WHITLEY
FUND FOR NATURE

WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE
PR DOSSIER
2016

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Part 1: General Coverage of the Whitley Fund for Nature

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Print

Geographical Magazine – Features Magazine
18 April 2016
106,000 readers

I'M A GEOGRAPHER



Edward Whitley

is a conservationist, author, and founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature. The 2016 Whitley Awards will be held on 27 April at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). For more information, visit **whitleyaward.org**

Over the generations, my family have always been involved in conservation. My great-great-uncle set up Paignton Zoo, starting with domestic animals, but importing increasingly exotic ones. Then my grandfather set up a charitable trust called the Whitley Animal Protection Trust in the 1960s – that was always a part of our lives as we grew up. So the concept has been in the family for generations.

Conservation has become more pressing over the last 30 years. When I set up the Whitley Fund for Nature – the charity behind the Whitley Awards – in 1993, it was off the back of us wanting to find and fund the best placed people who are working in developing countries where funds are most needed.

What the WFN tries to do is focus on conservation success stories and the progress that's being made. The awards ceremony is about recognising and celebrating that – winning those small battles. In addition to the financial benefit of winning an award, our winners receive professional communications training to turn scientists into ambassadors so they're able to communicate what they're doing to the public and to policy makers.

We've now funded 170 conservationists in 70 different countries. Our first award winner was in 1994, and the prize value at that time was £15,000. Over the years it has increased as more supporters have joined us; at the moment they're at £35,000, and we have seven or eight new Whitley award winners every year. We're not the only funder, but we're quite a significant one, and we help them get more funding. They raise a considerable amount of money once they've won our award, because we then put them in contact with other funders and nominate them for other prizes to help them fund raise. So the award acts as a stamp of approval and our funds are leveraged many times over.

Winning a Whitley Award is partly about the financial gain, but a lot of it is to do with the increased profile experienced as a result, especially back in a winner's home country. If you give a grant it's obviously great, but we thought it would have more impact if you make it into a high-profile award. Often a winner's picture with our Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, will appear on the cover of their local newspaper. It gives them more influence when they're trying to make policy recommendations, and it helps build pride in the local communities; they realise that people overseas care about what they're doing.

All our previous winners are eligible for further funding, so they're not in the spotlight just once and then never again. Once we've found them, we stick with them and invest in them. Very excitingly, we've just set up a new funding programme called the Whitley-Segré Conservation Fund to support past winners. Every pound we are able to raise for this programme will be matched by our Swiss partner, Fondation Segré, giving supporters the chance to double their donation for the first time.

We only ever fund local people in their own countries, we don't believe in parachuting people in for a short period of time. You need somebody with local knowledge of the context in which they're working so that what they do is effective. Somebody who is seen as part of that community, somebody who's integrated, that's how we've seen successful results in conservation.

Conservation doesn't happen overnight. It is a long-term process, and sometimes the results aren't as quick as you'd like them to be. Our donors realise this and are also in it for the long haul, which we are so grateful to them for. They all feel very connected, because they're able to meet the people that they're funding.

It was while writing *Gerald Durrell's Army* that I met Claudio Padua, in Brazil. I was looking at who was doing good and effective conservation work, people who had been trained by Gerald Durrell, and Claudio was one of those people. When I first went out there it was really just him, working on the black lion tamarin project. He won a Whitley Award in 1999 and now he's built an NGO called IPÊ, which operates multiple projects across the country, working to conserve tamarins (which are now in a much better position), tapirs and giant armadillos to name a few. So it's gone from being something really small, to something much bigger.

Conservation still needs all the help it can get. The good news is there are some fantastic and truly heroic people who are making a difference in places. Each victory is one to be really cherished. G

CV

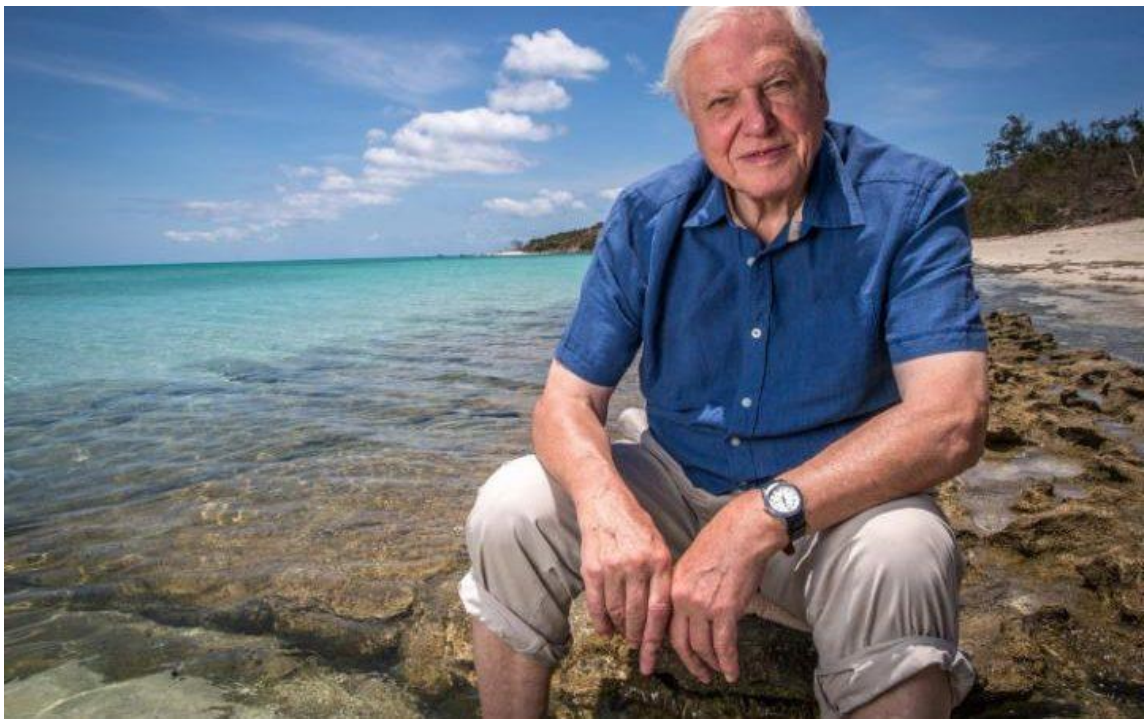
1961 Born in Shrewsbury
1983 Graduated from Oxford University with an honours degree in English
1988 Became a trustee of the Whitley Animal Protection Trust
1992 Wrote *Gerald Durrell's Army*
1994 Launched the first Whitley Awards ceremony
2013 Awarded an OBE for services to wildlife conservation

Online

The Telegraph – Online Newspaper, UK
8 May 2016
8,283,000 visitors per month

In celebration of Sir David Attenborough's 90th birthday, an article was published in the **Telegraph Online** with tributes from Edward Whitley, Bill Odie and more.
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/happy-90th-sir-david-attenborough-tributes-from-kirsty-young-bil/

The Telegraph



Sir David on the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, Australia CREDIT: EPA/AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Edward Whitley, conservationist

Like everyone who has corresponded with Sir David, I imagine that I am not alone in keeping his letters in a drawer of my desk. They are amongst my most treasured possessions because they form a direct link to the man who first articulated the intricate beauty of the world which I hoped to explore and then - when I understood the risks to that world – inspired my quest to conserve it.

David has been to places I shall never go and he reports back from the outer edge with matter of fact wonder: "What nobody ever tells you about manatees," he pauses to drink

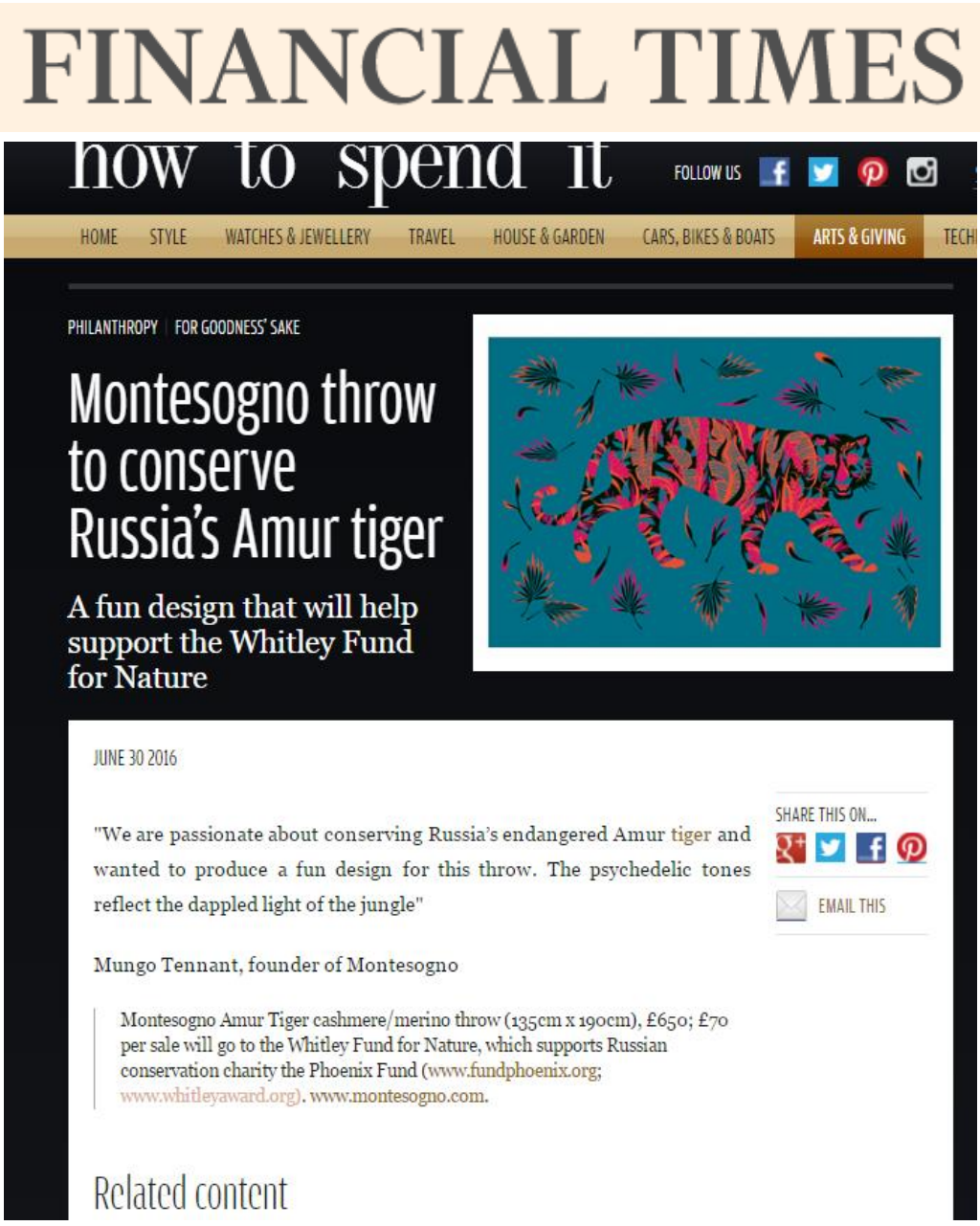
his tea, "Is that they have the most appalling halitosis!" I laugh, bite into my shortcake, make a mental note, and wait for more. David never disappoints.

So the letters stay in my drawer – sometimes I re-read them for their courtesy, their generous sentiments, their humour, their wisdom, but also because just holding them is like holding a lightning conductor to the remote other world spread out far and wide beyond my own horizons, where so many places bear his invisible footprints.

The Montesogno Campaign

Mungo Tennant, founder of Montesogno, very kindly designed and created a limited edition throw on a 'made to order' basis, in order to raise funds for WFN after being inspired by our Amur tiger project. Also in collaboration with Mungo, a number of scarves and pocket squares were commissioned and sold during the Whitley Awards Ceremony and online. These were covered by the **Notting Hill Post** in February this year, while the throw was featured in the **Financial Times** (print and online) and the **HELLO magazine**:

Financial Times
30 June 2016
2,104,456 daily audience
http://howtospendit.ft.com/philanthropy/108983-montesogno-throw-to-conserve-russias-amur-tiger



FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend it

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PHILANTHROPY | FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

Montesogno throw to conserve Russia's Amur tiger

A fun design that will help support the Whitley Fund for Nature

JUNE 30 2016

"We are passionate about conserving Russia's endangered Amur tiger and wanted to produce a fun design for this throw. The psychedelic tones reflect the dappled light of the jungle"

Mungo Tennant, founder of Montesogno

Montesogno Amur Tiger cashmere/merino throw (135cm x 190cm), £650; £70 per sale will go to the Whitley Fund for Nature, which supports Russian conservation charity the Phoenix Fund (www.fundphoenix.org; www.whitleyaward.org). www.montesogno.com.

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HELLO!



This Week's Obsession:
MONTESOGNO THROWS

My latest discovery is Montesogno's beautiful collection of luxury accessories featuring wild-animal motifs. The super-soft cashmere and merino wool blankets are a particular favourite and Montesogno's commitment to protecting the endangered species they depict makes me love them even more. For every Amur Tiger throw sold, £70 will be donated to the Whitley Fund for Nature conservation charity.

Amur tiger throw, £650, Montesogno; visit montesogno.com

EXCLUSIVE

The

Notting Hill Post – Local News Website
10 February 2016
http://nottinghillpost.com/news/gorgeous-scarves-on-sale-for-local-conservation-charity/

BY MARY-LU BAKKER / FORAGING THE PORTOBELLO, NEWS / FEBRUARY 10, 2016

GORGEOUS SCARVES ON SALE FOR LOCAL CONSERVATION CHARITY



One of our favorite charities Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) have some fantastic silk scarves and pocket squares for sale. They have been specially designed by luxury brand Montesogno just for the charity using species from 2015 Whitley Award winning projects, plus the Monarch butterfly which is the WFN logo. There are just over 40 of each to sell (scarf @ £199, pocket square @ £49), with all funds raised going to WFN. A few other plus-es, they are made in the UK using sand-washed Habotai silk and are a unique design and a lovely way of giving to charity. You can buy them here … whitleyaward



Oh and if you do decide to buy a scarf you will also be invited to the Whitley Awards Ceremony in April, which is a great event.

LATEST POSTS



ANOTHER GORGEOUS DAY #KENSINGTONGARDENS #ILOVELONDON

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Local inconvenience 4

LATEST PROPERTY



2016 PR Impact

PR Coverage Summary*:
• **275** items in total
• **40** articles in UK print and online (excluding social media interactions, e.g. comments, likes, retweets)
• **49** broadcast features, including TV and radio interviews (23 of which were radio interviews by Pablo Borboroglu and his NGO)
• **186** items in international newspapers

*These figures are based on UK and international coverage tracked by WFN and Firebird PR; without a formal media monitoring service in place they represent a conservative estimate. Not all coverage will be captured, especially internationally, and some audience reach figures are unavailable.
Coverage highlights include:

The Guardian (15 million visitors per month)
Telegraph (8 million per month)
BBC online (including programmes)
Mongabay online
Geographical Magazine
BBC World Service
National Geographic
TED Talks

As well as providing winners with significant financial support, WFN works to accelerate the career paths of Whitley Award recipients by helping them to raise their profile, expand their network and inspire others.
Through Boffin Media, we provide winners with professional training for radio, TV and print interviews; whilst also offering speech training with speech coach Caroline Black. This ensures winners can communicate the impact of their work and raise awareness of conservation issues at the local and national level. We also work with a specialist environmental PR agency, Firebird, to secure media coverage for winners both in the UK and in their home countries.

Boffin Media

firebird

HSBC
The world's local bank

Caroline Black & Associates
COMMUNICATIONS • CONSULTANCY • LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Part 2: 2016 Whitley Awards

Overview of Winners

WFN celebrates dynamic local conservation leaders working in biodiversity-rich, resource-poor countries through Whitley Awards of £35,000 in project funding over one year. The Awards are the result of a competitive process and are presented by our patron, HRH The Princess Royal, at an annual ceremony in London. Each year WFN also gives a previous winner the prestigious Whitley Gold Award, a funding and profile prize worth up to £50,000, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to conservation.

Gold Award Winner 2016



Hotlin Ompusunggu – Indonesia

The Whitley Gold Award donated by The Friends and Scottish Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

Dentistry and reforestation: scaling up models to protect orangutans and improve health, Borneo

www.alamsehatlestari.org



Gilbert Adum – Ghana

The Whitley Award donated by Sarah Chenevix-Trench

Saving Ghana's frogs: a giant leap forward for biodiversity conservation

www.savethefrogs.com/countries/ghana/



Farwiza Farhan – Indonesia

The Whitley Award for Conservation in Ape Habitats donated by the Arcus Foundation

Citizen lawsuits: defending local livelihoods and Sumatra's iconic species in the Leuser Ecosystem

www.haka.or.id



Makala Jasper – Tanzania
The Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK
Forest stewardship: community conservation of coastal forests in the greater Selous Ecosystem, Tanzania
www.slf.org.pk



Karau Kuna – Papua New Guinea
The Whitley Award donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust in memory of William Brake
Tree kangaroos as a flagship to protect Papua New Guinea's spectacular wildlife
www.treekangaroo.org



Muhammad Ali Nawaz - Pakistan
The Whitley Award donated by The Shears Foundation in memory of Trevor Shears
Snow leopard conservation: a landscape-level approach in the mountains of northern Pakistan
www.slf.org.pk



Alexander Rukhaia - Georgia
The Whitley Award donated by the Garfield Weston Foundation
Magnificent migrants: safeguarding birds-of-prey negotiating the Batumi Flyway, Georgia
www.sabuko.org



Juliette Velosoa – Madagascar
The Whitley Award donated by the Garden House School Parents' Association
Saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle and its freshwater habitat, Madagascar
www.durrell.org

Coverage of the Awards week

- **Print……..…12**
- **Online……25-44**

The Telegraph – Print and Online Newspaper, UK
21 April 2016
1,132,000 readers per month (Daily Telegraph only)
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/david-attenborough-inspired-me-to-quit-my-career-as-a-doctor-to/

The Telegraph

'David Attenborough inspired me to quit my career as a doctor to save a rare species of bird'



Day breaks early in the world's busiest desert. A herd of goats driven out at dawn grazes in the distance, bells tinkling from their collars. Flocks of short-toed larks and sparrows dart between the thorny khair trees. Off the main road a pack of wild dogs feasts on the body of a gazelle taken down overnight. Griffon and cinereous vultures wait silently in the wings.

On the top of a nearby ridge stands a lonely silhouette of a giant bird overlooking the morning rush. It is close to 4ft tall with its beak tipped resolutely upwards at an angle of 45 degrees.

Slowly, it turns to face the rising sun, its white breast stained pink by the light and puffed out to its furthest feathers.



Dr Pramod Patil with David Attenborough after winning a prestigious Whitley award for his work saving the rare Great Indian Bustard CREDIT: COURTESY OF DR PRAMOD PATIL

The female bustard is smaller, with a greyer neck He (for it is evidently a male in full display) takes deep gulps of dry desert air to fill a pouch beneath his throat and begins a bellowing mating call.



CREDIT: ASHOK CHAUDHARY

An otherworldly sound like the muffled blast of a bugle echoes out across the plains. 'Such a magnificent creature,' whispers the man sitting next to me with his binoculars trained on the same sight. And then, almost in the same breath, 'It is so sad.'

In the local Marwari dialect of Rajasthan's Thar Desert, they call these landscapes jood – hills unfit for crops where only grass and bushes grow – and the bird that roams here, the joodawan.

"It is a majestic bird, with an epic wingspan: no wonder, then, that the Great Indian Bustard is the state emblem of Rajasthan"

When the first British explorers arrived hundreds of years ago, they mispronounced it 'godawan', and then in the mid-19th century an Irish ornithologist named Nicholas Aylward Vigors gave it the name still used today: the Great Indian Bustard.

In the modern era, this usually comes prefaced by 'critically endangered'. For its decline has been catastrophic. The bustard has been extirpated from 90 per cent of its former range across India, with fewer than 250 birds left in the wild.

As recently as the mid-1980s, that population stood at around 1,500. The bustard, which is the state bird of Rajasthan, is now among the world's top 100 endangered species, and the Thar Desert is its final refuge.

It is impossible to listen to the lone male's morning call for a mate and not hear a lament. The man with the binoculars next to me first witnessed a bustard displaying in 2003 and it changed his entire life.

Prior to that moment, Pramod Patil was a young medical student with some of the best grades in his state and the prospect of a glittering career.

"During his first year at medical college, he kept a 9ft python he had rescued in a sack in a cupboard"

But he fell in 'love' with the bird (a word he uses with deliberate emphasis) and decided, against the wishes of his family, to devote himself to ensuring its survival.

Even across the 77,000 square mile environs of the Thar Desert, which stretches between India and Pakistan, the issue revolves around space.

The desert is the most densely populated on earth, with its swathes of grassland where bustards once thrived used by nomadic herders to graze sheep and goats.



A male Great Indian Bustard CREDIT: ASHOK CHAUDHARY

While the older shepherds recall the birds walking alongside them, snapping up insects, lizards and snakes flushed out by their livestock, modern life has disrupted this ancient rhythm.

Since securing independence from Britain in 1947, India has embarked on one of the world's largest irrigation schemes in Rajasthan, stemming from the 400-mile-long Indira Gandhi Canal, leading to far more intensive farming and grazing.

"The Bustard now ranks among the world's 100 most endangered species"

The Indian side of the desert alone is now degrading at a rate of more than 30,000 acres of productive land annually and advancing on the capital New Delhi by 0.3 miles a year.

The construction of power lines and huge wind farms in recent times has hemmed the bustards in. Dr Patil recalls with sorrow in his eyes finding the body of one snarled up in electric cables.

There have been previous attempts to arrest the decline, such as establishing breeding enclosures, but none like that which the 32-year-old has implemented.

He is using his medical training to act as a de facto doctor for the desert nomads, who receive almost no healthcare provision.



Mursa and Ursa Khan, two of the villagers involved with the project, with Dr Pramod Patil (right) CREDIT: JOE SHUTE

In return, he requests they report any bustard sightings and reduce the grazing range of their flocks. Dr Patil is also helping to establish anti-poaching teams and volunteers, who assist with GPS mapping of bustard sightings, dead or alive.

His work is pioneering, not least as he is the first to get through to herders typically distrustful of any outside interference.

Last year, he was one of eight winners of the Whitley Fund for Nature Awards – launched by the British philanthropist Edward Whitley in 1994 and known as the 'Green Oscars' – and awarded £35,000.

