



2012 Whitley Awards 

“Whitley Award winners are working with those communities that are a part of that most important front line of the human race that lives with nature, perhaps not understanding the impact that they are having. They help these local people to build on their knowledge, so that they are able to support nature, and thus able to continue to have it alongside them.”

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, WFN Patron



Welcome to the 19th Annual Whitley Awards for International Nature Conservation.

It seems that every year Whitley Fund for Nature is celebrating yet another milestone: 2012 is no exception. As well as seeing our fundraising exceed £10 million since the charity was founded, tonight also marks the 10th consecutive year that donations from our supporters, the Friends of WFN, have raised enough money to sponsor a named Whitley Award. Thank you very much for your far-reaching generosity.

This year we are also introducing a new Whitley Gold Award. In the past, this has been presented to the Whitley Award winner deemed the most outstanding. However, we have often found it difficult to single out just one winner from such consistently strong groups. We have, therefore, decided that the Gold Award would be better served recognising a winner from a previous year who, in the time since their first award, has gone on to achieve success far beyond the scope of their original work, often with the help of further support from WFN Continuation Funding. The inaugural winner of the Gold Award for 2012 is Rodrigo Medellin and we welcome him both on our Judging Panel and with us tonight.

As well as our new Gold Award, we will be celebrating seven brand new Whitley Award winners who are joining us from Peru, Indonesia, Madagascar, Guatemala, Belize, Ivory Coast and Costa Rica. Each will receive £30,000 to support their work and will gain new skills through media training. We also work to introduce them to new contacts and further opportunities during their week with us in London.

As we approach our 20th Anniversary, the celebration of milestones is set to continue, something we look forward to sharing with all of you.

Thank you very much for your generous donations and for being here tonight. Your presence inspires our winners more than you will realise.

Please join me in welcoming the Whitley Award winners for 2012.

Edward Whitley
Chairman, Whitley Fund for Nature

WELCOME

Thank you to our donors

Identifying and funding the world's most dynamic conservation leaders through the Whitley Awards is only made possible through the support of our major donors.

The donations we receive from our Friends are also vital, enabling us to offer the Whitley Award donated by the Friends of WFN and also providing Continuation Funding for the ongoing work of past winners.

The WFN team would like to thank all of our donors, including those who choose to remain anonymous.

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Whitley Awardee Media Training sponsorship



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thank you

Judging Process

We rely on the expertise of our global network of contacts and past winners in helping us to select the Finalists for the Whitley Awards. This year we again received over 120 applications which passed through four stages of assessment, reviewed at every step by our screeners and panellists who kindly offer their expertise voluntarily.

	End October 2011	Deadline for applications
Stage 1	End November 2011	Eligibility screen complete
Stage 2	Mid January 2012	Scoring stage complete
Stage 3	Mid March 2012	Judging Panel meets to decide finalists
Stage 4	May 2012	Finalist interviews

