Malian to be shortlisted for a Whitley Award.



Jittin Ritthirat West Thailand

Jittin Ritthirat was first drawn to Salakpra by the region's mountains and natural beauty. "A vivid memory is lying in a hammock observing a herd of wild elephants by the light of a full moon night when I camped in the forest. I kept awake throughout the night as they moved around at a relaxing pace, sometimes within hand's reach! I still remember the moon shining on their backs that night. It is just like a dream".

The dream has its dark side, though. Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary is Thailand's oldest reserve. Established in 1965 it was once famous for its rich forest fauna close to Bangkok. Unfortunately, management of the reserve has been neglected. Over the years, a growing human population around its unclear boundary has come into increasing conflict with the park's last elephants, sometimes with fatal results.

Elephants need to range beyond park boundaries to survive, but this brings them into conflict with communities who can



Community-led conservation of Thailand's Elephants in populated monsoon forest

ill-afford to lose crops. At the same time, illegal exploitation of the sanctuary is commonplace, by local people as well as poachers, for fuelwood and grazing.

Furthermore local people have not been properly included in decisions which affect them. Despite living alongside a dam at the River Kwai, they have no running water.

Jittin is co-founder of Elephant Conservation Network, established in 1999 as a research and outreach organisation to improve life for people and elephants. ECN is working with people to increase their understanding of why elephants are driven to forage outside the reserve. The team is helping those worst affected to erect crop defences, but ECN's work goes much

further than this. Unlike many other Thai NGOs which focus on either human well-being or the welfare of wildlife, ECN does both.

Jittin says: "We turned some local people, who were against us and wild elephants, into our friends within a year or two ... They have stopped asking for compensation but instead take action and collaborate to solve the problem with us. Many now feel sympathetic towards wild elephants after learning what is causing the problem. This is rewarding for me, particularly when looking back to when farmers were angry, hopeless, pessimistic."

Jittin now aims to develop a cattle management plan, as well as an alternative livelihood programme and new education work, to reduce the dependency of people on the forest. Local people are working with ECN to change how park managers think, and ensure communities see benefits from the park as well as challenges.





Emil Todorov Bulgaria

Emil Todorov leads a team at the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds working to protect one of Europe's greatest rivers, the Lower Danube. Dividing Northern Bulgaria from Romania, the river lies within one of the European Union's least developed regions.

Emil grew up here, and it was as a schoolboy BSPB volunteer that a wildlife sighting decided him on his future direction. *"I remember being so inspired by seeing the magnificent white-tailed eagle in flight that I said then and there that I would do anything to keep this eagle in the area."*

Today he is working with policy-makers, planners and local people, raising awareness of how the lower reaches of the Danube provide a critical corridor for migrating birds and a vital resource for rare breeding birds, including globally threatened red-breasted goose, lesser white-fronted goose, Dalmatian pelican and Endangered Egyptian vulture. 72% of the original floodplain of the Lower Danube has been cut off from the river or drained for agricultural use, making



Wetlands of the Lower Danube: Protecting critical migratory corridors for globally threatened birds

what habitat remains of great importance to conservation.

Emil and his team have successfully identified 17 Important Bird Areas and achieved their legal protection. As well as collecting important biological data, Emil has worked to gain the support of locals as 'caretakers' who help with bird surveys, the mapping of special sites, public education and practical action. This approach has increased local capacity and created a new sense of ownership over conservation results. Many farmers have installed nest boxes for the European Roller, whilst fisherman help report where white-tailed eagles nest on the Danube islands.

An emerging challenge is a proposal for a

150-turbine wind farm in the path of migrating birds, regardless of its potential environmental impact. The turbines will stretch across a wide area, creating a 20km barrier. Emil supports Bulgaria's desire to reduce its carbon emissions but says: *"We believe that the ideas for developing renewable energy could be realised without harming endangered birds and other biodiversity, if nature values are taken into consideration in advance."*

In response to this emerging threat, Emil is working with experts and local people to action a rethink of current planning decisions, and so safeguard the lower Danube's natural richness and the flocks of birds which pass through every year.



Continuation Funding Winners 2008-2009

- Randall Arauz**, Action for sharks, Costa Rica
Gargi Banerji, Sustainable use of medicinal and aromatic plants, Himalayas, **India**
Sergei Bereznuik, Amur tiger and leopard conservation, Primorye, **Russia**
Achilles Byaruhanga & Kerryn Morrison, Crane and wetland conservation, **Uganda**
Gerardo Ceballos, Biosphere reserve for the prairie dog grassland ecosystem, **Mexico**
Laury Cullen, Jaguars as landscape detectives for the Atlantic Forest, **Brazil**
Dmitry Lisitsyn, Vostochny wild salmon refuge: conservation of Sakhalin Island, **Russia**
Charudutt Mishra, People and snow leopards in the Himalayan high altitudes, **India**
Claudio Padua, Black-faced lion tamarins: implementing a Species Action Plan, **Brazil**
Emilian Stoynov, Predators, People and Livestock in peaceful co-existence, **Bulgaria**

It is often repeated that conservation is not about one-off grant giving. This is true now more than ever. It is easy to care about the environment when times are good, but if the world sees conservation as a luxury to be put aside when less convenient, what of the work that has already been funded? Self-sustainability is an urgent goal of all conservation work supported by the WFN, but achieving that goal takes time and continued investment.

WFN stays in close touch with winners, offering support, contacts and advice. When funding allows, the most successful are invited to reapply after the conclusion of their Whitley Award work and once their final report has been received and assessed.

This 'Continuation Funding', which this year ranged from grants of £30,000 to £60,000, allows us to continue our link between you and our most effective winners. We are proud to have contributed to their ongoing success.



Associate Award Winners 2009

- Leonard Akwany**, Conservation and Improved livelihoods at Lake Victoria Wetland, **Kenya**
Sudipto Chatterjee, An Action Plan for conservation of wild Rhododendrons, Eastern Himalayas, **India**
Gang Chen, Wild Bactrian Camel conservation through sustainable desert communities in Xinjiang, **China**
Ravi Corea, Improving land use practices to mitigate human-elephant conflict, **Sri Lanka**
Supraja Dharini, Community based conservation of sea turtles and dolphins in Kancheepuram, **India**

Starting in 2005, we have offered grants to fund projects with outstanding promise. The Associate Awards have allowed WFN to broaden support of grassroots nature conservation at an earlier level, which is often the most critical part of a project's growth. Small grants of up to £10,000 give these winners an important boost and we stay in touch with them as they progress. In 2008, Jean Wiener and Liu Yi were both winners who successfully 'graduated' to a full Whitley Award, two years on from their Associate Award, illustrating the value of these small grants.

We would like to thank...

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
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...for their support of the Associate Awards 2009.

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2009 Whitley Awards

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