No bird so emblematic of a region anywhere in the world has ever come this close to being wiped out. Yet even as we watch our morning bustard during 30 minutes of marvellous if unreciprocated display, Dr Patil refuses to countenance its extinction.

'I trust the instinct of the birds,' he says. And what about trusting human instinct? He pauses as he lowers his binoculars. 'Well, less so.'

This affinity with animals started young for Pramod Patil. Born in Kolhapur, a small city in the western state of Maharashtra, Pramod, his older sister and younger brother were raised in a middle-class household by his father, a chemistry professor, and housewife mother.

One of his earliest memories is of an elephant being paraded down their street each Sunday to collect money for the local Hindu temple.

'I was fascinated and used to put a one rupee coin into his trunk,' he says. 'I would fight with my parents for that coin.

"I love the bustard's stature and how it always walks proudly with its head in the air. It has a powerful personality"

Pramod Patil



They told me it was useless and that I should go and buy some toffee instead.'

Thar Desert CREDIT: AP

The back of the house looked out over a patch of open grassland, upon which India's ubiquitous cattle grazed. Patil would sit spotting the lapwings, sparrows and vultures that settled between the beasts and occasional troupes of monkeys marauding through the tamarind trees.

During his teens, his bedroom became a rescue centre for animals, much to his mother Ranjana's dismay. On one occasion, she was dive-bombed by a juvenile barn owl living in his wardrobe.

On another, a sloth bear he had saved from street performances tore Patil's bed to shreds and bit his shoulder, requiring a barrage of anti-rabies injections.

Despite his youth, he also gained a reputation in his neighbourhood as the person to call when a snake was discovered.

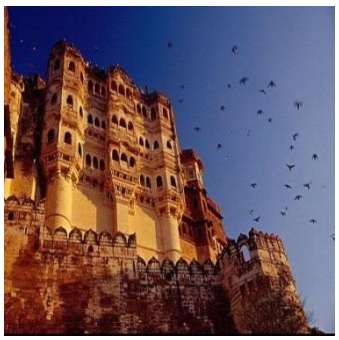


The Great Indian Bustard is one of the most endangered birds in the world, with fewer than 250 left in the wild CREDIT: CSABA BARKA/REX FEATURES

For a brief spell during his first year at medical college, he kept a 9ft reticulated python he had rescued with his bare hands in a sack in a cupboard while waiting to rehome it.
'We lived with it for one week,' he says. 'It already had a bulge in its stomach so was in a fed state, but at night it used to make a lot of noise, hissing, and always managed to get out of the cupboard, even though the door was partially locked.
'Every morning, we found it lying on the floor. My roommate would go crazy.'
It was also as a boy that Patil first fell under Sir David Attenborough's spell, although for years growing up without the internet he did not know to whom the mellifluous narration of the wildlife documentaries he adored belonged.

The pair first met during last year's Whitley Awards ceremony –Attenborough is a trustee and narrates a film on each of the winners – and, during his acceptance speech, Patil announced to the packed room, 'Sir David Attenborough is my most fav- ourite human being on this earth. Thank you so much, sir. I love you and I mean it.'
Grinning at the memory, he also shows me a selfie he took of the two of them – the first Attenborough has ever acquiesced to. 'When I met him, I told him his voice had made me mad. He said, "You were already mad; my voice just triggered that."'

"During night shifts monitoring patients on the intensive-care ward, he sketched grassland bird" In that photograph as in person, Patil cuts a sophisticated figure. He speaks beautiful flawless old-fashioned English (calling a flattened saw-scaled viper we spot on the road a 'poor fellow'). When not in the desert, he lives in Mumbai, working in the offices of theBombay Natural History Society, which was founded by the British in 1883 and supports his work today.
He says his first real exposure to India's poverty only came at the age of 23, when he finished his medical studies and started a one-year internship at a government hospital.
'That was a life-changing experience,' he says. 'I worked with HIV patients, criminals, beggars. I remember everyone who died. You're trying to save them but you can't do anything.
'It created in me this empathy towards all sections of society. If I hadn't done that, I would be a different person today.' However, even working in such a demanding environment, Patil found it impossible to ignore the call of the wild.



Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur which is situated on the edge of the Thar desert CREDIT: JENS BENNINGHOFEN

During night shifts monitoring patients on the intensive-care ward, he sketched grassland birds, and, in particular, Great Indian Bustards.

THE WHITLEY AWARDS 2016 FINALISTS | One of the most important prizes worldwide for conservation



David Attenborough is one of the trustees of the Whitley Fund for Nature
REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

SAVING GHANA'S FROGS - Gilbert Baase Adum's work protecting Ghana's amphibian populations was descibed as a 'giant leap forward for biodiversity conservation'.

PROTECTING INDONESIA'S FORESTS - Farwiza Farhan works to protect Sumatra's Leuser ecosystem where many of Indonesia's iconic species, such as the orang-utan, can be found.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION IN TANZANIA - Jasper Makala helps to preserve coastal forests in the greater Selous ecosystem in Tanzania.

SAVING TREE KANGAROOS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Karau Kuna's work establishing a conservation area to help nurture tree kangaroos on the Huon Peninsula is a flagship initiative in this country.

NURTURING PAKISTAN'S SNOW LEOPARDS - Muhammad Ali Nawaz conserves snow leopards in the mountains of northern Pakistan.

SAFEGUARDING MIGRATING BIRDS OF PREY - Alexander Rukhaia safeguards birds of prey from illegal shooting as they journey through the Batumi Flyway, a crucial passage for migratory birds.

SAVING MADAGASCAR'S SIDE-NECKED TURTLE - Juliette Velosoa works to save Madagascar's endangered turtle and its freshwater habitat.

GOLD AWARD WINNER - Hotlin Ompusunggu's work reforesting areas of Borneo to protect Indonesia's orang-utans.

Any free time would be spent travelling to the sanctuary where he had first seen a male bustard displaying on August 15, 2003 (India's Independence Day), and where the bird left its powerful mark.

'I love its stature and how it always walks proudly with its head in the air,' he says. 'It has this silent but very powerful personality.'

The opportunity to devote himself to its salvation came in 2013, when the RSPB and BirdLife International established a project to try to halt the decline.

"We used to see the birds around the farm in flocks of 10 at a time, but we haven't seen any for two-and-a-half years now"

Mire Khan, herder

Patil – who by then was studying a post-graduate course in physiology – made the decision to abandon medicine.

His parents, he says with a wry smile, still haven't forgiven him. He remains single, living

a 'weird nomadic life' like the male bustard itself.

The irony, of course, is that since moving to the desert, the doctor has never had so many patients. At first, Patil received short shrift from the deeply conservative herders – until he suggested he could assist with their health.

He is also launching workshops making hessian bags bearing the bustard's image, to provide employment for women in the community who are normally culturally required to spend their days caring for children at home.

'It's my philosophy that if you are very clear on your ultimate objective then you have to try all ethical ways possible. People should respect you and get something out of it in return.

'You can't have meetings with businessmen or the intellectual set in the cities and sit with them for an hour without giving them any benefit from it – why should these people be any different?'

"There are too many humans taking up too much of the habitat that sustains them"

He makes his daily rounds between the jhobas (mud huts) in a battered pick-up truck so lacking in suspension that the desert roads judder its very frame.

Our first stop is to see four brothers who tend the family flock of 100 sheep and share a hut surrounded by mounds of animal dung.

The eldest, 22-year-old Mire Khan, invites us to sit, and Nazir, 11, and Alaf (who cannot remember his age) rush off to prepare chai tea.



Livestock in the Thar desert, which runs across the Indian-Pakistani border CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

Their father, who lives in a nearby village, suffers from diabetes and the boys show Patil the blood-thinning medicine he has wrongly been taking.

Illiteracy is rife among the herders. 'We used to see the birds around the farm in flocks of 10 at a time, but we haven't seen any for two-and-a-half years now,' Khan says with a shrug when the conversation moves on to the bustard.

An hour's drive away, across vast drifting sand dunes studded with khejri trees grazed by roaming camels, lives 80-year-old Musa Khan with his wife, Misri, and six grandchildren.

Musa has been suffering from chest complaints and when we arrive he produces a handful of pills to inspect.

As we drive off, Patil wonders out loud if he should send the patient to go and get his sputum tested, but then a spiny-tailed lizard darting across our path snaps him out of his trance and he charges off into the sand dunes in pursuit.

We also visit a primary school where Patil speaks to hundreds of pupils packed on to a dusty floor about the importance of bustards, and a Hindu temple in a village called Sankhala where worshippers need no reminding of the bird's importance.

In the middle of the floor is a marble statue of the Great Indian Bustard draped with flowers by Mohit and Khushbu Panwar, two young children.

'We pray for our animals and for ourselves,' their father, a 25-year-old wheat farmer called Damodar, tells me once the service has concluded.



David Attenborough inspired Dr Pramod Patil to dedicate his life to protecting the Great Indian Bustard CREDIT: SARAH DUNN /BBC

The day ends long after dark at a jhoba belonging to 55-year-old Bachawa Khan, who is wrapped up against the cold desert night in traditional robes and turban. His family has farmed the desert for eight generations and reveres the bustard.

'The bird is like our companion,' he says as he serves chapatis and freshly slaughtered goat, which we eat by the light of our mobile phones under a canopy of stars.

'It's a harmless, beautiful bird – but nowadays that relationship has gone. This is the true bustard land. If we lose bustards, then we lose our pride.'

The bustard's decline is, in one sense, a simple and sadly familiar tale: there are too many humans taking up too much of the habitat that sustains them.

"People say if you think you are going to save bustards you are the most optimistic man on earth"

Pramod Patil

They breed between April and September and will lay just one blotchy brown egg on the open ground, which must escape countless competing threats unscathed.

Those odds seem so slim, but refusing to succumb to a loss of hope is why the Whitley Fund for Nature was established.

It is led by Edward Whitley, a 54-year-old financier who comes from a long line of conservationists (his grandfather, also Edward, started the Whitley Animal Protection Trust, and his great-great-uncle Herbert built Paignton Zoo).

Whitley says he was moved to begin the awards after the birth of his daughter, Ella (he and his wife Araminta have four children in total).



Princess Anne is very supportive of conservation and is a patron of the Whitley Fund for Nature CREDIT: EDDIE MULHOLLAND

The fund is currently distributing more than £1 million a year, the majority of which is in the form of continuation grants to previous winners.

'I thought about what sort of world she would inherit and, if we did nothing and lost all that wildlife and natural beauty, she could accuse me of being rather neglectful,' he says.

'You're up against inexorable forces and wherever you look there is bad news. But when you find somebody like Pramod, or one of our other winners, they are so inspiring.

'To be able to support their work over a period of time gives them a tremendous leg-up.'

"He remains convinced that humans and bustards can co-exist in harmony in this landscape once more"

The Princess Royal is another key supporter. Since being appointed patron 17 years ago, she has not missed a single ceremony, and this April 27 will be no different.

Finding the right people, she said in an interview given to mark the 20th anniversary of the awards, is their secret.

'I don't quite understand how they manage that; finding those who are in the right place to do something about a conservation issue, who have the right connections and the confidence and the personal profile to impact on their neighbours, and who have the most interest in making a real difference in the way that they approach their environment.'

We see bustards once more, a few days later, this time in pastureland close to a village where nearby wind turbines scythe through the hot air.

It is a group of three females, smaller than the males with more slender necks, but still possessing the same startling beauty.

With their long legs obscured by the scrub, they move as if floating. The birds spot us watching after what seems like only a few moments and take off with long, languid flaps of their giant wings.

'People say if you think you are going to save bustards you are the most optimistic man on earth,' Patil says, as the last of them disappears from view. 'But there are still eggs and we still see the chicks coming.'

He remains convinced that humans and bustards can co-exist in harmony in this landscape once more.

'If not, then my entire life will lose its charm.'

Discover Wildlife
28 April 2016
http://www.discoverwildlife.com/news/discover-who-has-won-years-green-oscars

DISCOVER Wildlife
Wildlife and photography at its best from BBC Wildlife Magazine

Discover who has won this year's 'Green Oscars'

The Whitley Awards 2016 have been awarded by the Whitley Fund for Nature to seven exceptional conservation champions.



Left to right: Alison Rosser, Tracey Rennie-Starke, Danni Parks, Alexander Rukhaia, Hotlin Ompusunggu, Gilbert Adum, Karau Kuna, Sir David Attenborough, Edward Whitley, Farwiza Farhan, Makala Jasper, Juliette Velosoa, Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Rebecca Sennett © Whitley Fund for Nature

The Whitley Awards have been supported by the Whitley Fund for Nature for 23 years, which supports innovative conservation leaders and their projects to protect endangered wildlife in developing countries.

The winners of the prestigious environmental prize were competitively selected from over 120 applicants from 53 countries.

Strong science and community engagement are the hallmarks of the winning projects.

Each winner also needs the skill and tenacity to highlight and combat challenges such as exploitation of natural resources, bureaucratic inertia, human-wildlife conflict and habitat destruction.

Trustee of the Whitley Fund for Nature Sir David Attenborough says, "Whitley Award winners are simply exceptional people - passionate individuals who are committed to achieving positive environmental impact and long-term conservation and community benefits."

This year's winners are working with communities to safeguard snow leopards, orangutans and lesser-known animals such as tree kangaroos, side-necked turtles and giant squeaker frogs.

Whitley Awards winners 2016

Gilbert Baase Adum, Ghana Saving Ghana's frogs: a giant leap forward for biodiversity conservation

Farwiza Farhan, Indonesia Citizen lawsuits: defending local livelihoods and Sumatra's iconic species in the Leuser Ecosystem

Makala Jasper, Tanzania Forest stewardship: community conservation of coastal forests in the greater Selous Ecosystem, Tanzania

Karau Kuna, Papa New Guinea Tree kangaroos as a flagship to protect Papua New Guinea's spectacular wildlife

Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Pakistan Snow leopard conservation: a landscape-level approach in the mountains of northern Pakistan

Alexander Rukhaia, Georgia Magnificent migrants: safeguarding birds-of-prey negotiating the Batumi Flyway, Georgia

Juliette Velosoa, Madagascar Saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle and its freshwater habitat, Madagascar

Whitley Gold Award winner

The Whitley Gold Award recognises the outstanding contribution made by an exceptional Whitley Award alumnus. The Gold Award provides £50,000 in further project funding.

Hotlin Ompusunggu Dentistry and reforestation: scaling up models to protect orangutans and improve health, Borneo

Mongabay Online – Wildlife and Environment News Website
28 April 2016
1,920,000 visitors per month
https://news.mongabay.com/2016/04/7-conservationists-win-green-oscars/

MONGABAY

Conservationists win the 'Green Oscars'

This year's Whitley Awards – often referred to as the "Green Oscars" – have been given to seven conservationists chosen from a pool of over 120 applicants from 53 countries for their achievements in nature conservation.

- *This year's Whitley Awards have been given to seven conservationists chosen from a pool of over 120 applicants from 53 countries for their "innovative conservation projects".*
- *At an awards ceremony held last evening at the Royal Geographic Society in London, the seven winning conservationists received £35,000 (~$50,700) in project funding.*
- *Hotlin Ompusunggu from Borneo won the 2016 Whitley Gold Award that is given to an outstanding past recipient of a Whitley Award who has gone on to make a significant contribution to conservation.*

This year's Whitley Awards — often referred to as the "Green Oscars" — has been given to seven conservationists chosen from a pool of over 120 applicants from 53 countries for their "innovative conservation projects". Presented annually since 1994, the Whitley Awards are given to individuals in recognition of "their achievements in nature conservation."

At an awards ceremony held last evening at the Royal Geographic Society in London, each winner received £35,000 (~$50,700) in project funding. The award money will help the conservationists scale up their work to conserve some of the planet's most endangered species and iconic places.

The 2016 winners include Gilbert Baase Adum from Ghana, Farwiza Farhan from Indonesia, Makala Jasper from Tanzania, Karau Kuna from Papua New Guinea, Muhammad Ali Nawaz from Pakistan, Alexander Rukhaia from Georgia and Juliette Velosoa from Madagascar. The seven conservationists have been working to save a wide range of species and landscapes, such as the Huon tree kangaroo, giant squeaker frogs, snow leopards, coastal forests, birds of prey, and side-necked turtles.



Huon Tree Kangaroo (Dendrolagus matschiei) female and joey peer over branch. Endangered species from the Huon Peninsula, Papua New Guinea. Photo by Tim Laman

"Whitley Award winners are simply exceptional people – passionate individuals who are committed to achieving positive environmental impact and long-term conservation and community benefits," Sir David Attenborough, a Trustee of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said in a statement.

Hotlin Ompusunggu from Borneo won the 2016 Whitley Gold Award that is given to an outstanding past recipient of a Whitley Award who has gone on to make a significant contribution to conservation. Hotlin, who is a dental surgeon, received the Whitley Award in 2011.

Hotlin's project provides healthcare incentives for local people to reduce exploitation of rainforest habitat in Indonesia. Since 2011, her project has helped reduce illegal logging in Indonesia, while improving the health of 24,000 people living around Gunung Palung National Park. The Gold Award will help Hotlin expand her project to new potential sites in Indonesia.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Gilbert Baase Adum, Ghana at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Farwiza Farhan, Indonesia at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Makala Jasper, Tanzania at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Karua Kuna, Papua New Guinea at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Pakistan at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Alexander Rukhaia at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



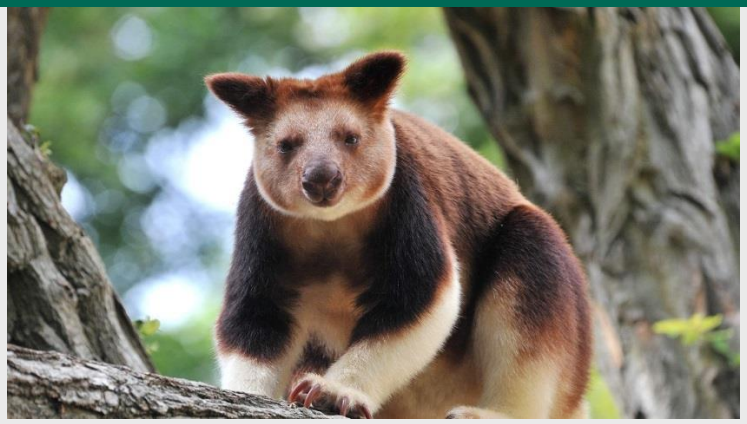
The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Juliette Velosoa at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.



The Princess Royal and 2016 Whitley Awards 2016 recipient Hotlin Ompusunggu, Borneo at The Royal Geographical Society, London, 27th April 2016. Photo courtesy of Whitley Fund for Nature.

Lifegate – Online News
04 May 2016
http://www.lifegate.com/people/news/whitley-awards-2016-winners

LIFEGATE



Whitley Awards 2016. Who won the Green Oscars

Seven conservationists have been honoured by the Royal Geographic Society in London for their successful conservation efforts.
With less than 100 individual surviving in the wild, the **Sumatran rhino** is likely to disappear. **Tigers** could become extinct in a decade, while Lonesome George, male Pinta Island tortoise that was the last known individual of the subspecies, died 2 years ago.



Snow leopard (Panthera uncia). Doctor Muhammad Ali Nawaz was honoured for his efforts to protect this species from extinction in Pakistan

We are witnessing animal and plant species disappearing at an alarming rate, so much so that scientists defined this phenomenon as the "sixth mass extinction" in history. Some species, with their peculiar beauty, are lost and gone forever and will only be admired in biology books. However, something could be done for other species.

The Whitley Awards

Luckily, some people decided to dedicate their life to protecting endangered species, including those less known to the general public. To honour their essential work aimed at safeguarding this precious, common heritage, the **Whitley Awards** have been established in 1994. They are often referred to as the Green Oscars for nature conservation.
They are organised by the Whitley Fund, UK-based non-profit organisation that supports conservation projects worldwide. The awards ceremony was held on the 27th of April at the Royal Geographic Society in London and the prizes were given by the Princess Royal, Anne. Seven conservationists, chosen from a pool of over 120 applicants from 53 countries, have been honoured for their "**innovative conservation projects**".



Farwiza Farhan, from Indonesia, is one of the winning conservationists of the 2016 Whitley Awards. She was honoured for a project aimed to protect the livelihoods of the Leuser Ecosystem's local populations and iconic species

The winners

The winners of the 2016 Whitley Awards are Gilbert Baase Adum from Ghana, Farwiza Farhan from Indonesia, Makala Jasper from Tanzania, Karau Kuna from Papua New Guinea, Muhammad Ali Nawaz from Pakistan, Alexander Rukhaia from Georgia, and Juliette Velosoa from Madagascar. They received £35,000 in project funding.
The seven winning conservationists work to **protect a wide range of species and habitats**, including the Matschie's tree-kangaroo, the snow leopard, the Giant Squeaker Frog from Ghana, coastal forests, birds of prey, and a long-necked turtle of the family of *Chelidae*.

"Whitley Award winners are simply exceptional people – passionate individuals who are committed to achieving positive environmental impact and **long-term conservation and community benefits**," said Sir David Attenborough, renowned English broadcaster and naturalist. Translated by **CAMILLA SOLDATI**

ARKive – Wildlife Imagery and Information Website
26 May 2016
http://blog.arkive.org/tag/whitley-award/



Whitley Awards 2016 – Hotlin Ompusunggu

The Whitley Fund for Nature holds an annual ceremony where pioneering conservationists around the world are honoured with an award recognising their achievement and given £35,000 (US$50,350) to continue their projects. We were lucky enough to be invited along to the ceremony to meet the finalists and find out more about their work. Each day this week we will release an interview from each of the winners on the Arkive blog and our Youtube channel. ENJOY!

Hotlin Ompusunggu – Dentistry and reforestation: scaling up models to protect orangutans and improve health, Borneo

Hotlin's amazing conservation project received Whitley funding in 2011, 2013, 2014 and again this year when her project was honoured with a Whitley Gold Award worth £50,000. Not your average conservation leader, Hotlin is a Doctor of Dental Surgery and cofounded Alam Sehat Lestari, a Borneo-based NGO. Hotlin's organisation provide heavily discounted healthcare to communities that live in the vicinity of Gulung Palung National Park for those who do not partake in logging activities, or pledge to stop doing so. The organisation will also provide healthcare to those who cannot afford to pay with money, in return for participation in reforestation activities or alternative livelihood programmes. After the extreme success of Hotlin's project, she is now hoping to replicate this environmental and humanitarian improvement technique to other areas of Borneo.