Whitley Award Judging Panel 2012

Ros Aveling

Deputy Chief Executive, Fauna and Flora International

Dr. Glyn Davies

Director of Programmes, WWF-UK

Dr. Simon Lyster

Trustee, World Land Trust

Francis Sullivan

Deputy Head of Group Sustainable Development, HSBC

Dr. Rodrigo Medellin

Whitley Award winner 2004

Edward Whitley

Chairman and Founder, WFN

Catherine Faulks

Trustee, WFN

Tim Dye

Trustee, WFN

Application screeners

David Wallis

Awards Manager and Acting Director, WFN

Danni Parks

Manager, WFN

Dr. Charudutt Mishra

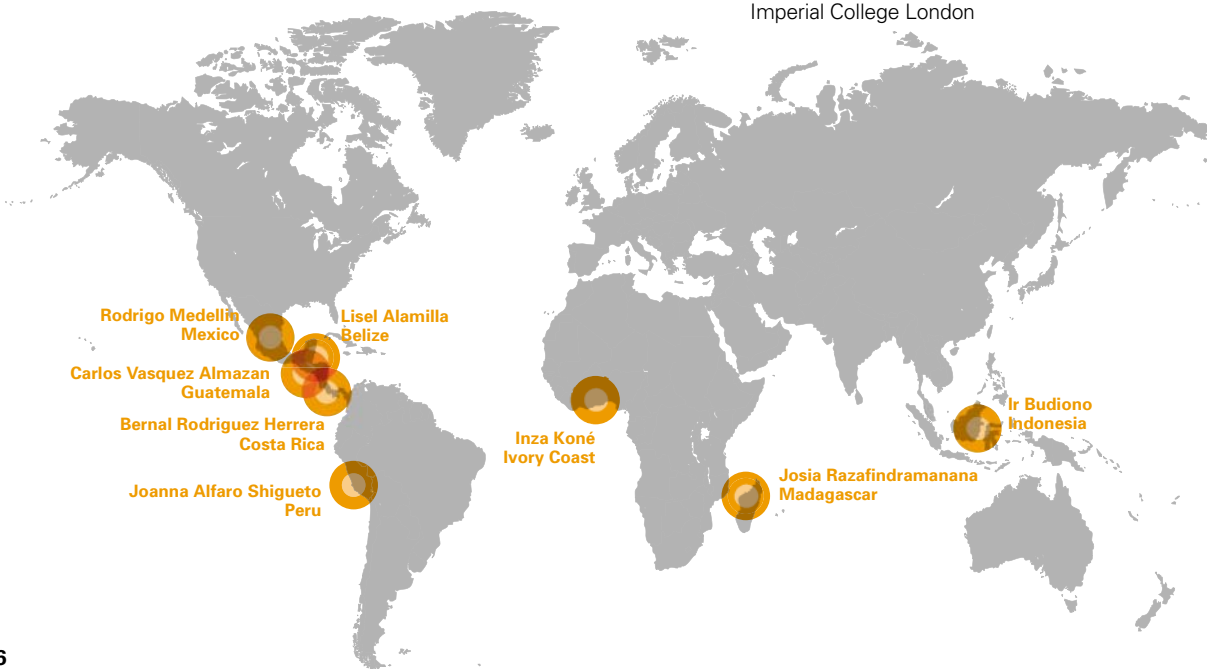
Whitley Gold Award winner 2005

Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu

Whitley Gold Award winner 2008

Prof. E.J. Milner-Gulland

Imperial College London



finalists



Rodrigo Medellín Mexico

In 2004, in recognition of his work to conserve Mexico's bats, Rodrigo Medellín became the second ever recipient of the Whitley Award donated by the Friends of WFN. Since then, Rodrigo has become one of our most successful and influential winners, receiving Continuation Funding in 2005 and again in 2011, with a total of £120,000 awarded by WFN to support the expansion of his work, nationally and internationally.

Within just two years of his first award, Rodrigo had established his own NGO, BIOCONCIENCIA, successfully expanded his conservation programme from 16 to 25 of Mexico's 32 States and rediscovered the flatheaded bat – a species not seen for 30 years and thought extinct. He and his team have continued to make a real and measurable impact on how people perceive bats, based on cutting edge scientific study as well as through intelligent, engaging and well-targeted education work.

Rodrigo's programme in Mexico has been so successful that he has expanded it into

other countries across Latin America. This platform has led to the establishment of the Latin American Bat Conservation Network (RELCOM), where he works alongside scientists including fellow Whitley Alumnus Luis Aguirre in Bolivia, as well as Bernal Rodriguez Herrera in Costa Rica, a finalist in this year's Awards.

Rodrigo's current focus is to highlight the crucial role that bats play in the ecosystem and show how the services they provide as pollinators and seed dispersers – and even in preventing the spread of infectious diseases – are more significant than previously thought. In doing so, Rodrigo aims to make the world more aware of how crucial bats are to our own survival. Indeed, without bats controlling numbers of crop-destroying insects, there would be a lot less food on tables right across Mexico, and without them pollinating the agave plant, there might also be no tequila with which to wash it down!