Find out more about Hotlin's work on the Whitley Awards website

Discover more about Alam Sehat Lestari

Gilbert Baase Adum – Saving Ghana's frogs: a giant leap forward for biodiversity conservation

Gilbert is the co-founder of Save the Frogs Ghana whose aim is to protect Ghana's amphibian populations and promote a society that respects and appreciates wildlife. Over 80% of Ghana's original rainforests have been cleared and a third of the country's amphibians are under threat, yet Ghana has only two professional amphibian biologists (SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana Executive Director Gilbert Adum and Caleb Ofori), and the amphibian population is relatively unstudied. Gilbert and his team were responsible for rediscovering the giant squeaker frog which you can hear Gilbert do a fantastic impression of in this video!

Find out more about Gilbert's work on the Whitley Awards website

Discover more about Save the Frogs! Ghana

Published 28 May 2016

Whitley Awards 2016 – Karau Kuna

The Whitley Fund for Nature holds an annual ceremony where pioneering conservationists around the world are honoured with an award recognising their achievement and given £35,000 (US$50,350) to continue their projects. We were lucky enough to be invited along to the ceremony to meet the finalists and find out more about their work. Each day this week we will release an interview from each of the winners on the Arkive blog and our Youtube channel. ENJOY!

Karau Kuna – Tree kangaroos as a flagship to protect Papua New Guinea's spectacular wildlife

Karau works in the YUS Conservation Area, which is named after the three rivers that run through it – Yopno, Uruwa and Som, and covers over 1,500 square kilometres of pristine, biodiverse rainforest. Karau works with local people to conserve the natural resources in the protected area, developing Community Land Use plans which help them to manage their land sustainably. Karau's project benefits around 12,000 people and is protecting the forest for its wild inhabitants such as Matschie's tree kangaroo and birds-of-paradise.

Find out more about Karau's work on the Whitley Awards website

Discover more about the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program

Visit the Arkive profile of Matschie's tree kangaroo

Juliette Velosoa – Saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle and its freshwater habitat

Juliette works in Madagascar for Durrell Wildlife Trust, saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle. The population of this ancient species has drastically decreased over recent years due to overexploitation and habitat loss. Since 1998 Juliette has been

working to save the side-necked turtle, known in Madagascar as 'rere', by encouraging community-led resource management, nest protection and wetland restoration.
Find out more about Juliette's work on the Whitley Awards website
Discover more about Durrell Wildlife Trust
Visit the Arkive profile of the side-necked turtle (also known as the Madagascar big-headed turtle)

Published 29 May 2016

Whitley Awards 2016 – Muhammed Ali Nawaz

The Whitley Fund for Nature holds an annual ceremony where pioneering conservationists around the world are honoured with an award recognising their achievement and given £35,000 (US$50,350) to continue their projects. We were lucky enough to be invited along to the ceremony to meet the finalists and find out more about their work. Each day this week we will release an interview from each of the winners on the Arkive blog and our Youtube channel. ENJOY!
Muhammed Ali Nawaz – Snow leopard conservation: a landscape-level approach in the mountains of northern Pakistan
Ali works in Pakistan with the Critically Endangered snow leopard, whose numbers have undergone a drastic decline due to poaching, human-animal conflict and habitat loss. By bringing together NGOs, local people and government, Ali has developed and implemented a management plan for the species to allow co-existence of communities and carnivores. Human-animal conflict is rife in the area, with many livestock keepers killing snow leopards who have predated their sheep, goats and cows. Ali's projects help local people to protect their livestock and has reduced the amount of losses caused by snow leopards tenfold.
Find out more about Ali's work on the Whitley Awards website
Discover more about the Snow Leopard Trust
Visit the Arkive profile of the snow leopard

Notting Hill Post – Local News Website
27 April 2016
http://nottinghillpost.com/news/holland-park-hub-of-global-conservation-awards/

BY MARY-LU BAKKER NEWS, WILD NEWSAPRIL 27, 2016

HOLLAND PARK HUB OF GLOBAL CONSERVATION AWARDS



Stories to make your heart beat faster and and your eyes shine brighter came thick and fast at this year's Whitley Fund for Nature awards ceremony. Stories like that of Gilbert Adum from Ghana (pic). He was offered a place at Cambridge University to start an MSc this September but turned down the amazing chance because there are only 30 known Giant Squeaker Frogs left in the World and he would like to save them. Adam originally found 14 of the frogs and realised local people were illegally farming and logging on the patch of land, around the size of a football pitch, where the last remaining frogs lived. On top of that the land was being invaded by the nasty Devil's Weed which was poisoning the soil. Gilbert has persuaded illegal



farmers and loggers to halt such activities in favour of alternative livelihoods in bee keeping, and some of the Whitley Award funds, given to small-scale effective grassroots conservation leaders to them expand their work, will be used for new hives. There is also an eco-tourism programme and in September there is an expedition you can join if you feel the urge. Just contactghana@savethefrogs.com

Juliette Velosoa (pic bottom on right) scientific officer for Rere Conservation, has spent the past 18 years studying a critically endangered freshwater turtle endemic to western Madagascar. Called the Madagascan side-necked turtle (pic top), numbers of the reptile have crashed as human's squeeze their habitat and feast on the turtle's eggs. She works at two sites and there the population of the hard backed beasts has gone up to around 12,000 because, Velosoa says: "We work closely with local communities to help them to manage sustainably the wetland and the turtle." Now locals don't eat the turtle eggs anymore and there are teams of locals who protect the nests and are then paid for each undisturbed nest. The Whitley award money will help pay for management of the areas, meetings, patrol teams and nest payments.



Have you time for one more story? This time about Farwiza Farhan's (on left of pic, right) work in Indonesia. Her group is helping the local community in a nature reserve to fight . There is a government development plan which doesn't acknowledge the Leuser countryside, which covers 2.7 million hectares. There are Sumatran rhinos living there, and through local protection the population has doubled in just 30 years. They are short sighted and quite slow breeders. Local livelihoods depend on the land, in some places where it has been developed there have been floods and landslides. "People try to protest but they don't get anywhere," says Farhan. We facilitate them by funding lawsuits and we help them take back control. When they feel the global community is with them they feel stronger." Recently they fought a palm oil company, PT Kalista Alam and won. The palm oil company was fined 3.6 million dollars.

National Geographic Kids
May 2016
190,000 Readership per year
http://www.ngkids.co.uk/animals/conservation-heroes-whitley-awards



Meet some incredible conservation heroes!



These six amazing animal activists are working to protect special species around the world. Here, we catch up with them to learn about the incredible animals they're working to save, and just how they're doing it...

Each of these inspirational projects won a 2016 Whitley Award from the Whitley Fund for Nature, a charity that funds vital conservation projects around the world. Good work, guys! Check them out, below.

Karau Kuna is protecting Matschie's tree kangaroos



These mega-cute **marsupials** are only found in a remote area of **Papua New Guinea** called the**Huon Peninsula**, and there are **fewer than 2,500 left**! Luckily, **Karau Kuna** is working with local communities to help save the tree kangaroos and their habitat.

How Karau is helping

Over 90% of Papua New Guinea is owned by **indigenous people**, and there's a lot of pressure on them from **logging** and **mining** companies to sell their natural resources. This could have devastating consequences on the wildlife, so Karau is working with **50 villages** to help them sustainably manage their land.

"Matschie's tree kangaroos live nowhere else in the world – that's why I'm so passionate about them," says Karau. "Some say they look like red pandas, but I think they're a cross between kangaroos and brown bears! Recently, I met an old lady who told me that she spotted a tree kangaroo at her doorstep – and she'd never seen one before. Stories like this make me realise that their numbers are growing and that the work we're doing is having an impact."

Karau's work is also helping birds-of-paradise!

Alexander Rukhaia is protecting birds of prey



Every year, **over a million** birds of prey fly through a region called **Batumi** in **Georgia**, eastern Europe. Sadly, their migration is also a traditional hunting event for local people. When **Alex** saw the killing first-hand, he knew he had to do something…

"A few years ago, I met some young bird experts," explains Alexander. "They asked me what I knew about birds. 'Not much,' I said, 'but I love roast chicken!' So I joined them at Batumi to see exactly what they were so passionate about. The bird migration was amazing, with thousands of spectacular birds of prey passing over my head. But it had a dark side as well – thousands were being shot and killed on a daily basis.

"That day was a turning point for me. I don't have a background in biology, but I felt I had to take action. I love being a guardian for nature and helping birds on their way home."

How Alexander is helping

Alexander is working with former hunters and local communities to set up **wildlife tourism**, so they can make money from keeping the birds safe instead of hunting them. Since 2010, he's reduced hunting in two villages by 80% and plans to extend the project to six more villages.

Gilbert Baase Adum is helping giant squeaker frogs





Seven years ago, the **giant squeaker frog** from Ghana, West Africa, was feared extinct, its habitat destroyed by **illegal logging** and **farming**. So when **Gilbert** and his team rediscovered a tiny population in 2009, they set about safeguarding its future.

How Gilbert is helping

One of Africa's leading amphibian experts, Gilbert co-founded **Save The Frogs Ghana!** To date, he's planted 10,000 native trees to restore habitat, launched ***Save the Giant Squeaker Frogs Day!*** to encourage conservation, and persuaded illegal loggers and farmers to find different ways to make a living.

Gilbert said: *"I was born into a hunting community in northern Ghana. When I was younger, frog meat was always the special dinner! But now Ghana's frogs are going extinct, and I must do all I can to save them. I've yet to meet anyone who does not love the squeaky sound that giant squeaker frogs make!*

"Frogs are so important. They eat the mosquitoes that spread malaria, and recently a substance from the skin of a frog has been found to help prevent HIV infection. Thus when we save the frog, we save the world!"

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Hotlin Ompusunggu is saving orangutans



Shockingly, 98% of Indonesia's rainforest could disappear in the next decade. And orangutans may be lost from the wild within 20 years. But dentist **Hotlin** came up with an ingenious idea to stop people chopping down trees in the **Gunung Palung National Park** on the island of **Borneo**,**Southeast Asia**.

How Hotlin is helping

In Borneo, healthcare can cost more money than a family earns in a whole year. So poor people often have to make money for treatment by illegally cutting down trees. To change this, Hotlin's project offers **healthcare discounts** to villages that agree to stop logging. And those that can't afford treatment can **plant trees** in exchange for healthcare!

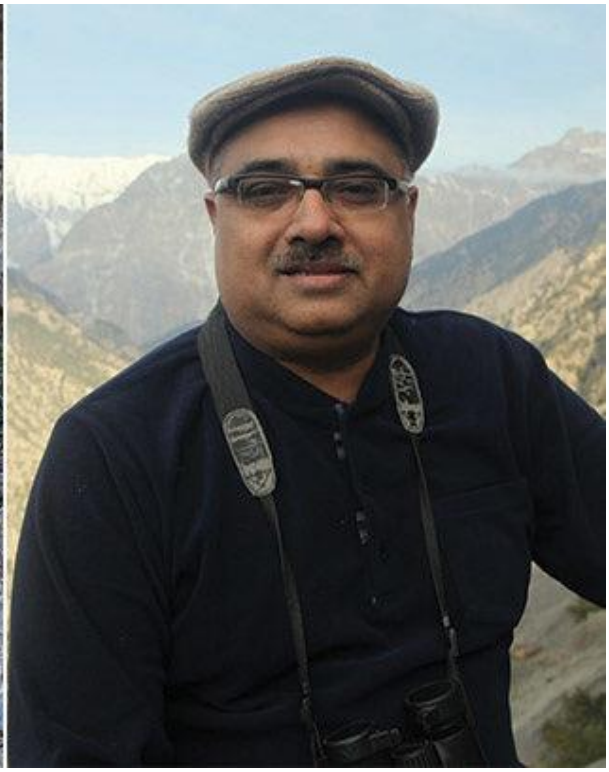
Since winning her first Whitley Award in 2011, over **100,000 trees have been planted**, illegal logging has been reduced, infant deaths have been cut by two thirds and **forest guardians** now operate in all villages bordering the park. Orangutans have returned to the national park, too. Go, Hotlin!

"I believe that all individuals should take responsibility for addressing global problems. For example, last year there were devastating forest fires in Indonesia. And we all played a personal role in causing the fires. Whether you bought palm oil products in the UK, or tossed away the cigarette that ignited the fire, you had a role.

Months of smoky haze followed the fires. So much so, the gibbons in the forest stopped singing. We live in one world and we all are connected. It will take all of us to build a future where orangutans will be happily frolicking between the giant trees, where gibbons will once again sing their beautiful songs – and where human communities will live in good health beside the forest."

Muhammad Ali Nawaz is protecting snow leopards





Although it's home to the world's **third largest population of snow leopards**, Pakistan's big cats are **critically endangered**. One of the biggest problems is conflict with farmers, who want to stop snow leopards from attacking their animals.

"I'll tell you a story that helped me understand the depth of the problem," says Muhammad. "In 2010, I met a herder who had lost 50 sheep and goats in a single snow-leopard attack. That was 80% of his animals. Can you imagine how it would feel if your family lost 80% of their assets and income and there was no safety net available to help? It took him several years to recover. That's when we realised research is not the only solution. We need to start helping affected communities."

How Muhammad is helping

Field biologist **Muhammad** has set up **education projects** to teach people how to live with snow leopards, as well as insurance and vaccination programmes. One of the villages has lost no livestock to snow leopards or diseases in the last two years. Yay! He now hopes to continue this success across the region.

Juliette Velosoa is conserving side-necked turtles





Also known as the **rere**, this **critically-endangered reptile** is the only freshwater turtle in Madagascar. So **Juliette** is working with communities to save their declining wetland habitat.

"In Madagascar, many of the lakes where turtles live are sacred to local people and their ancestors. But the side-necked turtle is in rapid decline. The challenge is that our people are very poor. They rely on natural resources for their livelihood – so we must involve them in conservation. Side-necked turtles are my life!"

How Juliette is helping…

Juliette is working to help local people to **restore Madagascar's wetlands**, improve **fish stocks**and **protect turtle nests**. Since her project began, she has **head-started*** over 6,000 young turtles, and populations are starting to show signs of recovery. Hooray!

*** Head-starting is when baby turtles are reared in captivity for their first few years so they're less likely to get gobbled by predators.**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Part 3: Media Coverage of the 2016 Whitley Award Winners

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Hotlin Ompusunggu
Indonesia

2016 GOLD AWARD WINNER

2011 Whitley Award winner

Local community health through forest stewardship

Winner of the Whitley Gold Award donated by the Friends and Scottish Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

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Hotlin has been very successful in receiving media coverage this year, with seven print and online news stories in both local and international press and an ARKive video. Hotlin and Farwiza Farhan were featured together in five additional articles. The following is a selection of articles from Hotlin's media coverage.
To see Hotlin's WFN profile follow this link.

- **WFN Press Release……47**
- **Print and Online……49-58**
- **Interview……..……..59**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Indonesian dentist and conservationist wins the 2016 Whitley Gold Award for her innovative work to protect Borneo's Gunung Palung National Park

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present the prestigious Whitley Gold Award worth £50,000, to Hotlin Ompusunggu, a 2011 Whitley Award winner, dentist and conservationist from Indonesian Borneo. The Gold Award is donated by The Friends and Scottish Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature, and given in recognition of Hotlin's outstanding project 'Dentistry and reforestation: scaling up models to protect orangutans and improve health, Borneo'.

Unusually for a conservationist, Hotlin is a dental surgeon. In 2007 she co-founded the NGO Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI) with a mission to protect Gunung Palung National Park in southwestern Borneo whilst improving the health of communities around it. Gunung Palung's rainforest represents some of the most intact lowland forests left in Indonesia. It is home to endangered species including hornbills, gibbons, clouded leopards and 10% of the global population of orangutans - an ape gravely threatened by habitat loss.

Poverty and poor health are important drivers of deforestation here, with communities often turning to illegal logging to pay for basic yet vital necessities such as healthcare. Hotlin is working to break this cycle. Through innovative healthcare incentives, ASRI is reducing the need for people to exploit the forest whilst improving access to healthcare for villagers. Families who stop logging receive extra discounts of up to 70% on medical care. No-one is turned away; those who cannot afford treatment can pay using non-cash means by participating in reforestation activities, or alternative livelihoods programmes, including organic farming.

Since Hotlin won a Whitley Award in 2011, the project has significantly decreased illegal logging in 18 villages around Gunung Palung National Park; treated over 24,000 people; cut infant deaths by two thirds; set up teams of local Forest Guardians in all villages bordering the park; planted 100,000 native trees; and seen the return of orangutans to reforestation sites.

The Whitley Gold Award will help bring together stakeholders to strengthen protection of the park against illegal logging and forest fires which swept through Indonesia in 2015; establish Indonesia's first 'conservation hospital' as a medical and education center; raise ASRI's profile nationally and internationally; and explore expansion of this model to potential new sites across the country including Sumatra, Sulawesi and Papua.

Edward Whitley, Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: "The Whitley Awards are about celebrating success. Hotlin is truly deserving of the Whitley Gold Award. She has transformed the health and well-being of local communities whilst protecting crucial habitat for orangutans and other endangered wildlife in Borneo."

The Jakarta Post – Print and Online News, Indonesia
23 February 2016
Circulation 40,000
http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/02/23/healthy-forests-healthy-lives.html

TheJakartaPost

Healthy forests for healthy lives

Ketapang,West Kalimantan



All green: Various types of seedlings are seen ready for planting at the ASRI reforestation site, Laman Satong. (JP/Novia D. Rulistia)" height="339" border="0" width="510">

All green: Various types of seedlings are seen ready for planting at the ASRI reforestation site, Laman Satong. (JP/Novia D. Rulistia)

There is a very effective way to combat deforestation: trading chainsaws for stethoscopes. In Sukadana village, located at the foot of Palung Mountain National Park in West Kalimantan, doctors, environmentalists and local people work together to save the forest to save lives. The non-profit organization, Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI), combines forest-protection methods with proper and affordable health care as it believes that there is a substantial link between human health and environmental health. There is a vicious cycle

between poverty, ill-health, deforestation and illegal logging and we must find comprehensive ways to solve it, said Hotlin Ompusunggu, ASRI's co-founder, said. ASRI was founded by an American doctor, Kinari Webb, and Hotlin in 2007. They chose the Palung Mountain National Park as their operational ground, as the 90,000-hectare rain forest that is home to 10 percent of the world's surviving orangutan population could still be saved. There were also a huge need for health care as tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhea and diabetes cases were common. Hotlin, who is also a dentist, said people in the villages lived in poverty with no access to proper health care.

All green: Various types of seedlings are seen ready for planting at the ASRI reforestation site, Laman Satong. (JP/Novia D. Rulistia)
There is a very effective way to combat deforestation: trading chainsaws for stethoscopes. In Sukadana village, located at the foot of Palung Mountain National Park in West Kalimantan, doctors, environmentalists and local people work together to save the forest to save lives. The non-profit organization, Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI), combines forest-protection methods with proper and affordable health care as it believes that there is a substantial link between human health and environmental health. 'There's a vicious cycle between poverty, ill-health, deforestation and illegal logging and we must find comprehensive ways to solve it,' said Hotlin Ompusunggu, ASRI'€ ™s co-founder,said. ASRI was founded by an American doctor, Kinari Webb, and Hotlin in 2007.

They chose the Palung Mountain National Park as their operational ground, as the 90,000-hectare rain forest that is home to 10 percent of the world's surviving orangutan population could still be saved. There were also a huge need for health care as tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhea and diabetes cases were common. Hotlin, who is also a dentist, said people in the villages lived in poverty with no access to proper health care.

Work in progress: ASRI reforestation team members collect data on tree growth at ASRI's Sedahan reforestation site.(Courtesy of ASRI-Yayat Aryadi)

'When they got sick, they would cut down trees to be sold because that's the easiest way to earn money to go to the doctor,' she said, adding that it could take 60 trees to be cut down to pay for a surgical operation. To be able to solve the problems, they must first get the trust of the local people. They held a series of long discussions with local communities, and from the total of 23 villages that border the National Park, 21 immediately agreed to sign an agreement to participate in ASRI's programs. She added that one village refused to participate due to border issues, while the other refused because the village head was involved in logging activities. 'From the discussions, we learned that they wanted proper health care and information on organic farming as an alternative to earn a living. In return, we asked them to participate in our forest-conservation programs,' Hotlin said. ASRI's clinic is open four days a week, offering a

wide range of services, including inpatient facilities, free immunization, general medicine, dental care and a comprehensive pharmacy. 'There are discounts for healthcare costs that are determined according to the zones in which their villages are located,' Webb said.

ASRI has set up five color zones: green, yellow, red and blue for areas that border the park and purple for communities outside the border. These are based on the reports collected by ASRI's Forest Guardian team who always keep an eye out for destructive activities in the National Park areas.

A green zone means no logging activities are found in the area, and residents who live there can get 70 percent discount for medical services; yellow and blue zones get 50 percent and red zone residents get 30 percent. 'Patients who don't have money can pay with items that will be used in conservation projects, such as plant seedlings, manure, or traditional mats, or by working for ASRI,' Webb said. The seedlings will later be planted in ASRI's reforestation areas in Sedahan Jaya village and Laman Satong village by the local communities under the supervision of ASRI's conservation team.

In Laman Satong, they have replanted a total of 20 hectares of forest since 2009. Unfortunately, most of the area caught fire in 2013, bringing their efforts back to zero. 'We started to replant it in 2014 with various types of tree, especially with trees that can easily grow after fires and are resilient, such as jengkol [dog fruit],' Fransiscus Xaverius, the reforestation manager, said. ASRI also works with other environmental organizations, including the National Park's office. 'We hope in the near future to reach an agreement on how ASRI's network of Forest Guardians can support the activities of the forest police to improve law enforcement, possibly through joint patrolling or finding a way to pass along information without being perceived as 'spies' of the National Park,' said ASRI conservation staff member Erica Pohnan. There are many oil palm plantations just across from the National Park's Laman Satong area. However, Pohnan said, ASRI did not have any concrete collaboration with them around the Palung mountain landscape. ASRI programs have been successful in turning loggers into conservation workers and empowering communities with various skills, including sustainable farming, administrative and computer skills.

Initially, there were 1,350 households that were involved in illegal logging, the number is now down to 180. Those who were reluctant to give up their chainsaws, Hotlin said, were mostly those who did not have land for farming. Hotlin said in line with the improvement of the forest, people also lived a healthier life based on the improved health indicators, such as infant mortality, down from 3.4 percent in 2007 to 1.1 percent in 2012 and diarrhea, from 40 percent to 2 percent.

'We won't stop there. We're now building a hospital to improve our services to the people and we're also thinking of new ways to engage people more in our conservation strategy,' she said.

The Guardian – Print and Online News, UK
27 April 2016
1,027,000 readership
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/27/dentist-wins-green-oscar-for-using-healthcare-incentives-to-halt-logging

theguardian

Dentist wins 'green oscar' for using healthcare incentives to halt logging

Scheme offering Indonesian villages that stop illegal logging large discounts on medical care is saving lives as well as the rainforest



Dr Hotlin Ompusunggu: 'I have learned that to be a healthy human being, you also need healthy nature.' Photograph: Republika/Whitley Gold Award

As a dental surgeon, a successful career in conservation was not something Dr Hotlin Ompusunggu ever imagined.

But her work in Indonesia, where she has helped save orangutans by providing people with healthcare discounts if their villages stop logging, has clearly paid off. As well as cutting logging and improving health, this week she won second a "green oscar" prize and there are plans to replicate her model across south-east Asia.

"The idea is to save the lives of these people and also save the forest. A dentist is not a typical background, but I'm passionate about community development and I'm interested in health in the bigger picture. I have learned that to be a healthy human being, you also need healthy nature, and that's how I came to find myself here," she said.

In 2007, she co-founded the NGO Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI), with a mission to break the cycle between poverty and illegal logging in the 1,100 km sq Gunung Palung national park in remote south-west Borneo by giving local people healthcare incentives to preserve the globally important rainforest. The forest is home to endangered species including hornbills, gibbons, sun bears, clouded leopards, and 2,500 orangutans – roughly 10% of the world's population.

Hotlin Ompusunggu received a 2011 Whitley award and has this year been recognised a second time with a gold award. Photograph: James Finlay/Whitley Gold Award

Ompusunggu, who is from a big city on Sumatra, said she wasn't originally interested in conservation. "I took it for granted that we had beautiful forests with orangutans. I was even sceptical about conservation, I wondered why we spend so much money saving orangutans. But I learned that the orangutan is the farmer of the forest, and the forest provides water for people, so it all comes back to people and conservation for human wellbeing."

Illegal logging is destroying vast areas of the national park's protected forest each year, and it has been estimated that 98% of it could disappear within 10 years. The 18 villages that border the park are very poor and many people resort to chopping down lucrative ironwood trees to earn a living.

"One of the drivers to log is instant cash to pay bills – particularly medical bills. If your loved one is dying, you will do anything to help."

So Ompusunggu went to the community and asked people: "If the global community wants to help you to save the forest, what would you like help with? What do you need to enable you to protect the forest? And they asked for affordable, accessible, high-quality healthcare."

Villages that stop logging receive discounts of up to 70% on medical care. More than 24,000 patients have been treated so far at the main clinic and mobile clinics for TB, high blood pressure, dental problems and diabetes. Since 2007, infant deaths have fallen by two-thirds and child immunisation rates increased by 25%. There has also been a significant reduction in rates of common illnesses. No one is turned away: those who cannot afford treatment can pay by taking part in reforestation activities.

"By providing this healthcare as an incentive we have removed one of the reasons for people to log the forest. But also it's in line with what the community asked us for from the beginning," she said.

As a result of the scheme, the number of villages free from illegal logging has more than doubled and the number of households involved in illegal logging has fallen from 1,350 to 450.

She said another request was for alternative livelihoods. Teams of local forest guardians are trained to monitor illegal logging and teach others about the importance of healthy forest ecosystems and conservation. "Many people want to farm but the methods are not good because they use slash and burn and with the population there is not enough land. Also fertiliser gets more expensive so they need a new way to be more independent, so they asked us to train them to farm organically."



Gunung Palung national park in remote south-west Borneo. The forest is home to endangered species including hornbills, gibbons, sun bears, clouded leopards, and 2,500 orangutans. Photograph: Endro Setiawan/Whitley Gold Award

For Ompusunggu, it wasn't a challenge to win the community over and stop them logging once alternatives were provided. "They believe that they need forests. They live next to the forest, and they know if there's no more forest there won't be water for them. With a common understanding, we work together with them and they know that we are there to help them. They know also that to do logging is illegal, and to give them alternative solutions is to increase their dignity. So they feel they are doing the right thing for their future and their community."

Ompusunggu has won the 2016 Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) gold award, and will receive her prize from HRH Princess Anne at a ceremony in London on Wednesday night.

The awards, which recognise the success of grassroots conservation leaders in developing countries, provide winners with funds to scale-up their projects. This year, other award-winning schemes range from protecting tree kangaroos in Papua New Guinea to safeguarding migrating birds of prey from hunters in Georgia.

Ompusunggu, who won one of the prizes in 2011, has been recognised by the awards a second time for the outstanding success of her project with a further grant of £50,000. The WFN prize money will now be used to establish the country's first conservation hospital, she said, and fund a possible national expansion.

"The funding will enable us to scale-up and help us see potential replication of our scheme across forests in Indonesia. We did some site visits and are working to see what will be the impact on communities might be."

Geographical – Feature Magazine
4 May 2016
106,000 readers
http://geographical.co.uk/places/forests/item/1671-pulling-teeth-saving-trees

Geographical

Pulling teeth, saving trees

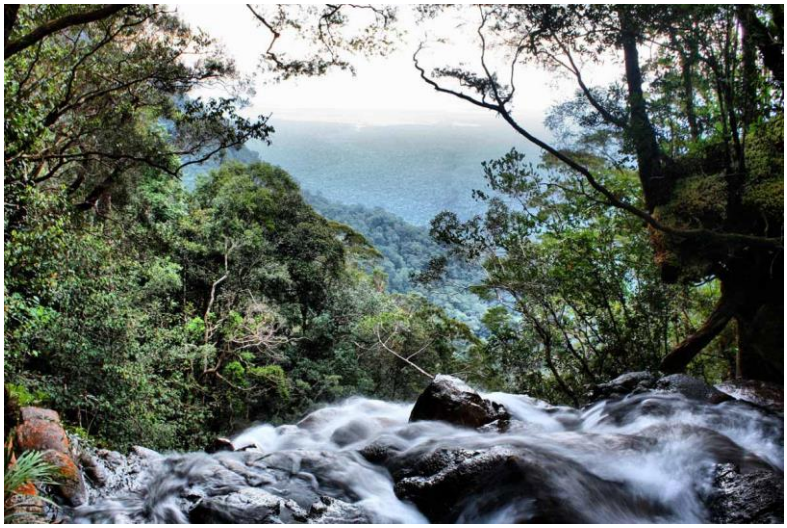


An innovative conservation project in Borneo rewards local communities with discounted medical care in return for protecting threatened tropical forests

As exhibited so clearly during the **2016 Whitley Awards** last week, conservation and development now walk hand-in-hand. With the installation of community engagement and education programmes from Pakistan to Madagascar, from Georgia to Tanzania, in order for conservation projects designed to protect forests and wildlife to succeed, they require complete co-operation from local communities. In turn, connecting with these communities can help improve levels of literacy, health, and general life prospects.

However, few projects have been as creative as **Alam Sehat Lestari (ASRI)**, an NGO co-founded in Indonesia by dentist Hotlin Ompusunggu in 2007. ASRI engaged with communities to find out the reasons why people found themselves tempted to deforest and sell timber. 'They asked if they can have affordable and accessible healthcare,' reveals Ompusunggu. Therefore, she and her team set up a system whereby they can improve people's access to healthcare, providing

up to 70 per cent off medical care for families who stop logging. Even people who are unable to pay at all can instead participate in conservation activities such as reforestation or organic farming to pay their bills.



The natural rainforest landscape of Gunung Palung National Park, Indonesia (Image: Endro Setiawan)

The focus of ASRI's attention is to protect Gunung Palung National Park in southwest Borneo, a rainforest covering 1,100km^2. It provides a habitat for endangered species such as clouded leopards, gibbons, and hornbills, and is also home to ten per cent of the global orang-utan population. Despite these precarious wildlife species, deforestation has become a major threat to the park, as local communities are driven to logging as a source of income to try and overcome poverty.

'In 2007, we asked the community, if the global community wants to help you to protect the forest, what would you ask for?' explains Ompusunggu. 'They asked for medical care, and dental care. Because it was very expensive – that was one reason for them to do illegal logging, to pay their medical bills. We designed it with the community, and we have a system now – if my patient needs a root canal, or they need follow up antibiotics, which is sometimes very expensive, they get a 70 per cent discount – if they protect the forest!'



Alam Sehat Lestari co-founder and Whitley Gold Award winner, Hotlin Ompusunggu (Image: Republika)

Ompusunggu won a Whitley Award in 2011, and last week was awarded the prestigious Whitley Gold Award, a £50,000 grant in recognition of her continued 'outstanding contribution to conservation'. Since 2011, she has been able to 'significantly decrease' illegal logging in 18 villages, has set up teams of Forest Guardians in all 74 sub-villages that border Gunung Palung National Park or that are part of the park's greater periphery, and has planted over 100,000 native seedlings to begin the process of reforesting the park.

This latest grant will enable her to continue ASRI's work, establishing Indonesia's first Conservation Hospital to serve as a first class medical facility and environmental education facility, mapping the park's boundary to reduce land-use conflicts, and reach 200 children from six schools through ASRI's education programme and field trips to the park. 'We've been running this program now for nine years, and we're thinking of how we can scale up,' says



Ompusunggu. 'With the help of the **Whitley Fund for Nature**, we are hoping to work on other potential project sites in Indonesia.'

Gunung Palung National Park holds ten per cent of the world's orang-utan population (Image: Bryan Watt)

'I was at first interested in the idea of community development, and how to improve the lives of people,' she continues. 'But since I worked on this project, I learned that community development is only achievable in a more holistic way, where we also address the issue of the environment. We can serve the heart of the community, but what happens if they don't have any more forests, which are the source of water for them? Saving the forest is not just a local responsibility; it's all our responsibilities. We live in one world, what happens in Indonesia will influence another part of the world. But it happens to be that they are the ones who live near the forest, and they know how to protect the forest. But they're not able to do so, so we are helping them to do what we cannot, by providing incentives. So it's a fair trade – it's not "helping the poor", but helping them to protect the forest that we also value.'

ARKive Interview with Hotlin

26 May 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RozQpbvm_IU&list=PL_9ElqdYKexZk2vGM5JM4e3CcdtotT8BN&index=4





Gilbert Baase Adum
Ghana

Saving Ghana's frogs: a giant leap forward for biodiversity conservation

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Sarah Chenevix-Trench

Gilbert has used his Facebook page 'SAVE THE FROGS Ghana' to inspire the public to take part in conservation or simply be aware of his work. He has featured in eighteen articles from various institutions and publications, including a TV documentary on his work and a Wildscreen ARKive video. Gilbert and Makala were both guests on a BBC programme 'Focus on Africa'. The following is a selection of articles from Gilbert's media coverage.
Follow this link to see Gilbert's WFN profile.

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- **Interviews……70**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press Release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Conservation leader from Ghana wins 2016 Whitley Award
Prize awarded for bringing Ghana's giant squeaker frogs back from the brink of extinction

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Gilbert Baase Adum at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work to champion the unusual and very rare giant squeaker frog in Ghana.

After rediscovering the species in 2009 when only 13 individuals were known to exist, Gilbert set about ensuring their protection. Worldwide, frogs are declining catastrophically, but Gilbert aims to buck this trend and ensure that Ghanaians, from school children to policy makers, are aware of their amphibian heritage. Gilbert and his NGO, 'SAVE THE FROGS-GHANA!' have organised a national 'Giant Squeaker Frogs Day', mobilizing Ghanaians countrywide to help protect giant squeaker frogs and restore their lost habitat.

Originally from a hunting tribe, Gilbert is now one of Africa's leading amphibian conservationists. Working in West Africa where over 90% of forests have been destroyed, with his Whitley Award Gilbert will help villagers in the environs of the Sui Forest Reserve to develop beekeeping as an alternative livelihood to illegal farming and logging to access wild honey. This will help to secure key habitat not only for giant squeaker frogs but also for western chimpanzees. The project will also build vital capacity to conserve this species by training the next generation of amphibian conservationists in Ghana.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Tropical Biology Association – NGO, Resource for Scientists, UK
May 2016
http://www.tropical-biology.org/congratulations-mr-frog-man/

TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

Congratulations Mr Frog Man! - Tropical Biology Association

TBA alumnus, Gilbert Adum, is a winner of this year's prestigious Whitley Awards for his pioneering work in amphibian conservation in his home country of Ghana.

Gilbert is one of six winners, selected from 127 applicants from 53 countries, who receive £35,000 project funding to support their work in the coming year.

Since attending the TBA field course in Amani, Tanzania in 2010, Gilbert has been a passionate advocate of the impact of TBA capacity building on inspiring and supporting young conservationists, like himself: "Quite simply, I am where I am because of TBA." he says.

During a whirlwind week in London, where Whitley Fund for Nature Patron HRH Princess Anne presented the awards, Gilbert and fellow finalists met with NGOs and the press, strengthening networks and raising awareness of their work.

Gilbert – who introduces himself with a big smile as Mr Frog Man – has turned around the prospects of Ghana's giant squeaker frog, feared extinct just a decade ago. Having rediscovered a small population in Ghana's Sui River Reserve, Gilbert and his team set up Save the Frogs Ghana – the first organisation dedicated to amphibian conservation in West Africa.

Habitat loss – from illegal resource extraction, agricultural encroachment and invasive alien plants - is the biggest threat to the squeaker frog. Working with colleagues at Save the Frogs Ghana, Gilbert has made forest restoration a priority. They have already launched a national outreach programme to raise awareness, cleared huge tracts of invasive species and replanted 10,000 native tree species.

The squeaker frog is not the only beneficiary of these efforts. Other species, such as the western chimpanzee has benefitted from the forest restoration. With the Whitley award, Gilbert will continue to build on this success, helping communities to develop sustainable livelihoods, influencing policy and inspiring young leaders.

Modern Ghana – Online News, Ghana
4 May 2016
80,000 visitors daily
https://www.modernghana.com/news/689947/ghanaian-conservation-leader-wins-a-green-oscars-award.html

MODERN GHANA

Ghanaian Conservation Leader Wins a Green Oscars Award



Last Wednesday 27th April, the Executive Director of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, Gilbert Adum won this year's Green Oscars, a Whitley Fund for Nature Award. Gilbert who was among seven other finalists selected from 130 applicants worldwide is the first Ghanaian to receive this prestigious award in honour of Gilbert's heroic conservation efforts to save Ghana's endangered frogs, Her Royal Highness.

The Princess Royal made the presentation worth £35,000 at a ceremony hosted at the Royal Geographical Society, London. Ghana's High Commissioner to UK/Ireland, His Excellency Victor Emmanuel Smith whose office represented Ghana's government at the awards ceremony later met with Gilbert in his office.

In his congratulatory message, the High Commissioner says he has 'long been concerned about how rapidly Ghana's forests and wildlife are declining but there is hope if as individuals and collectively we would do our best to protect the remaining ecosystems'.

With the Green Oscars Award, Gilbert and his SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana team will continue to conduct cutting-edge research to understand the conservation needs of Ghana's endangered frogs. They will also develop viable and sustainable alternative livelihoods for local people around western Ghana's Sui Forest who depend on frogs' critical habitats.

This will help to secure key habitats not only for frogs but also for chimpanzees and other wildlife. The project will also build vital capacity to conserve these species by training the next generation of biologists in Ghana.

Gilbert's award continues to receive a lot of international media attention including a recent special feature on BBC's Focus on Africa. Please follow the links below for more information on the award including Gilbert's acceptance speech, and interviews in London.

International Climate Initiative – Enviromental News Platform
18 May 2016
https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/news/article/a_green_oscar_for_iki_climate_protection_fellow/

Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety

INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE (IKI)



A GREEN OSCAR FOR IKI CLIMATE PROTECTION FELLOW



Princess Anne and Gilbert Adum; Photo: Whitley Award

Climate Protection Fellow Gilbert Adum from Ghana, who is being funded by the German Environment Ministry, has won one of this year's Whitley Awards, also known as the 'Green Oscar'. Princess Anne of the UK Royal Family presented him with the prize worth £35,000 in a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society in London. Adum's research on the giant squeaker frog (Arthroleptis krokosua), which is native to Ghana and is particularly threatened by climate change, was selected from over 130 other projects.

Adum is currently a visiting researcher at Berlin's Museum für Naturkunde (natural history museum).

In conjunction with the herpetological[1] working group, led by Mark-Oliver Rödel at Berlin's Naturkundemuseum, Gilbert Adum is carrying out intensive fieldwork and conservation measures to protect a population of endangered giant squeaker frogs. His research in Berlin as a Climate Protection Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is being funded by BMUB's International Climate Initiative (IKI).

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Barbara Hendricks, German Environment Minister, expressed her praise as follows: 'I am absolutely delighted that one of the Humboldt Climate Protection Fellows has received this prestigious award. When we launched the Climate Protection Fellowship programme in 2009 we had great hopes of being able to help smooth the way a little for exceptionally talented scientists in developing countries. The long-overdue global structural change towards sustainable development that does not harm the environment or the climate depends crucially on the commitment of people such as Ghana's Gilbert Adum. I would like to extend my most sincere congratulations and wish him every success with his future research'.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has been awarding international Climate Protection and Resource Conservation Fellowships, funded by BMUB's International Climate Initiative, since 2010. Up to 20 fellows are funded each year under this programme. During their one-year stay in Germany they carry out a project on climate change mitigation or resource conservation at a German university or other appropriate institution. The aim is to facilitate an exchange of knowledge, methods and techniques.

Gilbert Adum would like to use this Green Oscar to continue his innovative research and in particular investigate and understand the breeding ecology and conservation needs of this endangered frog species. It is extremely important to him to involve the local population in his work, as he sees them as key to the survival, not only of the giant squeaker frog population but also of other species that share their habitat. As the founder and director of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, West Africa's non-profit amphibian conservation organisation, he is seeking not only to protect the animals but also to help preserve the livelihoods of the local people and train a new generation of amphibian biologists in Ghana.

Pulse – News and Entertainment, Ghana
21 June 2016
http://pulse.com.gh/building/illegal-mining-ghanaian-wins-grant-to-save-endangered-frogs-id5175580.html

Ghanaian wins grant to save endangered frogs

Worth 55,000 cedis, the grant will be used to close mining pits and reforest areas in and around the Sui River Forest Reserve.



Gilbert Adum is the Executive Director and Chief Ecologist of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, an organization he co-founded in September 2011.

A Ghanaian ecologist has won a grant to help in an attempt to save one of the country's endangered species of frogs.

This is the fourth time **Gilbert Adum** (executive director of ***Save the Frogs Ghana***) has won such a grant for his conservation work in saving the amphibians. Worth 55,000 cedis, the grant will be used to close mining pits and reforest areas in and around the**Sui River Forest Reserve**.

The pits, consequences of the activities of illegal miners in the area, are a threat to the lives of not only frogs, but human. Many deaths have been recorded in mining communities because of abandoned pits.

The giant squeaker frog (scientifically known as *Arthroleptis Krokosua*) was believed to have gone extinct but were rediscovered through the work of Save the Frogs in 2009 in the Sui Forest.



Gilbert Adum, Executive Director and Chief Ecologist of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, poses with some students

According to the **International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources** (IUCN), the giant squeaker frog; is "*near threatened.*"
"[The frog is] considered to occur in two threat-defined locations (one in Guinea and one in Ghana), and is undergoing a continuing decline in the extent and quality of its habitat"- the conservation agency said.

Save the Frogs Ghana has received about 170,000 cedis from Rufford Foundation to aid in its work.

The 2016 Whitley Award was also given to the organisation and is worth 180,000 cedis.

ARKive Interview with Gilbert
25 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQokKBBZNKA





Farwiza Farhan
Indonesia

Citizen lawsuits: defending local livelihoods and Sumatra's iconic species in the Leuser Ecosystem

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Winner of the Whitley Award for Conservation Habitats donated by the Arcus Foundation

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Farwiza has received significant media coverage this year, having featured in seventeen articles in national and international news, conservation websites, social media and two radio interviews. Farwiza has featured in five additional articles together with Hotlin, the Gold Award winner. The following is a selection of articles from Farwiza's media coverage.

To see Farwiza's WFN profile, please follow this link:

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WFN's Press release



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Conservation leader from Indonesia wins 2016 Whitley Award
Prize awarded for conservation of Sumatra's iconic species and the 'Jungle Book' Leuser Ecosystem

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Farwiza Farhan at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of her work tackling corporations and government agencies head on in order to ensure the Leuser Ecosystem in Sumatra is preserved for future generations.

Farwiza**,** Founder of Yayasan HAkA, has mobilised the local community in Aceh province to become environmental activists and with her Whitley Award will pursue a citizen lawsuit. The aim is to overturn the local government's proposed Aceh Spatial Plan that threatens to effectively legalise oil palm plantations, logging, mining and road development inside the protected Leuser Ecosystem.

This development would destroy the last place on earth where the Critically Endangered Sumatran orangutan, tiger, elephant and rhino coexist in the wild and jeopardise the ecosystem services that support four million Acehnese. Already, illegal activities are destroying forests and triggering a surge in poaching. Evidence of tiger presence has plummeted by almost 75% in the last five years and oil plantations are disrupting elephant migration paths. Farwiza's project seeks to empower the local communities to have a greater say in directing their own futures and protecting wildlife.

Changing Times – Alternative News Platform
28 April 2016
https://time2transcend.wordpress.com/2016/04/28/defender-of-sumatras-leuser-ecosystem-wins-whitley-fund-for-nature-award/

CHANGING TIMES

HOLISTIC JOURNALISM THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Defender of Sumatra's Leuser Ecosystem wins Whitley Fund for Nature award

Farwiza Farhan is a force for nature, and a force of nature. Determined, dedicated, and passionate about protecting the environment, she is one of the founders of the NGO HAkA – based in the Indonesian province of Aceh in northern Sumatra – and she has just won a prestigious Whitley award.
The London-based Whitley Fund for Nature honoured Farwiza for "defending local livelihoods and Sumatra's iconic species in the Leuser Ecosystem".

The fund says Farwiza has tackled corporations and government agencies head on "in order to ensure the Leuser Ecosystem in Sumatra is preserved for future generations".

Farwiza was presented with the 2016 Whitley Award for Conservation in Ape Habitats by the Princess Royal in a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society in London last night (Wednesday). The prize is worth £35,000 (about US$ 51,000). It was donated by the Arcus Foundation and Farwiza will use it to protect Leuser via citizens' lawsuits. She also wants to set up a wildlife protection unit.