In 2012 Rodrigo will be working alongside the Mexican Government to carry out the final studies required to remove one of his target species, the Lesser Long-nosed bat, from the Country's endangered species list.



Whitley Gold Award winner 2012

Bat Conservation in Mexico and Latin America

This in itself is one of the strongest and most objective indicators of his effectiveness and will mark the first de-listing of a species in Mexico.

Rodrigo's reputation as one of the world's leading conservation professionals is reflected in the many positions he holds with international bodies such as the IUCN, CITES and the UN. Also, as 2012 is the International Year of the Bat, it is no surprise to know that Rodrigo has been appointed a Year of the Bat Ambassador.

We are delighted to announce Rodrigo as the first recipient of the new Whitley Gold Award.





Josia Razafindramanana

Madagascar

Josia Razafindramanana is the Crowned Sifaka Project Coordinator of the Malagasy Primate Working Group (GERP), an association of Malagasy and international primatologists dedicated to the conservation of Madagascar's 102 species of lemur, a unique clade of primates found nowhere else on Earth.

Over 90% of wild lemurs are threatened with extinction but Josia is currently dedicating herself to focussing on the conservation of one of the species most at risk, the crowned sifaka. Famed for its idiosyncratic style of locomotion, the species has declined by 50% over the past 30 years as a result of habitat fragmentation and hunting – threats that still persist today.

Although thought to be restricted to the Mahajanga region of North-West Madagascar, in 2009 the discovery of small populations of crowned sifakas in various unprotected sites in the central highlands, far away from its known range, has led to the realisation that the species has a more complex distribution than previously thought. Although the discovery of additional



Linking lemurs: Saving the endangered crowned sifaka and its fragmented habitat

populations is good news for the species, it also poses new challenges in terms of their conservation. Sifakas are sensitive to food scarcity and their reproduction rate is very slow, making recovery of small populations problematic.

Sharing expertise and resources with international zoos, NGOs and the Malagasy Government, Josia's solution is to establish an effective metapopulation management approach. By developing community-based conservation strategies for each site, Josia aims to delegate responsibility to local people, mobilising local teams to monitor and protect the species and its habitat.



Forest restoration is also a key part of the project, whilst genetic analysis of the populations from each site will provide useful data for their management. Translocation of groups from the most highly degraded habitat to more intact and food-rich areas will also be carried out if necessary.

The support of local communities is crucial and benefits, such as improved access to clean water and sanitation, are another output of this project. Fuel-efficient stoves and biogas will improve access to energy whilst vegetable gardening and tree-planting programmes will help to further reduce pressure on forest resources.

Josia says, "Local people are very excited about the project. They wish to be involved in decision-making and the project activities. We organise regular meetings with communities to discuss results, problems and next steps. This makes them direct participants in the implementation of the project and, in the areas where we have started, local people have stopped illegal timber exploitation."



Carlos Vasquez Almazan

Guatemala

Carlos Vasquez Almazan is the Curator of Herpetology at the National University of San Carlos's Museum of Natural History in Guatemala and Coordinator of the Amphibian Conservation Programme at the Foundation for Eco-development and Conservation (FUNDAECO), an NGO dedicated to protecting Guatemala's wildlife.

Located on the border between Guatemala and Honduras, the Sierra Caral is

Establishing Guatemala's first network of nature reserves for amphibian conservation

one of the largest and most biodiverse cloud forests remaining in Central America. Home to an astonishing array of insects, reptiles and birds, as well as high numbers of endangered frogs and salamanders – many of which are endemic – the region has been identified as the priority site for conservation in Guatemala.

However, the Sierra Caral is being lost at an alarming rate as a result of deforestation and expanding agriculture, threatening not only wildlife but also the local communities who rely on the forest for their livelihoods and well-being. To add to the problem, despite 30% of Guatemala being designated as officially protected on paper, in reality many sites are not enforced on the ground. In the absence of authorities and proper management, forests are left unprotected against illegal logging and from collectors targeting rare amphibians for sale to the international pet trade. Local awareness about amphibians is also low, as Carlos explains, *"Amphibians are not well known in Guatemala. This lack of information makes them highly vulnerable and since they have no apparent value to local people, they receive no attention"*.