The fund gave its additional 2016 Gold Award to another Indonesian, Hotlin Ompusunggu, for her work in dentistry and reforestation.[1] *(Full story about Hotlin and her work to follow).*

The Leuser Ecosystem is the last place on Earth where orangutans, rhinos, tigers, and elephants can be found living together in the wild, and is the area that HAkA (Forest, Nature, and Environment of Aceh) is fighting to protect.

The Ecosystem hit international headlines recently when actor, film producer, and ardent environmentalist Leonardo DiCaprio paid it a visit.

DiCaprio was photographed with Farwiza, who chairs HAkA, and with members of the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme (SOCP), which runs a quarantine centre.



Farwiza, DiCaprio (right), and award-winning environmentalist Rudi Putra.



DiCaprio at the SOCP quarantine centre.

After DiCaprio's visit, social media was abuzz with the photos and his comments about saving Leuser. The "Save Leuser" petition on change.org quickly grew from 2,000 signatures to 53,000, Farwiza says. "A few years ago, we launched a petition on Avaaz

and Leo tweeted it and it grew to a million signatures. That's the impact of Leonardo DiCaprio."

Such awareness raising is vital, Farwiza says. "DiCaprio delivered and amplified the voice of the local people. He doesn't have his own agenda; he is simply standing with the locals. That's his message and that is super strong, and we see massive changes in public awareness and support.

"Through experience, we have learned that public awareness and support can change legal outcomes."

The Leuser Ecosystem covers 2.6 million hectares and straddles the border of Aceh and the neighbouring province of North Sumatra. It has been listed as one of the world's most irreplaceable areas.

It includes the Gunung Leuser National Park, which is listed as a World Heritage Site.

Citizens' lawsuit

While Farwiza was in London for the Whitley event, the civil lawsuit brought by a group of nine Aceh citizens against Indonesia's minister of home affairs entered the stage of initial courtroom submissions. Farwiza is one of the plaintiffs.

The lawsuit is the latest development in a two-year fight by an alliance of concerned citizens – Gerakan Rakyat Aceh Menggugat (GeRAM) – against the proposed spatial plan for Aceh.

Farwiza says the Whitley award money will be used "to prevent the Aceh spatial plan from legalising destruction of the Leuser Ecosystem and to enable communities to be involved in the policy-making processes that will effect their livelihoods".

Her aim is to shift the balance of power to the local level and support people in their defence of Leuser.

The spatial plan will "whitewash crimes of the past, and pave the way for a new wave of catastrophic ecological destruction", Farwiza says.

The class action plaintiffs are demanding a cancellation of the plan and "a thorough and comprehensive revision" of its proposals, which they say must include the recognition of the Leuser Ecosytem's special status.

The new spatial plan would open up swathes of the Ecosystem for roads, mining, and palm oil and timber concessions. It threatens to destroy the area's biodiversity and increase the risk of flooding and landslides.

There has already been extensive illegal burning of land in the area and there is large-scale encroachment for illegal logging and plantations. Environmentalists say the new spatial plan would effectively dissolve protection of much of Aceh's remaining tropical rainforest.

Illegal activities within the Leuser Ecosystem have triggered a surge in poaching. Evidence of tiger presence has plummeted by almost 75 percent over the past five years and oil palm plantations are disrupting elephant migration paths.

The new spatial plan makes no mention of the existence of the Leuser Ecosystem as a National Strategic Area and no reference to its role in environmental protection.

"It effectively legalises numerous new roads, many of which have already been constructed illegally and cut through vast areas of forest, fragmenting this sensitive ecosystem and opening up new pathways for destruction," Farwiza said.



The approach in the citizens' lawsuit is different to that taken previously by a coalition of NGOs including Friends of the Earth Aceh (Walhi), which sought a judicial review of the plan itself in the Supreme Court. The move was unsuccessful.

"The citizens' law suit comes down to asking the government to do its job," Farwiza said.

Farwiza says the spatial plan should be revised in accordance with the ministry of home affairs evaluation. "That's a compromise that we are willing to make."

The plaintiffs say the home affairs minister has "failed to act on his jurisdiction to cancel the Aceh spatial plan" as required under the ministry's decree Nº 650-441 of 2014.

The home affairs ministry has written to the Aceh government asking it to revise its spatial plan in accordance with the ministry's evaluation. If it did not do this, the ministry said, the plan would be revoked.

"Neither the ministry of home affairs nor the Aceh government have done what they are supposed to have done," Farwiza said.

The citizens' lawsuit was formally filed in January 2016. Then the court decided there needed to be mediation. "In a case taken by citizens against the government they said there should be dialogue."

Unfortunately, Farwiza says, all the plaintiffs attended the mediation sessions, but the government simply sent its legal representatives.

"They walked in with a pre-prepared agenda, with no desire to have a dialogue; no desire to seek a sensible solution."

Millions of people depend upon Aceh's forests, and the Leuser Ecosystem in particular, the plaintiffs say.

Protection of the Ecosystem is required under several of Indonesia's national laws, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has ranked it as one of the world's most irreplaceable protected areas.



A bulldozer moves earth within the Leuser Ecosystem.

The ministry of home affairs evaluation is not as complete as HAkA would like, Farwiza says. "Of course, we would like the area to be fully mapped out. We know exactly which area needs to be one hundred percent conserved, where not even a single tree can be taken out, and which area could be harvested; which area needs to be restored, and in which area we could build roads and have industry."

Data analysis by the UK-based Sumatran Orangutan Society shows a dramatic loss of forest cover in the Leuser Ecosystem in recent years.

The charity compared the period from the start of 2008 to the end of 2012 with the previous five years and found that forest loss in the Ecosystem had more than doubled. At least 30,830 hectares of forest were lost over the first period, and 80,316 hectares over the second.

Over the entire ten-year period, from the beginning of 2003 to the end of 2012, an area the size of Hong Kong was lost, the society says.

Sustainable development

Aceh does need economic development, Farwiza says. "But, at the end of the day, if we focus on economic development without putting real thought into it, we're going to end up with pseudo economic development."

Farwiza cites the example of the Tripa peat forest, large swathes of which have been destroyed to make way for oil palms.

"After the palm oil companies came into the area and changed the ecosystem, the local people no longer had fish in their rivers; they no longer had rattan in the forest because the forest was gone; and they no longer had honey because those trees were gone. When that happened, like it or not, they had to work with the plantation."

The locals in Tripa are earning more money than they used to, Farwiza says, but they are worse off because they now have to buy everything. "When I ask them what do you grow these days, they say palm oil."

Can Leuser be protected if there are still oil palm plantations there? "Palm oil is only a crop; a commodity," Farwiza said.

"If you replaced all the palm oil with coconut, it would be just as destructive. What we need to change is the practice, and we need to set a line in the sand beyond which there can be no further expansion."

There needs to be intensification on the plantations, Farwiza says – increased yields with no further expansion. A major problem, however, is that many companies are conducting land clearing and expanding as far as they can before they obtain a permit. And it is often very unclear who owns which parcels of land.

Deforestation or conservation

Farwiza told Changing Times recently: "Aceh has an opportunity today to decide which direction its development is going. The Aceh government and its people are at a junction; it is a choice between deforestation and conservation.

"A lot of people would argue that conservation in developing countries is in lieu of development; that you have to have either conservation or development.

"In reality, we need conservation to make sure we have sustainable development. If we destroy forests in order to build infrastructure, over time – not so long – we are going to have more natural disasters."

Farwiza, who is writing a PhD about conservation and development, says it was thought that environmental destruction was already peaking, but it isn't. It is continuing to increase.

"All around the world we see that forests are declining; all around the world we see more and more natural disasters and, last year, Indonesia made the headlines for forest fires that burned for months and, at their peak, caused more emissions daily than in the entire United States."

She cites the flash flood in Aceh Tamiang in 2006.

"Initially local people didn't realise that palm oil encroachment upstream was affecting their livelihood.

"They only realised this when the flash flood happened and not only mud, but logs flowed down the river, smashing homes on their way through."

Farwiza says she understands that President Jokowi has to navigate his way through political and bureaucratic complexities, and she thinks he has good intentions, but she wishes he had stronger policies and would deliver on his promises.

Optimism has increased with the recent government announcement of a moratorium on new palm oil and mining licences in Indonesia, but implementation will be a challenge. The ban's authority is based on a presidential decree, which carries less weight than a law.

A current ban on palm oil cultivation on peatland isn't adequately enforced.

Indonesia's Environment and Forestry Minister, Siti Nurbaya, made specific reference to the Leuser Ecosystem in her speech at the United Nations headquarters in New York on April 22 after the signing of the Paris agreement on climate change.

The governor of Aceh had declared that no new palm oil or mining licences would be granted in the Ecosystem, she said.



From small beginnings

HAkA came into being three years ago when the Leuser Ecosystem management agency was dissolved and Farwiza and other employees found themselves out of a job.

Other NGOs wanted to employ them, but they wanted to keep working to protect Leuser. "Within each of us there was still that love for Leuser and we wanted to continue the work," Farwiza said.

"We regrouped and we created HAkA out of the mess. At that time we had no money and we had no office. We worked out of coffee shops. For the first year we didn't even know if we would have a salary at the end of the month.

"It was very hard, but, because we worked out of love, because we worked out of passion, we lasted through the challenges and we grew out of it."

Farwiza used to be a marine biologist, but is now focused on anthropology and development studies, and has chosen to become an environmental activist.

"I watched the ocean die before my own eyes. I thought forests should have a better chance. And I don't want to be the one who took no action. I was a scientist, but then someone told me you could very well study something to death."

She wishes scientists would talk to policymakers and the public in language they understand. For Farwiza, public education is vital. "On-the-ground success for me is empowering communities."

Farwiza cites legal successes in Tripa.[2] "Once the communities saw that we had started to win, they realised they could do something themselves; that they could actually fight companies and win."

A stronger civil society makes sure the government does its job well, Farwiza says, and gets companies to make their practices more sustainable.

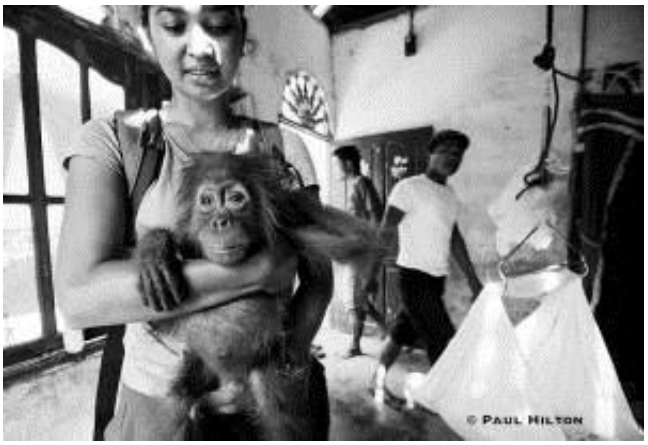
"If more people are empowered we can take on bigger battles. Just by living our lives we make an impact, and it's down to us what kind of impact we want to make.

"Either we choose the pathway of apathy and inaction or we choose to do something."

While Farwiza, who is just 29 years old, respects custom, and will cover her head on certain occasions, she resists Aceh societal pressure and has made a personal choice not to wear the hijab (headscarf) day to day.

Environmentalists in Indonesia do not face the threats and dangers encountered in such countries as Honduras, Guatemala, Cambodia, and the Philippines, but there are continual attempts to bribe them.

"It happens to everyone, not just me," Farwiza said. "If any of the HAkA staff decided to jump ship, they would be driving fancy cars for starters, but the strength that we have here is our integrity and honesty."



Farwiza with Chocolate the orangutan, who was rescued from wildlife traders four years ago and was released back into the wild in February.

The Whitley Fund for Nature says its awards honour "exceptional individuals who, through their outstanding conservation work in developing countries, are redefining the way people engage with the natural world in the 21st century".

The fund's founder, Edward Whitley, says it focuses on conservation success stories and the progress that's being made.

"The awards ceremony is about recognising and celebrating that – winning those small battles, which cumulatively add up to significant change at the national level.
"In addition to the financial benefit of winning an award, our winners receive professional communications training to turn scientists into ambassadors, so they're able to communicate what they're doing to the public and to policy makers."

The renowned naturalist David Attenborough, who is a Whitley Fund for Nature trustee, said: "Empowering local people, who understand what the problems are, and who have the local knowledge, determination and vested interest to find the solutions, is the very best way to ensure long-term protection for the natural world."

Farwiza remains very modest about her achievements. She says she has numerous mentors who have inspired and empowered her.

"None of us could achieve any of the things we achieve if it were not for all the help we get from everyone involved. It is never just one organisation, and it is never just one person."
Winning the Whitley award is a massive achievement, Farwiza says, and a huge mark of appreciation of the work she and others are doing. "It is something I would never have dreamed of. I never expected to be shortlisted. I am incredibly honoured and humbled to be selected."

She added on Instagram: "This award is not mine; it belongs to everyone working tirelessly day and night to protect Leuser; it's the people at @haka_sumatra and all of our partners; it's the local grassroots communities whose courage and bravery continue to inspire me and provide me with strength. It's our supporters, donors and petition signers who have enabled us to achieve what we have achieved, and it's friends and families who have been beyond understanding and supportive."



The award will help to amplify the voice of those battling to protect Leuser, and strengthen their work, Farwiza says.

"The awareness that this award could bring could actually change the game; it really could."

BBC Indonesia – BBC News Online, UK
28 April 2016
http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah/2016/04/160427_aceh_gugatan_leuser

BBC INDONESIA
bbcindonesia.com

Melindungi ekosistem Leuser, pegiat dapat dana dari Inggris



Pegiat lingkungan Aceh mendapatkan hadiah dari badan amal konservasi Inggris, Whitley, sebagai pengakuan dalam upayanya melindungi ekosistem Leuser.

Farwiza Farhan -termasuk salah seorang dari dua warga Indonesia yang mendapatkan Whitley Award 2016- berkat upayanya mempertahankan kawasan hutan Leuser, dengan hadiah tambahan sebesar £35.000 atau sekitar Rp670 juta rupiah selain penghargaan lingkungan bergengsi tersebut.

Farwiza menggerakkan komunitas lokal melakukan gugatan warga negara terhadap pemerintah dan dewan perwakilan daerah serta Kementerian Dalam Negeri.



Sidang pertama gugatan warga negara ini dimulai Rabu (27/04) di Jakarta dengan tergugat termasuk Kementerian Dalam Negeri yang disebutkan Farwiza 'tidak membatalkan rencana tata ruang Aceh...yang tidak memasukkan Leuser sebagai kawasan lindung'.

Leonardo Di Caprio dukung perlindungan Leuser

Harimau Leuser menjauh, korban selamat

Penyelenggara Whitley Award menyatakan penghargaan untuk Farwiza diserahkan dalam upacara di London, pada Rabu (27/04), karena 'upayanya menangani perusahaan-perusahaan dan instansi pemerintah untuk menjamin ekosistem Leuser di Sumatra tetap dijaga bagi generasi-generasi berikutnya'.



Peraih Whitley Award 2016 lainnya asal Indonesia adalah Hotlin Ompusunggu, karena memberikan pengobatan murah yang ditukar dengan upaya masyarakat dalam melindungi hutan di Gunung Palung, Kalimantan Barat.

Leonardo Di Caprio berkunjung ke Leuser

Farwiza yang mendirikan Yayasan Hutan, Alam, Lingkungan Aceh atau HAKA, menyatakan telah meminta Pemerintah Daerah Aceh merevisi Tata Ruang Aceh yang tidak mencantumkan Leuser dan dalam tiga tahun ini tanpa hasil.



"Leuser adalah kawasan terakhir di dunia tempat masih ada badak, orang utan, gajah bersama sama di alam liar. Leuser tak hanya penting bagi satwa tapi juga sekitar empat juta masyarakat di seputar," kata Farwiza.



"Kawasan ekosistem Leuser dilindungi dalam UU Nasional namun oleh pemerintah daerah tiba-tiba dihapuskan keberadaannya," tambahnya.

"Tiga tahun telah berlalu (tanpa hasil) dan kita tempuh jalur hukum karena pemerintah gagal melindungi kawasan ekosistem Leuser."



Pegiat yayasan HAKA ikut mendampingi bintang Holywood dan pegiat lingkungan Leonardo Di Caprio yang berkunjung ke Leuser bulan Maret lalu.

Farwiza mengatakan Di Caprio ikut menyatakan dukungan penuhnya untuk perlindungan Leuser.

Voa News
13 September 2016
http://www.voanews.com/a/indonesia-rejects-plans-development-rainforest/3506504.html



FILE - This handout photograph taken in 2011 and released by the Leuser International Foundation shows a Sumatran rhinoceros at the Mount Leuser National Park in Indonesia's Sumatran island.

The Indonesian environment ministry has denied the Aceh provincial government's proposal to rezone part of Mount Leuser National Park for geothermal development, saving the lives of the tigers, orangutans, elephants and rhinos who co-exist there.

According to the environmental conservation group Mongobay, the ministry rejected Aceh Governor Zaini Abdullah's plea that 8,000 hectares of the park's "core zone" be changed to a "utilization zone" so that a Turkish company, Hitay Holdings, could pursue geothermal energy development there. In an August letter, Abdullah noted that the project would help President Joko Widodo, who has pledged to add 35,000 megawatts of electricity to Indonesia's skimpy energy grid by 2020.

Environmentalists, however, worried that such development would start a chain reaction leading to Leuser's collapse — one authorities would be powerless to stop.

"Anywhere you put roads, destruction follows," said Farwiza Farhan, chairwoman of Forest, Nature and Environment of Aceh, a nongovernmental organization. She said timber interests and small farmers used such roads to exploit forests previously inaccessible, leading to habitat loss.

"Right now it is geothermal, but what's next? Even now, they [the authorities] can't protect Leuser," Farhan said.

Despite federal conservation laws, recent decades have seen illegal encroachment and logging whittle Leuser by about 5,500 hectares a year.

The Aceh government's geothermal plans had focused on part of the Kappi Plateau, a 150,000-hectare expanse considered Leuser's most indispensable landscape.

"Kappi contains some of the best forests remaining in the world," said Rudi Putra, founder of the Leuser Conservation Forum.

The area's many salt lakes and fruit-bearing trees, he added, make it an ideal habitat for creatures large and small. Some 200 endangered Sumatran elephants that occupy the plateau — about 10 percent of the world's remaining population — would be imperiled if the geothermal plans were to go through.

ARKive Interview with Farwiza
24 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQoPaVDQoXA





Makala Jasper
Tanzania

Forest stewardship: community conservation of coastal forests in the greater Selous Ecosystem

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK

Makala has been featured in eleven news articles including a feature in National Geographic and Cambridge Conservation after receiving his Whitley award, highlighting how winning the 'Green Oscar' can provide a great deal of visibility for grassroots conservationists. Gilbert and Makala were both guests on a BBC programme 'Focus on Africa'. The following is a selection of articles from Makala's media coverage.
To see Makala's Whitley profile follow this link:

- **WFN Press Release……90**
- **Print and Online……...91-100**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Conservation leader from Tanzania wins 2016 Whitley Award

Prize awarded for community conservation of coastal forests in the greater Selous Ecosystem

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Makala Jasper at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work in Tanzania to empower communities to conserve coastal forests and their wildlife through the sustainable management and sale of the high value timber, African Blackwood (also known as mpingo).

As Director of the Mpingo Conservation Development Initiative, Makala has assisted 35 communities to protect over 3,000km² of forest. The project is Africa's only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified programme for community-managed natural forests. Since the programme was established in 2006, prices per log have increased 100-fold providing vital income to people earning less than US$1 per day.

The project is situated between two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Selous Game Reserve, one of the largest protected areas in Africa, and Kilwa Kisiwani. By linking forest fragments, the project is enabling seasonal movements of large mammals such as elephants and lions. Through this initiative, Makala is giving communities an incentive to conserve this important habitat and the biodiversity within it. Makala's Whitley Award will allow him to bring over 5,000km² of coastal forest under community protection, benefitting 2,500 Tanzanians.

National Geographic – Society for Research and Education
13 June 2016
http://press.nationalgeographic.com/2016/06/13/environmentalists-from-peru-and-tanzania-win-2016-national-geographicbuffett-award-for-leadership-in-conservation/

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Environmentalists from Peru and Tanzania Win 2016 National Geographic/Buffett Award for Leadership in Conservation

Award Honors Conservation Heroes Victor Zambrano and Makala Jasper



Conservationist **Victor Zambrano**, who has dedicated his life to the restoration of natural forests in the Madre de Dios region of Peru's southeastern Amazon, is the 2016 winner of the National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in Latin

American Conservation. **Makala Jasper**, chief executive officer of the Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative, a Tanzanian nonprofit committed to improving the well-being of rural communities as well as the forests upon which they rely, is this year's recipient of the National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in African Conservation.

Zambrano and Jasper will receive their $25,000 awards at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, June 16, during National Geographic's annual Explorers Week, when National Geographic explorers, grantees and others affiliated with the Society gather to share findings from their research and fieldwork and take part in panel discussions.

Established through a gift from The Howard G. Buffett Foundation in 2002 to celebrate and recognize unsung conservation heroes working in the field, the National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in Conservation is given each year to two outstanding conservationists, one in Latin America and one in Africa. The award acknowledges the winners' remarkable work and lifetime contributions that further the understanding and practice of conservation in their countries.

"It is an honor to participate with National Geographic in recognizing the achievements of these two remarkable visionaries who are making such a positive difference to conservation in their countries. Both are inspirational mentors and role models in their communities," said Howard G. Buffett, chairman and chief executive officer of The Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

"This year's awardees exemplify the spirit of the National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in Conservation," said Gary E. Knell, president and chief executive officer of the National Geographic Society. "They are powerful examples of how dedicated and passionate individuals can improve the world for all living things."

Born in Madre de Dios, **Zambrano** learned the customs of the local people at an early age. After leaving for high school in Lima and a subsequent 24-year military career, Zambrano retired and returned to his birthplace, settling along the Tambopata River in a region scientists consider to be the global epicenter of biodiversity. Sadly, he found the area under significant pressure from illegal gold mining, construction of the Amazon's first transcontinental highway, oil and gas exploration, illegal timber harvesting and human migration.

Upon his return in 1987, Zambrano located his family's land and began the arduous process of reforesting it, singlehandedly planting more than 19,000 trees, and over 120 species of them, in a 34-hectare area. In 2013, after many years of work, Zambrano legally obtained the land and gained long-term protection for it. Today, the area is known

as the K'erenda Homet Private Conservation Concession, in honor of his youngest daughter.

Over the years, Zambrano established, advised and trained a number of local organizations, including the Agrarian Federation of Madre de Dios, a group of 5,000 families practicing sound agricultural processes. Zambrano is also recognized as the creator of the first agroforestry initiatives in the region as well as the Indigenous and Peasant Forestry Coordination of Peru. In 2014, in recognition of his efforts, Zambrano received the prestigious Carlos Ponce Conservation Award in Peru.

In addition, Zambrano championed creation of the Alliance to Protect the Tambopata National Reserve, bringing together indigenous people, environmental organizations and agrarian associations to protect the Madre de Dios region from the severe habitat destruction and biodiversity loss caused by gold mining. His efforts contributed to a significant reduction of gold mining, improving the overall well-being of the local communities while drawing the national government's attention to the perils of illegal gold mining.

Jasper, a skilled forester and dedicated conservationist, pioneered community-based forest management in southeastern Tanzania through the work of the Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative (MCDI). Founded in 2004, MCDI currently supports more than 55,000 men, women and children in 35 communities, empowering local people to take control of and sustainably manage their forests while providing economic benefits and improving livelihoods.

Among its many accomplishments, MCDI helped its 35 involved communities to secure user rights to 350,000 hectares of forest. On average, the communities have set aside 32 percent of their forestland for sustainable management. MCDI also led the first-ever commercial timber harvest of a community-managed natural forest in Tanzania, resulting in a more than 100-fold increase in local earnings per cubic meter. In addition, MCDI received the first — and to date only — Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for a community-managed natural forest in Africa, enabling the supported communities to earn more than US$315,000 in FSC-certified timber sales.

Communities use their sustainable timber profits to meet their development needs. Some examples include:

- Building schools and supporting facilities, including a house for a primary school teacher;
- Constructing a solar-powered local marketplace and a midwife's house;
- Subsidizing nearly 200 local expectant mothers to ensure they receive proper health care;

- Purchasing school uniforms for more than 300 primary school students; and
- Providing health insurance to more than 200 elders so that they have free access to medical care.

In recognition of his long-term commitment to community-centered conservation in Tanzania, Jasper recently received the Whitley Fund for Nature 2016 Whitley Award, donated by the World Wildlife Fund-United Kingdom, at a ceremony at The Royal Geographical Society in London.

National Geographic Society/Buffett Award recipients are chosen from nominations submitted to the National Geographic Society's Committee for Research and Exploration, which screens the nominations through a peer-review process.

"This year's awardees are recognized for their outstanding leadership and the vital role they play in managing and protecting the natural resources in their regions. They are exemplary conservation advocates who often battle difficult odds with courage and commitment," said Peter Raven, chairman of the National Geographic Society Committee for Research and Exploration.

Howard G. Buffett is chairman and chief executive officer of The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, which focuses on humanitarian and conservation issues. A farmer, businessman and widely published author and photographer, Buffett is a member of the Commission on Presidential Debates and serves as a UN Goodwill Ambassador Against Hunger on behalf of the World Food Programme. He has traveled to more than 130 countries, documenting the challenges of preserving biodiversity while providing adequate resources to meet the needs of a growing global population. He has been recognized globally for his commitment to food security, conservation and journalistic freedom. He has written eight books on conservation, wildlife and the human condition.

About the National Geographic Society- The National Geographic Society is a global nonprofit membership organization driven by a passionate belief in the power of science, exploration and storytelling to change the world. We fund hundreds of research and conservation projects around the globe each year. With the support of our members and donors, we work to inspire, illuminate and teach through scientific expeditions, award-winning journalism, education initiatives and more. For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.org.

Conservation Leadership Programme – Conservationist's Support Programme
20 June 2016
http://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/news/awards-mpingo-maestro-music-clps-ears/

Awards for mpingo maestro are music to CLP ears



The head of one of Tanzania's most successful conservation organisations, which grew out of an initiative launched two decades ago with CLP support, has won the 2016 National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in African Conservation.

Makala Jasper, co-founder and CEO of the Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative, was honoured for his 'outstanding accomplishments' at an awards ceremony attended by HE Wilson Masilingi, Tanzania's Ambassador to the United States, at the National Geographic Society's headquarters in Washington DC.

Established through a gift from The Howard G. Buffett Foundation to celebrate and recognise unsung conservation heroes, the award is given each year to two outstanding conservationists, one in Latin America and one in Africa. The foundation's chairman, Howard G. Buffett himself, described Makala and his Latin American counterpart, Victor Zambrano, as "inspirational mentors and role models in their communities" and paid tribute to "two remarkable visionaries who are making such a positive difference to conservation in their countries."



Gary E. Knell, president and chief executive officer of the National Geographic Society, hailed them as "powerful examples of how dedicated and passionate individuals can improve the world for all living things."

"This year's awardees are recognised for their outstanding leadership and the vital role they play in managing and protecting the natural resources in their regions. They are exemplary conservation advocates who often battle difficult odds with courage and commitment," said Peter Raven, chairman of the National Geographic Society Committee for Research and Exploration.

The National Geographic Society/Buffett Award for Leadership in African Conservation comes hot on the heels of another prestigious prize for Makala. At the end of April, he attended a ceremony in London to accept a 2016 Whitley Fund for Nature Award, presented by HRH The Princess Royal. These awards, familiarly referred to as the 'Green Oscars', recognise the efforts of influential conservationists who use their research on threatened species to raise awareness about the issues they face and build lasting programmes to protect them.

The Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) has a long association with Makala and his work. In 1996, it supported a team carrying out vital research on the African blackwood or mpingo, a highly prized timber species that was threatened with commercial extinction as a result of overharvesting to supply the musical instrument trade.



Eight years later, having successfully developed sustainable community-led forestry practices for the beleaguered blackwood with support from three successive CLP awards worth a combined total of US$75,000, the project team established the Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative (MCDI).

With CLP alumnus Makala at the helm, the organisation is protecting biologically rich miombo woodland and other threatened forest habitat in East Africa by promoting sustainable and socially equitable harvesting of valuable timber stocks and other forest products. Addressing environmental, economic and social issues holistically, it has, to date, provided support to over 55,000 people in 37 impoverished rural communities, and has helped to secure user rights to more than 300,000 hectares of forested habitats.



MCDI currently holds the only Forest Stewardship Council certificate in Africa for community-managed natural forest. To date, these community forests have earned local people more than US$265,000 in sustainable hardwood timber sales, and income continues to increase. Revenues have been used to improve the livelihoods of local people – including the most marginalised members of those communities – by, for example, creating new water boreholes, building schools and improving village medical care.

Makala has always been keen to acknowledge CLP's contribution to these achievements: "Through CLP support, [the organisation] was transformed from a student research expedition into a practical conservation organisation in 2004. Today it is one of the most successful conservation organisations in Tanzania."

This prestigious award will undoubtedly raise the profile of Makala's work. It will also provide vital financial support for future projects in the form of a US$25,000 grant and help him to continue developing the programme to conserve Tanzania's forest and woodland habitats.

The Whitley Award, worth £35,000, will also open up new avenues for his organisation: "It means MCDI will expand its work to an entirely new area - the first step to connect existing community forests and their wildlife with one of Africa's largest protected areas."

Makala Jasper was not the only CLP alumnus to receive a Whitley Award in 2016. Among the other winners presented with their awards in front of Sir David Attenborough and over 550 assembled guests at London's Royal Geographical Society were Gilbert Baase Adum and Alexander Rukhaia.



Co-founder of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana – and a recipient of a 2013 CLP Future Conservationist Award, Gilbert Adum turned down the opportunity to pursue a career in medicine, preferring to dedicate himself to the conservation of endangered West African amphibians including the giant squeaker frog, which was rediscovered by his team in 2009.



Alexander Rukhaia, a 2016 CLP Award winner and the first Georgian ever nominated for a Whitley Award, is working with local communities in his home country to change

attitudes to migrating raptors that are traditionally shot or captured for falconry as they pass through the so-called Batumi Bottleneck.



Makala, Gilbert and Alexander are the latest in what is already an impressive list of CLP alumni who have received wider recognition in 2016. We look forward to celebrating further successes as the year unfolds.

Karau Kuna
Papua New Guinea

Tree Kangaroos as a flagship species to protect Papua New Guinea's spectacular wildlife

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust in memory of William Brake

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Karua has featured in ten articles including the Rainforest Trust and the IUCN websites. He was also the subject of a Wildscreen Archive video after receiving his award this year. The following is a selection of articles from Karau's media coverage. To see Karau's WFN profile please follow this link.

- **WFN Press Release…….102**
- **Print and Online……...……103-109**
- **Interviews…….110**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Conservation leader from Papua New Guinea wins 2016 Whitley Award

Prize awarded for protecting Papua New Guinea's spectacular wildlife using tree kangaroos as a flagship

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Karau Kuna at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work that is bringing together local landowners to ensure protection of the YUS Conservation Area in Papua New Guinea, which is home to a plethora of endangered species including tree kangaroos and birds-of-paradise.

Situated on the Huon Peninsula and named after the three main rivers in the area, the Yopno, Uruwa and Som, the 1,500km^2 YUS conservation area harbours more endemic birds and mammals than any other like-sized area in mainland New Guinea. It is one of only three major Tropical Wilderness areas worldwide. It is so remote that it can only be reached by foot or boat and extends from spectacular mountain ridges to dazzling coral reefs.

For over a decade Karau and the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Programme have been working with villagers who own this land. Together they have developed resource use plans that are now recognised in national policy. With his Whitley Award Karau will create community plans to manage and carry out conservation actions in the YUS landscape to 2020. Pressure from logging and mining companies is threatening the traditional culture of indigenous people and the project is working to help them to conserve their rich natural heritage for future generations and act as a beacon for other communities to emulate.

Energy Publications – Journal Publisher, Australia and Papua New Guinea
May 2016
http://energy-pubs.com.au/png-resources/kuna-wins-conservation-award/

Kuna wins conservation award



2016 Whitley Awards recipient Karau Kuna receives his award from Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, at The Royal Geographical Society, London in April.

KARAU Kuna, a long time staffer of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation program in Papua New Guinea, has been awarded a Whitley Award for his conservation efforts at a ceremony in London.

Including a prize of £35,000 for project funding, the award was presented for Mr Kuna's work in bringing together landowners to ensure protection of the Yopno-Uruwa-Som (YUS) Conservation area.

Measuring 1,500 square kilometres in the Huon Peninsula, the conservation area is home to a series of endangered species and more endemic birds and mammals than any other like-sized area in mainland New Guinea.

It is one of only three major Tropical Wilderness areas worldwide and is so remote that it can only be reached by foot or boat.

Mr Kuna has worked with the Tree Kangaroo Conservation program in the area for over a decade – working with villagers who own the land to develop resource use plans that are now recognised in national policy.

Over the course of his work, Mr Kuna has developed Community Land-Use Plans (LUP) with 50 villages to ensure a consensus on resource use that takes into account both people's welfare and conservation priorities.

With his Whitley Award money, Mr Kuna will create additional community plans to manage and carry out conservation actions in the YUS landscape to 2020.

Pressure from logging and mining companies is threatening the traditional culture of indigenous people and the project is working to help them to conserve their rich natural heritage for future generations and act as a beacon for other communities to emulate.

Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature Edward Whitley said the award was about recognising and celebrating the small battles which cumulatively add up to significant change at the national level.

"In addition to the financial benefit of winning an award, our winners receive professional communications training to turn scientists into ambassadors, so they're able to communicate what they're doing to the public and to policy makers," he said.

IUCN – International Conservation Union
12 May 2016
https://www.iucn.org/content/tree-kangaroo-conservationist-wins-prestigious-whitley-award

Tree Kangaroo conservationist wins prestigious Whitley Award

In April 2016, Karau Kuna was one of two SOS Grantees who won the renowned Whitley Fund for Nature's Whitley Awards. Acknowledged for his passionate work strengthening biodiversity protection in the YUS Conservation Area of Papua New Guinea (PNG) through the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Programme (TKCP), Karau accepted the award dedicating it to his team and the communities with whom they work.



Photo: Hessing



Joining the TKCP as a research assistant in 2004, Karau has championed Matschie's Tree Kangaroo (*Dendrolagus matschiei*) as a flagship species to protect PNG's incredible diversity of wildlife through community-oriented Land-use Planning (LUP) models. "Realizing I could do more to save these fascinating animals, I began working closely with the communities in 2006 to set aside and protect crucial habitat for the species. To date, over 450km2 of pristine forest has been protected for threatened wildlife to thrive."

Located on the Huon Peninsula in north-eastern PNG, the YUS Conservation Area was the first of its kind in the country. Named after the three rivers flowing through it – Yopno, Uruwa and Som – it covers 1,500km² of pristine habitat accessible only by foot, and extends from mountainous peaks to coastal reefs. This remote area supports unparalleled levels of biodiversity – including tree kangaroos and many species of birds of paradise. But it is also impacted by a growing human population. "Meanwhile pressure from logging and mining companies is putting traditional management practices at risk of being discarded in favour of short-term financial gain", say Karau.

As such, the community-oriented LUP model represents an optimal solution in a country where 90% of the land is owned by indigenous communities. They would perform as an important planning tool helping project participants become better managers of their resources.

So far the TKCP is benefiting 12,000 people living within the YUS, and has generated a positive dialogue between landowners and conservationists. "We started developing LUPs at the ward (village cluster) level and the model has since been incorporated into PNG's new National Protected Areas Policy, which will guide the establishment and management of protected areas throughout the country."

Funding from SOS ensured the continuation and successful completion of the Land-use Planning phase. Today, all 18 wards of YUS are equipped with LUPs. This significantly increases the size of the protected area while decreasing the frequency of illegal and destructive activity, Karau elaborates. "It has enabled my project to gain national and global recognition and in the process and attracted government and donor support for the implementation of the monitoring phase. SOS support has basically set the foundation from which more success stories will sprout from".

What is next for TKCP? Karau smiles, "It pays off in the long run to spend time and resources to build trust and cooperation and explain a new concept explicitly when your audience are the key drivers of a community-led initiative".

So Karau and his team will continue engaging indigenous landowners and local government in conservation planning and monitoring. This will include supporting communities to refine their Land-use Plans, while developing monitoring plans for the next five years to 2020. These will guide resource management, implement conservation actions and enable sustainable land-use zoning. And thirdly, we will work to provide local rangers and community monitors with field equipment and specialised training to increase management capacity, monitor wildlife and respond to threats as they appear.

In this world of more than 7 billion people, we are facing an immense challenge to balance the needs of nature with our own. The Whitley Awards recognise and reward success among grasroots leaders who champion species conservation in such an increasingly crowded world.

This year, two SOS Grantees won awards - Karau Kuna was one. Another was Muhammad Ali Nawaz for his work protecting snow leopards by developing ways to reduce human-animal conflict, including incentives such as livestock insurance and vaccination schemes to reduce retaliatory killings of this supreme feline predator.

In celebrating their success SOS wishes to congratulate both Karau and Muhammad and all Whitley Awards winners for their dedication, passion and achievements in championing peace with nature.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Rainforest Trust
14 June 2016
https://www.rainforesttrust.org/news/partner-recognized-passionate-biodiversity-protection-work/

RAINFOREST TRUST

Partner Recognized for Passionate Biodiversity Protection Work

Award presented to Rainforest Trust partner for protecting critical habitats in Papua New Guinea.

The conservation strategies manager of Rainforest Trust's partner Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP) in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Karau Kuna, won a prestigious Whitley Award from the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN). The award ceremony recognized Kuna's efforts to protect key species such as the Endangered Matschie's Tree-kangaroo in the Huon Peninsula located in eastern PNG.

"It is incredibly exciting when people from the local community are recognized for the work they are doing to protect their own forests and the species therein," said Rick Passaro, Rainforest Trust's Asia Conservation Officer.

"We extend a hearty congratulations to Mr. Kuna for this enormous achievement."

Rainforest Trust is working with TKCP to protect nearly 200,000 acres on the Huon Peninsula by establishing the country's first Community Conservation Area. This will provide a model that can be replicated by other indigenous groups to protect critical areas across PNG.

With the funds from the Whitley Award, Kuna and TKCP will be able to strengthen biodiversity protection by engaging additional local communities in conservation planning and monitoring.

"The Whitley Award will [allow] communities to become better managers of their resources," said Kuna in his acceptance speech. "It's our responsibility as partners, as government [and] as conservation leaders to support their efforts and advocate on their behalf to ensure Tree-kangaroos are here for generations to come."

ARKive Interview with Karau
28 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bY_AO2DUVIw





Muhammad Ali Nawaz
Pakistan

Snow leopard conservation: a landscape-level approach in the mountains of northern Pakistan

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the Shears Foundation in memory of Trevor Shears

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Ali has been featured in fifteen articles, some of which are within world renowned institutions such as the BBC Urdu. Alis has also been featured in a Wildscreen ARKive video. The following is a selection of articles from Ali's media coverage.
To see Ali's WFN profile please follow this link:

- **WFN Press Release……..112**
- **Print and Online……113-116**
- **Interviews……117-118**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Conservation leader from Pakistan wins 2016 Whitley Award

Prize awarded for conservation of endangered snow leopards in the mountains of northern Pakistan

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Muhammad Ali Nawaz (Ali) at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work securing important landscape for the protection of snow leopards in Pakistan.

Snow leopards are considered critically endangered in Pakistan where Ali is working in the Pamir-Karakoram mountain complex to conserve the species. Threatened by poaching, habitat degradation and subsequent decline of natural prey, snow leopards are sometimes killed by herders in retaliation to livestock predation. This loss to herders' livelihoods can be the equivalent of a month's salary, but through the introduction of livestock insurance and vaccination programmes that buffer against livestock losses and increase tolerance, Ali is reducing human-wildlife conflict.

Ali is Director of the Snow Leopard Foundation. With his Whitley Award Ali will bring together people, NGOs and government in a unified effort to develop a multi-stakeholder strategy for 25,000km^2 of this mountainous habitat. This will be Pakistan's first landscape-level strategy for snow leopard conservation and will be used as a model to guide future conservation planning in the country. The project will train 50 wildlife managers, whilst engaging with 6,000 herders to enable the co-existence of communities and carnivores. Ali's work represents one of the first steps towards the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme's (GSLEP) goal to secure 23 important snow leopard habitats by 2020.

Pamir times – Print and Online News
7 May 2016
http://pamirtimes.net/2016/05/07/conservationist-from-pakistan-wins-2016-whitley-award/

Conservationist from Pakistan wins 2016 Whitley Award



Pamir Times is the pioneering community news and views portal of Gilgit – Baltistan, Kohistan, Chitral and the surrounding mountain areas. It is a voluntary, not-for-profit, non-partisan and independent venture initiated by the youth.

Islamabad-Pakistan: HRH The Princess Royal presented a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize to Dr Muhammad Ali Nawaz, at a ceremony on April 27, 2016 at the Royal Geographical Society, London, attended by over

550 guests including Sir David Attenborough. Ali, an educationist, researcher and conservationist from Pakistan, has been honoured for his efforts to protect the endangered snow leopard in the mountains of northern Pakistan.

Based at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Ali has established snow leopard program in Pakistan, which is a unique research and conservation initiative in the country. The snow leopard program is a partnership initiative between the Snow Leopard Foundation, Federal Ministry of Climate Change, provincial Wildlife Departments, and local communities. Snow leopards are considered critically endangered in Pakistan where Ali is working in the Himalaya-Karakoram-Pamir-Hindukush mountain complex to conserve the species. Threatened by poaching, habitat degradation and subsequent decline of natural prey, snow leopards are sometimes killed by herders in retaliation to livestock predation. This loss to herders' livelihoods can be the equivalent of a month's salary, but through scientific research and introduction of innovative measures that buffer against livestock losses and increase tolerance, Ali is reducing human-wildlife conflict. Besides this, the snow leopard program has generated unprecedented scientific information on the unique ecosystem of this mountain complex, through state of the art research tools. The program is nurturing young ecologists to build country's capacity in field research and prepare next-generation conservationists.



Group photograph of the Whitley Award 2016 winners

With his Whitley Award Ali will bring together people, NGOs and government in a unified effort to develop a multi-stakeholder strategy for 25,000 km^2 of this mountainous habitat. This will be Pakistan's first landscape-level strategy for snow leopard conservation and will be used as a model to guide future conservation planning in the country. The project will train 50 wildlife managers, whilst engaging with 6,000 herders to enable the co-existence of communities and carnivores. Ali's work represents one of the first steps towards the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme's (GSLEP) goal to secure 23 important snow leopard habitats by 2020.

Daily Times – Print and Online News, Pakistan
3 June 2016
http://dailytimes.com.pk/islamabad/03-Jun-16/locals-should-step-forward-to-help-conserve-snow-leopards-hamid

Daily Times
Your right to know A new voice for a new Pakistan

Locals should step forward to help conserve snow leopards: Hamid

ISLAMABAD: The Minister for Climate Change, Zahid Hamid, has underlined the need to involve the local community in the conservation of snow leopards—increasingly becoming a rare species.

He expressed these views in his address at a ceremony held to commemorate the bestowal of the Whitey Award - the Green Oscar by the Royal Geographical Society on Muhammad Ali Nawaz for his efforts to protect the endangered snow leopard in Pakistan. The Whitley award was given to Ali Nawaz on April 27, 2016, in London, as a recognition of his efforts to protect the endangered snow leopards, residing in in the mountainous areas of the Pakistan's northern parts. The Princess Royal had presented him with the 2016 Whitley Award—a prestigious international nature conservation prize—at the Royal Geographical Society, London, which was also attended by more than 550 guests, including Sir David Attenborough.

Hamid said, "The involvement of local community will not only help generate income but beneficial for the conservation of special and unique species. The award is an important recognition of Pakistan's efforts on the conservation front, and will catalyse local and national efforts to accelerate snow leopard conservation, and improve coordination among stakeholders across the large landscapes snow leopards need to survive."

The minister was also of the view that the efforts of Ali Nawaz could serve as a great example to all to save the endangered species in Pakistan. "Nawaz has made whole Pakistani nation proud by bringing this Green Oscar to Pakistan," he added.

He also believed that "the majestic snow leopard is, no doubt, a symbol of pride for its range states, including Pakistan."