Since 2008 Carlos has led national efforts to re-survey amphibians occurring in ecologically important Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites across the country. In doing so, he has not only discovered species new to science, but re-discovered species thought to have been extinct for over 15 years. Carlos's findings have helped rally local support for its protection and, as a result, Guatemala's first reserve for amphibian conservation, encompassing 2,300 hectares and protecting five critically endangered species was declared in 2011.

To ensure the new reserve is properly protected, Carlos is training members of the community as park guards and as wildlife guides to help build capacity for sustainable ecotourism. Central to his goal is the launch of a new education programme to help raise awareness about the decline of amphibians and the importance of forest conservation. His team is also expanding their survey work to collect data that will support the formation of a network of protected and actively managed AZE sites to help conserve threatened amphibians right across Guatemala.





Ir Budiono Indonesia

Conservationist Ir Budiono is the Founder and Director of Yayasan Konservasi RASI (YK-RASI), an NGO established in 2000 to protect endangered aquatic species and their habitats in Indonesia.

The Mahakam River and its surrounding wetlands in the South East of Indonesian Borneo are ecologically important, providing breeding grounds for migrating birds and supporting a number of endangered species. The river and its tributaries also provide habitat for two species of crocodile, smooth coated otters and 98 species of fish – a vital resource to hundreds of local fishermen who have come to rely on the Mahakam as a provider of food and income for their families.

The River is also home to Indonesia's last population of freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins, or pesut, as they are known locally. In recent years, numbers of Irrawaddy dolphins have fallen dramatically as over-fishing, pollution and development have caused damage to the ecosystem, resulting in declining fish stocks and reducing the amount of available prey.



Conserving Indonesia's last freshwater dolphins: Community-action for Protected Area management

This loss of fish is also affecting local communities who are finding it increasingly hard to sustain their livelihoods.

The introduction of modern fishing gear also poses a direct threat to the dolphins as drownings often occur as a result of becoming entangled in gillnets. With only 90 individuals estimated to remain, action is urgently needed to save this critically endangered population from extinction.

Tackling these issues, Budi and his team are working to establish community-supported protected areas that encompass

important habitat for both dolphins and their prey whilst also developing management plans built on collaboration with local stakeholders. Budi explains, *"Because of the community involvement, the protected areas have a greater chance of success in comparison to nature reserves, which have been established from 'above' and have paid less attention to the communities' needs".*

Through awareness raising and education, Budi is also inspiring the adoption of less harmful fishing practices, such as by encouraging the regular checking of nets, and providing training for the safe release of entangled dolphins. Sustainable aqua-culture and ecotourism initiatives, using the dolphins as a flagship species, are also offering alternative sources of income and reducing the pressure on fish stocks whilst building a local commitment to conservation.

"Because the problems faced by villagers are similar to those facing the pesut, they feel that their conservation is very important as it will also help to increase their fish resources and build a more sustainable future for all."





Lisel Alamilla

Belize

Lisel Alamilla has over 15 years' experience of working in Belize as an educator, consultant and project manager, focusing on resource management, conservation, tourism and policy issues. Since 2006 she has lead the Ya'axché Conservation Trust, an NGO established to promote community-led conservation and sustainable development in Belize. More recently, days after her selection as a finalist for the 2012 Whitley Awards, Lisel was invited by the Belizean Prime Minister to join the Country's government as Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development. Lisel's appointment signifies Belize's commitment



Uniting stake-holders for the effective conservation of the Maya Golden Landscape

to conservation and, despite her elevation to government, she will maintain close involvement with Ya'axché to ensure the continuation of her successful work.