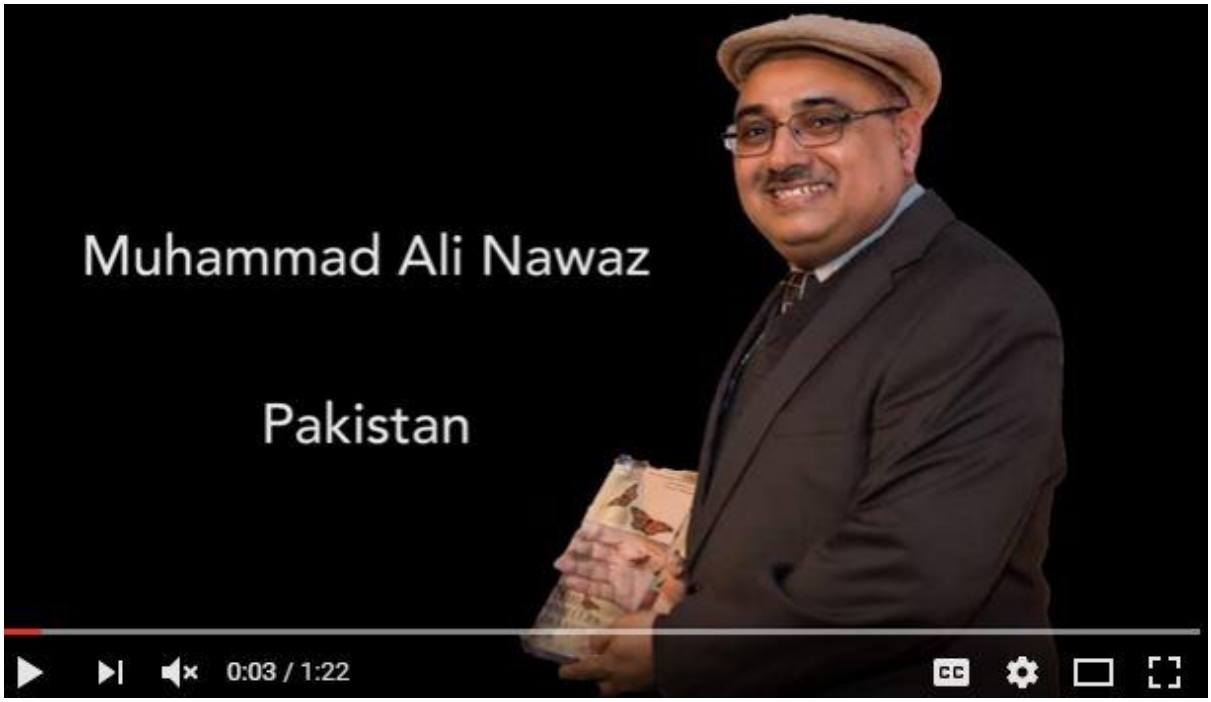
The minister said that Pakistan was blessed with a varied and interesting diversity of fauna and flora, starting from mangrove forests along country's coastline to snowcapped mountains in north Pakistan was endowed with a rich biodiversity. "The habitat of snow leopard and other wildlife—mountainous tracts of Himalayas, Karakorum and Hindukush—not only provide scenic and aesthetic value but also serve as varied ecosystems," he maintained.

The snow leopard is an iconic flagship species of the mountains in Central Asia. It is estimated that only 200 snow leopards exist in Pakistan's northern mountains, which include Hindukush, Himalaya, Karakorum, Pamir itchiest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir. The species is categorised as endangered on the IUCN Red list and listed in appendix-I of the convention on international trade in endangered species. The representatives of foreign embassies in Pakistan partner organisations and participants of 6th ECO Working Group Meeting on Environment also attended the event.

The minister also distributed mementoes among the participants of the ECO Working Group Meeting and the award recipient, Ali Nawaz.

ARKive Interview with Muhammad Ali
29 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yz-T7ABc3yU





BBC Urdu – BBC News Online, UK
2 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHHrdOtigQs
Watch from 7:09 for Ali's segment



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Alexander Rukhaia
Georgia

Magnificent migrants: safeguarding birds-of-prey negotiating the Batumi flyway

Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the Garfield Weston Foundation

Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION

Alex has been featured in four articles and an ARKive video since receiving his Whitley Award. The following is a selection of articles from Alex's media coverage. To see Alex's WFN profile follow this link:

- **WFN Press Release……120**
- **Print and online……121-126**
- **Interview……..127**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



<u>Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016</u>

Conservation leader from Georgia wins 2016 Whitley Award

Prize awarded for safeguarding birds-of-prey migrating through the Batumi Flyway

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Alexander Rukhaia at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work to reduce the number of raptors killed on their migration path through the Ajara region of Georgia.

Alexander is working in a birdwatcher's paradise. Each year, one million birds-of-prey of at least 35 species pass through Georgia's Batumi Bottleneck - the most vital flyway in the Western Palearctic. But for the migrating birds, negotiating this area can be a life or death experience, with 18,000 raptors killed annually for food or sport. Alexander, as Founder and Director of the Society for Nature Conservation (SABUKO), decided that he had to do something to protect these magnificent birds and started to work with local villagers to change attitudes towards hunting.

Alexander is raising awareness of hunting regulations, conducting educational activities and building local capacity to develop birdwatching tourism – turning this spectacular natural phenomenon into an opportunity to boost local income. His efforts have been highly successful, leading to an 80% reduction in the number of birds killed in two villages since 2010. With his Whitley Award, Alexander will expand the project to six new villages and draw attention to the situation at the national and international level.

Bird Life International – Conservation NGO website
18 May 2016
http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/alexander-rukhaia-wins-whitley-award-protecting-birds-prey

Alexander Rukhaia wins Whitley Award for protecting birds of prey

Much has been written about the Batumi Bottleneck in Georgia and its importance for migrating birds. So it's great to hear that its protection is valued and will continue, thanks to the Whitley Fund for Nature and the Society for Nature Conservation in Georgia (SABUKO).

A few weeks ago, Alexander Rukhaia, the founder and director of SABUKO was awarded a Whitley Award – £35,000 in project funding – by HRH The Princess Royal Anne at the annual Whitley Awards ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society in London. The award – given to conservationists in resource-poor, biodiversity-rich countries – was in honour of his work to reduce the number of birds of prey killed on their migration path through the Ajara region of Georgia and was the first time someone from that country received the award.



The award winners pose at the ceremony with Sir David Attenborough (centre). Photo: Whitley Fund for Nature

While the term 'bottleneck' today conjures images of unwelcome car traffic jams, the 'traffic jam' one in Batumi is actually a necessary one.

There are two kinds of birds of prey: those that almost constantly flap their wings and can fly over land and water (small, active flyers like falcons and sparrowhawks), and those that rely on the lift of thermal air currents to glide and save energy (these have large and broad wings, like eagles and buzzards). These thermal soarers have to fly mainly over land as water bodies provide no thermal lift during the day. They must also avoid high mountain ranges. As a result, large concentrations of them fly along the same routes, which are called 'bottlenecks'.

Batumi is the biggest bottleneck in the world for migrating birds of prey: more than one million birds of prey from 35 species pass through the region. It lies along the mountainous Black Sea coast in the Ajara region of Georgia and is recognised as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and a hotspot for birdwatchers.

Although illegal, the tradition of shooting birds of prey has long been prevalent in the coastal communities of Ajara. There is a mass indiscriminate killing of birds as they migrate, with up to 13,000 birds of prey shot every year for food and leisure. Limited understanding of hunting regulations, inadequate efforts to enforce them and a lack of conservation awareness have ensured shooting birds of prey remains a family tradition.

As a Policy Science graduate, it was only once Rukhaia volunteered to count migrating birds in Georgia that he saw the killing first-hand and realised he had to do something. He founded SABUKO and has adopted a holistic approach to put an end to the illegal killing. "Our approach delivers a win-win situation for people and raptors," he said.

Working with authorities and local communities, he disseminates information about hunting regulations, conducts educational activities to build awareness and builds local capacity to support the development of birdwatching tourism, which will help generate income to battle unemployment in the region and consequently build support against the illegal killing of birds.

His efforts have already led to an 80% reduction in the number of birds killed in two villages since 2010. With this new funding from the Whitley Fund, Rukhaia aims to expand the project to six additional villages; increase local awareness of hunting regulations and mobilise government support to enforce them; draw attention to the situation at the local, national and international level; engage communities in conservation activities and develop ecotourism; and continue to monitor raptor killings to measure the impact of the project.

Embassy of Georgia
1 May 2016
http://uk.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=193&info_id=36383

EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Alexander Rukhaia wins 2016 Whitley Award awarded for safeguarding birds-of-prey migrating through the Batumi Flyway

On April 27, 2016 HRH the Princess Royal Anne presented a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to the Founder and Director of the Society for Nature Conservation (SABUKO) Mr Alexander Rukhaia at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of his work to reduce the number of raptors killed on their migration path through the Ajara region of Georgia. The prize was given to the representative of Georgia for the first time.



The Ambassador of Georgia to the UK, Ms Tamar Beruchashvili attended the ceremony held at the Royal Geographical Society. The Ambassador congratulated Mr Rukhaia on this significant achievement, which is a huge success not only for him personally, but also for the whole country, given that it will help draw attention to the birdwatching practices in Georgia and develop tourism in this direction.

Alexander is working in a birdwatcher's paradise. Each year, one million birds-of-prey of at least 35 species pass through Georgia's Batumi Bottleneck - the most vital flyway in the Western Palearctic. But for the migrating birds, negotiating this area can be a life or death experience, with 18,000 raptors killed annually for food or sport. Alexander decided that he had to do something to protect these magnificent birds and started to work with local villagers to change attitudes towards hunting.

Alexander is raising awareness of hunting regulations, conducting educational activities and building local capacity to develop birdwatching tourism – turning this spectacular natural phenomenon into an opportunity to boost local income. His efforts have been highly successful, leading to an 80% reduction in the number of birds killed in two villages since 2010. With his Whitley Award, Alexander will expand the project to six new villages and draw attention to the situation at the national and international level.

Kvira Online
3 May 2016
http://kvira.ge

ბრიტანეთის პრინცესამ ქართველ ბუნებადამცველ ალექსანდრე რუხაიას 35 000 სტერლინგის ოდენობის ჯილდო გადასცა



BY საინფორმაციო პორტალი კვირა

ბრიტანეთის სამეფო გვარის წარმომადგენელმა, მისმა უდიდებულესობა პრინცესა ანამ, ბუნების კონსერვაციის საზოგადოების – SABUKO-ს დამაარსებელსა და დირექტორს, ალექსანდრე რუხაიას პროექტის დასაფინანსებლად უიტლის ფონდის 35,000 სტერლინგის ოდენობის ჯილდო გადასცა. რუხაია გამარჯვებულ 7 ქვეყნის წარმომადგენელთა შორის მოხვდა, აღნიშნული ჯილდო კი ბუნების სფეროში ერთ-ერთ ყველაზე რთულად მოსაპოვებელ და პატივსაცემ ჯილდოდ ითვლება. აღსანიშნავია, რომ დაჯილდოების ცერემონიალს, რომელიც ლონდონში გაიმართა, საქართველოს ელჩი დიდ ბრიტანეთსა და ჩრდილოეთ

ირლანდიის გაერთიანებულ სამეფოში, თამარ ბერუჩაშვილი ესწრებოდა. მისი განცხადებით, აღნიშნული ჯილდო არა მხოლოდ რუხაიასთვის, არამედ მთელი საქართველოსთვის განსაკუთრებით მნიშვნელოვანი იყო, მათ შორის საქართველოში გადამფრენი მტაცებელი ფრინველებისადმი საერთაშორისო საზოგადოების ყურადღების მიპყრობისა და ტურიზმის განვითარების კუთხით.

როგორც რუხაიამ „კვირასთან“ საუბრისას განაცხადა, მისი ორგანიზაცია ინფორმაციას ავრცელებს ნადირობის თაობაზე არსებული შეზღუდვების შესახებ, ასევე ეწევა საგანმანათლებლო მუშაობას და ეხმარება ადგილობრივ მოსახლეობას ფრინველებზე დაკვირვებისათვის ტურიზმის განვითარებაში. მისივე განმარტებით, 2010 წლიდან მისმა ორგანიზაციამ მოკლული ფრინველების რაოდენობის 80%-ით შემცირება შეძლო, მოპოვებული დაფინანსებით იგი პროექტისთვის უფრო ფართო მასშტაბის შეძენას შეეცდება.



ARKive Interview with Alexander

23 May 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pROo9adgNoI&list=PL_9ElqdYKexZk2vGM5JM4e3CcdtotT8BN&index=7





Juliette Velosoa
Madagascar

Saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle and its freshwater habitat

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the Garden House School Parents' Association

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Juliette has been promoted in the media by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust on their website, as well as their Facebook page in five articles. She has also been the subject of a Wildscreen ARKive video. The following is a selection of articles from Juliette's media coverage.
To see Juliette's WFN profile please follow this link:

- **WFN Press Release……129**
- **Print and Online……130-132**
- **Interviews……133**

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WFN's Press release



Embargoed - Not for publication or broadcast before 18.00 BST on Wednesday 27 April 2016

Conservation leader from Madagascar wins 2016 Whitley Award

Prize awarded for saving the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle and its freshwater habitat

London, UK: 27 April 2016 – HRH The Princess Royal will today present a Whitley Award, a prestigious international nature conservation prize worth £35,000 in project funding, to Juliette Velosoa at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, in honour of her commitment to conserve the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle in Madagascar.

Madagascar's biodiversity is truly unique; around 90% of its reptiles, plants and mammals occur nowhere else on earth and the side-necked turtle or 'rere' is no different. These ancient turtles are threatened by overexploitation and severe loss of wetland habitats in a country where 75% of the population live below the international poverty line. Once found throughout western Madagascar, only 8 stable populations of the rere remain.

Juliette, working with the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, has led the recovery for the rere since 1998. She is encouraging community-led resource management and restoration of wetlands using techniques that favour conservation and improve fish stocks for local people. Thanks to techniques such as nest protection and head-starting (where turtles are raised until big enough for release), rere populations are starting to show signs of recovery. Her Whitley Award will fund the development of locally-led management plans to enable sustainable use of wetlands in two key sites. The project is also helping to deliver vital ecosystem services for local people and developing guidance for further replication at a time when Madagascar has declared 83 new protected areas.

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
27 April 2016
https://www.durrell.org/latest/news/juliette-velosoa-wins-the-2016-whitley-award/

Juliette Velosoa wins the 2016 Whitley Award



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ancient turtles are threatened by over exploitation and severe loss of wetland habitats in a country where 75% of the population live below the international poverty line. Once found throughout western Madagascar, only 8 stable populations of the rere remain.

Juliette, our Rere Turtle Conservation Project Manager, has led the recovery for the rere since 1998. She is encouraging community-led resource management and restoration of wetlands using techniques that favour conservation and improve fish stocks for local people. Thanks to techniques such as nest protection and head-starting (where turtles are raised until big enough for release), rere populations are starting to show signs of recovery. Her Whitley Award will fund the development of locally-led management plans to enable sustainable use of wetlands in two key sites. The project is also helping to deliver vital ecosystem services for local people and developing guidance for further replication at a time when Madagascar has declared 83 new protected areas.

Edward Whitley, Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: "WFN focuses on conservation success stories and the progress that's being made. The Awards Ceremony is about recognising and celebrating that – winning those small battles which cumulatively add up to significant change at the national level. In addition to the financial benefit of winning an Award, our winners receive professional communications training to turn scientists into ambassadors, so they're able to communicate what they're doing to the public and to policy makers."
Juliette is one of seven individuals to have been awarded a share of prize money worth £245,000, winning the Whitley Award donated by the Garden House School Parents' Association.

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
27 April 2016
https://www.facebook.com/DurrellWildlife/photos/pcb.10153425052487041/10153425052272041/?type=3&theater

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust added 2 new photos.
April 27 ·

Congratulations to Juliette Velosoa, the Rere Turtle Conservation Project Manager, for winning a Whitley Award for her work in Madagascar to save the Critically Endangered side-necked turtle!

This prestigious nature conservation award worth £35,000 in project funding, will be presented to Juliette by HRH The Princess Royal tonight at the Royal Geographical Society in London.

Find out about the Madagascar side-necked turtle's story here: https://www.durrell.org/.../sp.../madagascar-side-necked-turtle/

Read the full press release here: https://www.durrell.org/.../juliette-velosoa-wins-the-2016-w.../

#DurrellTeam #WhitleyAward #Madagascar #conservation #rere





ARKive Interview with Juliette
27 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiGYfYiblmQ





Part 4: Partnership Funding

Media coverage of winners supported through Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré

Partnership Funding donated by Fondation Segré

Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré is a grant endowed by Fondation Segré and managed by Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN), which recognises and provides further funding to support the work of four of WFN's most successful previous Whitley Award and Continuation Funding winners. Over three years, grant funding totalling €1,500,000 will deliver urgent conservation activities to conserve snow leopards in India, penguins in Argentina, freshwater dolphins in Colombia and large carnivores in Turkey.

This new funding offers grants of €337,500 per project over three years (€112,500 per year per project) to outstanding, Whitley award winning conservation leaders and reflects the quality, scale, urgency and financial need of their work. This support provides much needed funding to projects that are having a real and measurable impact on endangered wildlife and local communities.

The Partnership Funding winners are:

- Pablo Borboroglu
- Charudutt Mishra
- Çağan Şekercioğlu
- Fernando Trujillo

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Pablo Borboroglu
Argentina
Global Penguin Society

Penguin advocacy for the ocean

2014 Partnership Funding Winner
2010 Whitley Award Winner



"*The survival and protection of penguins can only be secured by fostering integrated ocean conservation through science, management and community education. This grant will help us to go a long way to achieving this.*" Pablo Borboroglu

In this past year GPS had an important presence in the media given the interest in their accomplishments, particularly the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the new MPA designation. In total twelve newspaper articles, two TV programs and twenty-three radio interviews including a feature in a Discover Wildlife article.
Follow this link to see Pablo's WFN profile.

PABLO BORBOROGLU – FOSTERING GLOBAL PENGUIN CONSERVATION

GLOBAL PENGUIN SOCIETY



2010 Whitley award winner, ***Pablo Borboroglu*** has established the world's first international coalition for the protection of penguins. By uniting scientists, conservationists and decision makers across the Southern Hemisphere, Pablo is giving penguins a voice.

Over half of the 18 species of penguin are listed as 'Vulnerable' or 'Endangered' by the IUCN. Threatened by poor fisheries management, pollution and climate change in the oceans, penguins also face pressure on land from coastal development and introduced predators.

During year two of the project, Pablo has made the following progress towards achieving his goals:

Goal 1: Improve scientific knowledge on critical aspects of the biology and ecology of penguin species in order to make fact-based recommendations to guide conservation action.

- Pablo was appointed a member of the United Nations Ocean Sanctuary Alliance Scientific Panel to justify the need to increase the area of ocean under conservation using empirical evidence.

- In September 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It includes 17 **'Sustainable Development Goals'** that are an inter-governmentally agreed set of targets relating to international development. Thanks to scientists including Pablo and GPS colleagues, a goal on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans was included by the UN for the first time.

- As part of this initiative, in March 2015, Pablo addressed the United Nations at the 'One Ocean' symposium in New York. His presentation highlighted the ecological and financial reasons for the creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and why science is fundamental to their design.

- A peak of 160 King penguins were counted in the recently established Strait of Magellan colony in Chile. GPS staff are designing visitor guidelines for the site and have discovered where their feeding routes and food sources are located.

- Breeding areas for the Vulnerable Humboldt and Near Threatened Magellanic penguin were identified during surveys in Central Chile. Pablo and his team are working with authorities who are enthusiastic to ensure responsible ecotourism measures are put in place that are sensitive to penguin needs.

- The El Pedral colony in Argentina grew from just 6 pairs in 2008 to 1,791 pairs in 2015. The growth is fuelled by emigration from other colonies to the El Pedral beach which Pablo has secured as a Wildlife Refuge.

- The Fiordland penguin project in New Zealand became the first to determine feeding corridors and food source locations, which is central to justify ocean protection and underpin management.

- Nine scientific papers related to this project were published in peer reviewed international scientific and conservation journals.

Goal 2: Promote informed decision-making regarding the management of penguin species and its habitats. We will offer knowledge and experience of skilful professionals of the international penguin community to governments and landowners to influence and improve decisions that affect management and conservation actions.

- The IUCN Penguin Specialist Group was established in 2015 to provide cutting-edge informing to advise international penguin conservation at the policy level. Pablo has been appointed Co-Chair of the group with Dr. Boersma and a core

group of experts from every relevant region has been chosen. The first workshop was held in USA where the structure and goals of the group were defined.

- A **new 100,000 hectare Marine Protected Area** (MPA) was created around the Punta Tombo Magellanic penguin colony in Argentina to protect penguin feeding grounds. Home to 400,000 breeding pairs, it is the largest Magellanic penguin colony in the world, but numbers have declined by 20% in the last 20 years. Until now penguins were protected on land but not when they entered the water to feed.

- A major new protected area was declared in Argentina. Following GPS nomination, the **Blue Patagonia Biosphere Reserve** was **approved by UNESCO** in June 2015. It is the largest of this kind in Argentina, encompassing 3.1 million hectares; an area nearly the size of Belgium! It will protect 20 penguin colonies, 700 species and 40% of the global population of Magellanic penguins.

- Pablo's data, including identification of feeding routes, is helping to justify enlargement of the Peninsula Valdes protected area in Argentina (which incorporates terrestrial and marine habitat) and is ensuring responsible tourism management. The area is home to southern right whales, sea lions, penguins, guanacos and the only continental colony of elephant seals in the world.

Goal 3: Reach communities and decision makers with a clear conservation message about penguin and ocean conservation.

- An educational book entitled 'SEA MESSENGERS' was published and 3,000 copies were distributed free of charge in five Spanish speaking countries where penguins occur. The book is being used in schools, by tour guides, and is available to the public.

- 'Penguins: Natural History and Conservation' was published last year and brought together information on all penguin species in a book for the first time. This year it was translated into Spanish and received the Award for the ¨Best Book Edited in Argentina¨ which was presented by the Chamber of Publications and increased the profile and distribution of the book.

- 296 children participated in lessons and school trips to visit penguin colonies for the first time and learn about them.

- The project results were covered in 12 newspaper articles, two TV programs and 23 radio interviews. Declaration of the new MPA at Punta Tombo was covered by the **BBC Wildlife Magazine**.

Discover Wildlife
16 December 2016
http://www.discoverwildlife.com/news/new-marine-protected-area-penguins

DISCOVER Wildlife
Wildlife and photography at its best from BBC Wildlife Magazine

New marine protected area for penguins

World's largest magellanic penguin colony will benefit for the first time when they enter the water to feed and migrate.



The Global Penguin Society (GPS) led by the 2014 Whitley Fund for Nature Partnership Funding recipient Dr Pablo Borboroglu celebrates a big success as a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) on Argentina's Patagonian coast is designated.

The MPA includes the feeding ground of two magellanic penguin colonies: Punta Tombo and Punta Clara, which are home to 25 per cent of the world's population.