Although 45% of Belize's land surface is protected, rapid population growth and the expansion of agriculture threaten natural habitat from the grassroots level, while the discovery of oil and huge public debt put enormous pressure on government to deregulate protected areas to enable the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

The specific focus of Lisel and Ya'axché's work is the Maya Golden Landscape in the south of the country. This 302,259 acre mosaic of protected areas, commercial and subsistence farmland and Mayan villages, comprises a diverse range of forest habitats, including upland and lowland broadleaf forests and mangrove swamps. Supporting over 3,000 plant species, 110 mammals, 400 birds, 92 reptiles and amphibians, including 18 endemic and 37 globally threatened species, such as jaguars and tapirs, this area is of huge ecological importance.

Lisel and her team aim to protect this highly biodiverse but fragile landscape by promoting local participation in conservation

through dynamic outreach efforts and by encouraging consistent involvement of stakeholders in capacity building and decision-making. In this way, Lisel is facilitating the building of effective representation of civil society and ensuring close association with national stakeholders and government. She explains, *"Ya'axché will focus on delivering leadership training to the next generation of village leaders. In doing so, we believe that we can help to equip new leaders with the knowledge, skills and confidence to evaluate situations, make decisions that reflect consideration of both social, economic and environmental needs for their communities, and to implement actions to achieve effective conservation and sustainable development."*

Lisel's work will contribute directly to the conservation of Belize's biodiversity by ensuring that suitable habitat and habitat connectivity will continue to exist in the Maya Golden Landscape and right across the country, whilst also increasing local communities' understanding of the connection between human activities and ecosystem health.



Joanna Alfaro Shigueto

Peru

Peruvian biologist Joanna Alfaro Shigueto is Co-Founder and President of ProDelphinus, an NGO working with small-scale fishermen to conserve marine wildlife whilst enhancing fishery sustainability and improving local livelihoods.

Some of the most productive ocean ecosystems in the world are located off Peru's 3,000 km Pacific coastline and are home to endangered marine species, including migratory turtles, whales and dolphins, sharks and sea birds.

The great productivity of Peru's waters also means that they support some of the largest fisheries on the planet. These include huge industrial fleets as well as high numbers of small-scale artisanal fishermen operating from remote villages, who are dependent on the ocean for food and income. As Joanna explains, *"In these small villages almost 100% of the inhabitants make their living related to fisheries, especially given that agricultural activities are limited due to the desert nature of the Peruvian coastline."*

With so many people making use of



Marine conservation through the empowerment of coastal fishing communities

marine resources, unwanted side effects such as accidental by-catch of non-target species, are having an increasingly negative impact on wildlife and the coastal environment.

Since 2001 Joanna has focussed on gaining a better understanding of the effects of Peru's small-scale fisheries on threatened marine species and has begun implementing solutions to reduce their impact. Using the findings of her research as a basis for action, Joanna is working with coastal communities to introduce more sustainable and efficient fishing methods, using specialised gear that helps to reduce by-catch and decrease harm to non-target marine fauna.

By raising awareness of the important

role endangered species play in maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and, therefore, healthy fish stocks, Joanna is also changing behaviour; *"There are sites where we have worked where some families have now stopped retaining sea turtles for food and trade and are now releasing them back into the ocean if they are caught in their nets."*

Joanna and her team are currently aiming to create improved markets for sustainably caught fish by linking catches with Peruvian restaurants, with the potential to make environmentally friendly practices more profitable for local people.

Joanna's grass-roots approach has gained the support of coastal communities and is uniting fishermen to form associations for promoting and implementing sustainable practices along Peru's coast. By empowering those who rely on the ocean with the skills and resources needed to secure their own long-term food and livelihood security, Joanna is also ensuring a safe environment for threatened species critical to the ecosystem.





Bernal Rodriguez Herrera

Costa Rica

Bernal Rodriguez Herrera is a Professor at the University of Costa Rica and the Academic and Research Director of the Tirimbina Biological Reserve, an organisation dedicated to conserving a 345 hectare wildlife refuge in the north of the country. He is also the Founder and President of the Costa Rican Bat Conservation Programme (PCMCR) as well as the President-Elect of the Latin American Bat Conservation Network (RELCOM).

Despite being based in Costa Rica, Bernal's vision for bat conservation extends right across Central America, an area which has the greatest richness of bat genera in the world – with over 170 species and numerous cases of endemism. These bats are critical to maintaining healthy ecosystems but also, historically, they play an important part in the extraordinary cultural diversity of the region. Despite this, bats are in urgent need of conservation attention. Bernal explains, “*Mesoamerican indigenous cultures consider bats as positive symbols, associated with magic and fertility. For example, the Mayan God,*

Zotz, is represented by a bat and, for the Bribri of Costa Rica, the bat was responsible for creating the earth. However, currently in the non-indigenous cultures bats are feared and attacked, mainly through ignorance and bad publicity. The bats' situation is made worse through growing loss of habitat to agriculture and development.”

Currently, Central American countries lack the qualified personnel to carry out the required actions to conserve bats, whilst mammalogy and conservation biology courses are not widely available. Also,



A cooperative regional strategy for the conservation of Central American bats

although Central America is made up of small countries that share threats and priority conservation areas, there is relatively little coordination of management between them.

Bernal's aim is to establish bat conservation programmes in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica by implementing a joint cross-border management strategy. Bernal's belief is that in order for conservation to be effective, efforts must be carried out regionally and not just in a single country. Having already identified young professionals committed to work as leaders in their own countries, Bernal is continuing to train these students, providing tools that will allow them to confront their own conservation problems, develop their own research, generate resources, and train other students to build in-country capacity. Work plans are also being developed for each country that identify threats to bats and prioritise species and areas for conservation. Central to this is the involvement of stake holders at all levels, ensuring Bernal's legacy will be one of a lasting capacity for conservation in Central America, and not just for bats.



Inza Koné Ivory Coast

Inza Koné is Head of Biodiversity and Food Security at the Swiss Centre for Scientific research in Ivory Coast and the leader of the Country's Research and Actions for the Conservation of Primates programme (RASAP-CI).

Forming a natural border between Ivory Coast and Ghana, the 12,000 hectare Tanoé Forest is currently un-protected and has previously received little conservation attention. Recent surveys, however, have revealed it to be a rare location where populations of both the critically



Community-based conservation of critically endangered West African primates

endangered roloway guenon and white-naped mangabey monkeys still occur. Evidence of Miss Waldron's red colobus – a species declared as "probably extinct" in 2000 – has also been found here, making the Tanoé Forest the only place where all three primates are thought to still exist.

Despite their conservation significance, Ivory Coast's forests are being rapidly destroyed to make way for palm oil plantations. As Inza explains, *"The only natural forests which still exist in the region are small sacred forests and the swampy Tanoé Forest which was preserved only because of the difficulties of access."* In the few areas left untouched, poverty drives local people to hunt for bushmeat, putting increased pressure on endangered species.

Fighting for greater protection of Tanoé, Inza's successful campaign against proposals to drain and convert 8,000 hectares of the forest into a palm oil plantation in 2008, have helped him gain the support of both the government and local people and begin developing a community-based system for its conservation and management.

"Local chiefs were enthusiastic about initiating a conservation programme based on the empowerment of local communities. Discussions with them and other community members highlighted their willingness to be organized to protect ancestral heritage and biodiversity for future generations."

To maintain local commitment, Inza and his team are improving access to safe drinking water, medical supplies and education to demonstrate that conservation does not have to be a choice between protecting wildlife and human welfare, but instead that conservation and poverty reduction can go hand-in-hand.

Inza is passing responsibility back to local people who are now involved in forest management and biodiversity monitoring. The development of alternative livelihoods in animal rearing is also further reducing demand for bushmeat whilst providing people with new skills. In doing so, Inza is helping to create a more sustainable way of life and ensure greater awareness and so protection of West Africa's three most threatened primates.





2012 Whitley Awards

The 2012 Whitley Awards Ceremony
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Carlos Alberto Vasquez film

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