The area stretches over 60km of coastline and will influence the management of 1000 square km of coastal waters that extend up to 12nm offshore. Its main purpose will be to protect the feeding area and migration routes of half a million magellanic penguins.

Earlier this year the GPS received UNESCO approval for its proposal for the Blue Patagonia Biosphere Reserve, the largest of its kind in Argentina. Punta Tombo MPA forms part of one of its three core areas.



Biosphere Reserve (blue) and Punta Tombo MPA (green). © Dr Pablo Borboroglu

Dr Pablo Borboroglu, President and Founder of the GPS says, 'The designation of Punta Tombo MPA is a historical accomplishment, since there is only one protected area in Argentina that is exclusively marine and only four per cent of the marine surface of the country is currently protected."

Previous studies of the magellanic penguin colony along this coastline have stated that the existing protected area on land was not sufficient to secure the long-term survival of these threatened populations because the penguin feeding areas were not adequately protected.

The colony has declined by 30 per cent since the late 1980s, their feeding trips have increased by 80km on average per decade and about 40 per cent of the chicks die from starvation annually. The reduction in food availability close to the colony during the most critical stage of the breeding cycle is seen as one of the main causes of this decline.

Find out more about the Global Penguin Society and Whitley Fund for Nature.

Sanccob
12 September 2016
http://sanccob.co.za/south-africa-hosts-9th-international-penguin-congress-in-cape-town-5-9-september/

South Africa hosts 9th International Penguin Congress in Cape Town – 5-9 September



Gentoo Penguin: Eric Woehler



African Penguin: Justin Lawrence

More than half of the world's penguin species are threatened with extinction, according to penguin experts convened at the 9th International Penguin Congress in Cape Town last week.

Penguins are among the most beloved and well-studied bird groups. Restricted to the Southern Hemisphere, they range from Antarctica to the Galapagos Islands. According to specialists, many species cannot cope with threats such as habitat loss, pollution,

competition with fishermen for food, and climate change. Several species of penguins also face threats from entanglement in fishing nets used by commercial and artisanal fisheries. All of these threats could be eliminated by proactive human action, but still the majority of penguins face a very uncertain future.

The plight of the African penguin, the most rapidly declining of all 18 species, has focused international concern on South Africa and Namibia. In the 1950s, more than 140 000 pairs bred up and down the coasts of those two countries. Today, only 25 000 pairs remain. African penguins are threatened by food shortages, climate change, human disturbance, and increased predation by seals. Oil spills also pose a continuous threat; the Treasure oil spill in 2000 hit the main penguin landing beaches, and oiled nearly 20 000 penguins. There have been 14 major oil spills in South Africa since 1968.

"The good news is that two species of penguins, Adélies (pictured in photograph above by Eric Woehler) and Gentoos, are doing better than when the International Penguin Congress convened three years ago," said Dr Pablo Garcia Borboroglu, co-chair of the IUCN Penguin Specialist Group.

"One of the major positive changes in the last three years has been the increase in marine protected areas around the world," said Dr. Dee Boersma, of the Global Penguin Society. "For more than 30 years, we have studied Magellanic penguins in Argentina, and finally in 2015, the government and the international community approved a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Patagonia that should help penguins as well as other marine species."

The group recommended strengthening laws and policies relating to fisheries and management of human activities that negatively impact penguins. "Even though there is some good news, we cannot be complacent. Immediate interventions are needed to better manage the marine environment," says Boersma.

Conservationists and avifauna experts from all over the world came to Cape Town for the conference, which is organised by a local committee headed by CapeNature's Dr Lauren Waller and includes representatives from the University of Cape Town, the Department of Environmental Affairs, the South African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), and the University of Bristol. The congress was sponsored by the Global Penguin Society and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Charudutt Mishra

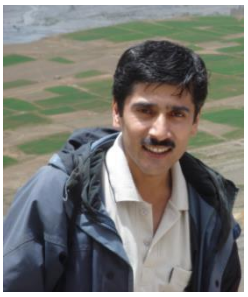
India

Snow Leopard Trust

From grassroots to global: Realising a conservation vision for snow leopards across their range

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2014 Partnership Funding Winner
2005 Winner of the Whitley Award



"***We envision a world where conservation of snow leopards and their mountain habitats are given a high place in the global agenda. Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré will help us ensure our philosophy of community-based, science-led conservation is embraced across Asia.***" **Charu Mishra**

Charus has featured in five articles this year including BBC Wildlife Magazine, the Snow Leopard Trust has also released four press reelases about their work. Follow this link to see Charu's WFN profile.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WhitleyFund for Nature – NGO, News Feature
3 October 2016
https://whitleyaward.org/apply-for-conservation-funding/partnership-funding-by-fondation-segre/charudutt-mishra/

CHARUDUTT MISHRA – FROM GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL: REALISING A CONSERVATION VISION FOR SNOW LEOPARDS ACROSS THEIR RANGE

SNOW LEOPARD TRUST



In 2013, Whitley Gold Award winner, ***Charudutt Mishra*** played a key role in bringing together the governments of all 12 snow leopard range countries for an international summit in Kyrgyzstan. The summit resulted in landmark commitments to protect these iconic cats, whilst acknowledging community involvement as a key principle for the future of snow leopards.

Fewer than 7,000 snow leopards remain in the wild due to loss of habitat and wild prey, human-wildlife conflict and poaching. A lack of funding, political and industrial awareness and scientific information hinder conservation efforts.

In its second year Charu's project has made the following progress towards its goals:

Goal 1: Create the next generation of snow leopard conservation leaders in the most important range countries.

- Six Conservation Leaders have been supported, in India, Pakistan and Mongolia. This includes four women researchers, one of whom is the first female researcher hired by Snow Leopard Foundation in Pakistan. Each will complete a PhD and be given hands-on conservation training.
- Best practices in community-based conservation were published in a training toolkit entitled PARTNERS Principles. The document has been developed as a go-to for community conservation internationally, and training has been held with field staff and conservation leaders from four countries to date.

Goal 2: Generate political support for conservation of snow leopards and their mountain habitat in all twelve range countries.

- The Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) brought together governments from all 12 snow leopard range countries to agree a global strategy to conserve these big cats. Commitments have been made to identify and protect 23 priority landscapes for snow leopards by 2020. All 12 countries are now working on management plans for these landscapes. Through the GSLEP, five countries have submitted GEF6 pre-proposals worth $30 million for snow leopard conservation to help realise this goal.
- The Snow Leopard Trust was selected as executing agency for a $1 million USD grant from GEF5 to support key components and functioning of GSLEP. As a result of the programme, more funding than ever before is being allocated to support snow leopard conservation.
- Two high-level government meetings were held; one at COP21 in Paris 2015 and another in Nepal during 2016, where 9 snow leopard range countries began landscape-level planning to mitigate climate change effects.

Goal 3: Catalyse government-sanctioned protection of key snow leopard landscapes in 3 of the 5 most important range countries.

- Following a seven year campaign, in April 2016 the Government of Mongolia approved creating a **new c. 8,000 km² Nature Reserve** in the Tost Mountains – the first state-level Protected Area declared specifically for snow leopard protection. Tost and the two adjoining National Parks now form one of the largest continuous protected areas for snow leopards in the world and are regarded as core habitat for snow leopard conservation and population connectivity.

- SLT launched a nationwide expansion of their Citizen Ranger Wildlife Protection Program in Kyrgyzstan, which Partnership Funding helped pilot in 2014/15. The programme, which encourages rangers and local communities to combat poaching, now operates in all 20 of Kyrgyzstan's National Parks. Training was delivered to 21 Protected Area rangers through Interpol, and a ceremony that **honoured 10 rangers** for apprehending poachers was held to give anti-poaching heroes well deserved recognition. There is now interest from the Government of Pakistan to adopt a similar programme.

- In Kyrgyzstan, an agreement was secured to convert a **100 square mile trophy hunting concession into a nature reserve**. Co-managed by Government, NGOs and local people, the reserve will give ungulate populations a chance to recover, increasing prey for snow leopards. This approach could be replicated by Government in future. Again, this would not have been possible without the support of Partnership Funding.

Goal 4: Help develop a more sustainable cashmere industry for the benefit local communities and the snow leopard habitat. **Over-grazing and competition caused by increasing herds of cashmere goats to supply the growing industry degrades habitat for snow leopard prey, impacting food availability. SLT are working with communities and distributors to create a 'snow leopard friendly cashmere' brand based on sustainable grazing practices that benefit wildlife and increase income for herders.*

- A MoU was signed with the largest cashmere cooperative in India to pilot a new Snow Leopard Friendly Cashmere program working with local communities to boost their income whilst benefiting snow leopards and their habitat. This cashmere will be this first of its kind.

Goal 5: Enhance social carrying capacity for snow leopards by strengthening community-based conservation initiatives in key snow leopard landscapes.

- Herders sold over 35,000 locally produced handicrafts, earning more than £45,000, through the NGO's programme – Snow Leopard Enterprises – boosting income for communities.

- Nearly 100,000 livestock were vaccinated as part of an incentive-based livestock vaccination programme. In Pakistan livestock mortality was reduced by 50-80%, families in the vaccination programme experienced on average a 30% improvement in income and acceptance of predators increased.

- Over 1,100 children and 90 teachers living in snow leopard habitats took part in Nature Clubs, and 300 enjoyed outdoor eco-camps.

Goal 6: Improve scientific understanding of the ecology of the snow leopard and associated biodiversity, and the threats they face, to enable better conservation management.

-

- Through GPS collaring and population surveys using trap cameras, the project has amassed the largest datasets in the world for snow leopard locations and images. 20 snow leopards have been collared to track their movements. This is higher than all other previous collaring studies put together! These data will be used to determine snow leopard range size and help design and manage protected areas.

- The first ever study was launched on disease ecology of snow leopards during year 1 of the project. Samples from snow leopards, water sources and associated wildlife were collected. Preliminary analysis shows numerous pathogens crossing several species, shedding light on disease vectors in multi-use landscapes and highlighting the importance of healthy ecosystems.

- A multi-country study into the impact of climate change and grazing on snow leopard habitat was launched during year 1 of the project. Three countries are now using outdoor 'living laboratories' to collect comparative data on the effects of climate change on snow leopards habitat, and research into snow leopard adaptions to climate change has been submitted for publication.



Nature News Network
28 December 2015
http://kyrgyzstan252.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=49182752&last=1&item=1

From Hunting Reserve to Wildlife Sanctuary – Kyrgyzstan tries innovative conservation program

The Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz Department of Hunting and Natural Resource Management are piloting a new, innovative conservation program: they are turning a hunting concession, where ibex were commercially hunted, into a co-managed nature reserve.

The 100 square mile former concession area, Shamshy, in Kyrgyzstan's northern Tian Shan mountains, is home to ibex, and seasonal populations of argali and wolves. It lies within a large snow leopard landscape, and has the potential to become a key part of the home ranges of several of these endangered cats if its wild ungulate population could be increased.

Ibex are a key snow leopard prey species. In Shamshy, they can thrive undisturbed in the future (photo: K. McCarthy)

Shamshy's ibex used to be hunted commercially — but now, they will be allowed to thrive and recover undisturbed, as hunting will no longer be allowed. This comes as part of a pilot project that aims to turn the former hunting concession into a new type of reserve, co-managed by the government, conservation NGOs, and local people.



"With proper protection and management, the area's ibex population could double or even triple in the next 10 years, so it could become an important feeding ground for the local snow leopard population", says Charu Mishra, the Snow Leopard Trust's Science & Conservation Director.



The new wildlife sanctuary has the potential to become an important snow leopard feeding ground (photo: SLF Kyrgyzstan)

An Idea Born Out of the Trophy Hunting Debate

Commercial big game hunting, often referred to as 'trophy hunting', is a revenue source for many countries around the world, and a **hotly debated topic in conservation circles**. Advocates of trophy hunting say that selling licenses to hunt big game generates funds, which can be used for conservation projects, while opponents fear that it adds to the pressure many species are already under, and also question the ethics of the practice.

The idea of turning a former hunting concession into a nature reserve was born out of this debate.

Charu Mishra, the Snow Leopard Trust's Science & Conservation Director



"In a hunting concession, the company that leases and manages the area would have the exclusive right to sell a stipulated number of licenses given out by the hunting department to shoot argali or ibex to any interested party — and they'd have the right to protect their interests e.g. by employing rangers. In our case, we'll have similar rights, but **we won't sell any hunting licenses, and we'll have rangers patrolling the area to make sure that there's no hunting at all**. We will also work with local people in the surrounding region, initiate community-based programs that they can benefit from, and strengthen their support for conservation", Charu Mishra says.

The area will be used for research, education and limited ecotourism – camera trap population surveys of snow leopards, and distribution and abundance surveys of ibex and other species; and also law enforcement trainings for park rangers, and possibly nature camps for local children are slated for the coming years.

This new, innovative approach is made possible by a **partnership between the Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan, and the Department of Hunting and Natural Resource Management under the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic**, which issues hunting concessions and licenses in the Central Asian country.



A sign at the entrance to the former hunting concession raises awareness for nature conservation.

"It is our duty to **manage the natural resources of the Kyrgyz Republic sustainably**", says Musaef Almaz, the Department of Hunting and Natural Resource Management's Director. "This means finding a healthy balance between hunting and conservation. We believe that this innovative idea of co-managing some of our concessions with partners such as the Snow Leopard Trust and the local people has a lot of potential."

More Reserves Could Be Added in the Future

For this pilot, the Hunting Department has **forfeited the cost of the hunting licenses** that could have been sold in this area, had it been rented out to a commercial outfit. A**ll partners will share expertise, the cost of training, equipment and salaries for the rangers, as well as any other costs that arise from the co-management of the area.**

Shamshy is an ideal spot for the pilot. It offers natural features that make it a good habitat for a wide range of species. "Shamshy has a bit of everything – the terrain gradually changes from **lush meadows and thick forests along a crystal clear stream** to grassland, and finally to **steep, rocky peaks covered in glaciers**", says Kuban Jumabai uulu, the Director of the Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan.



A small mountain paradise, and a future snow leopard stronghold!

While the area is fairly easy to access by road, there are only two conceivable entry points into the reserve, **it's feasible to monitor and patrol the area with a small team of rangers** drawn from the local communities around.

"Local people are crucial partners for any conservation initiative", Kuban Jumabai uulu says, "they will retain their right to graze their animals in Shamshy, albeit in an informed and systematically managed way".



Kuban Jumabay uulu (left), the director of SLF Kyrgzystan, and Emil, a local ranger employed to patrol Shamshy

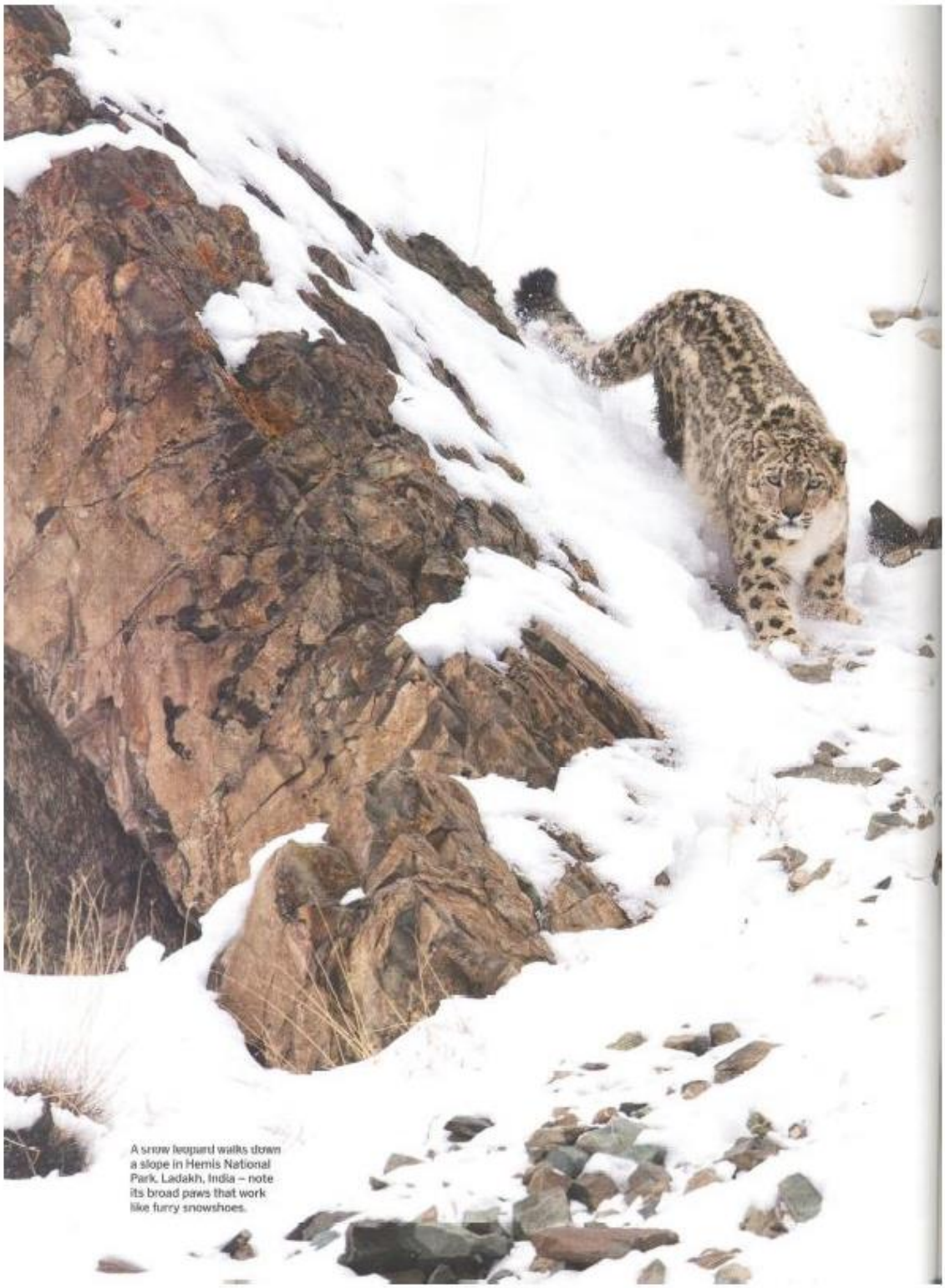
"We're looking forward to seeing the results of this approach" says Musaef Almaz "If it works as well as we expect, we will expand it to other hunting concession areas in the future together."

Charu Mishra agrees: "This pilot can be a great start to a promising new conservation approach that could really make a difference for Kyrgyzstan's wildlife."

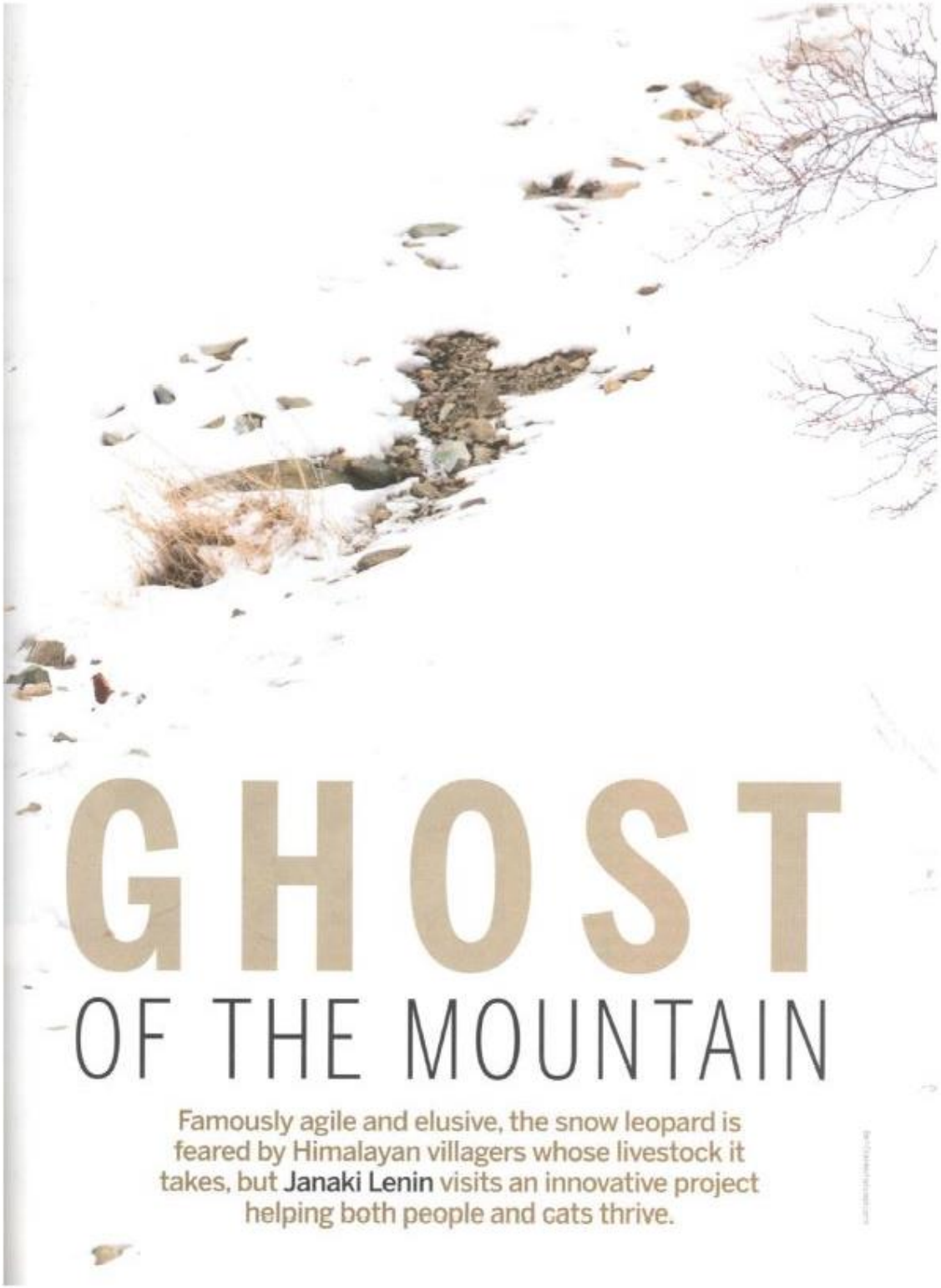
Acknowledgements:

This project has support from: Woodland Park Zoo and Partnership Funding by Fondation Segre, managed by Whitely Fund for Nature.

BBC Wildlife Magazine
February 2016

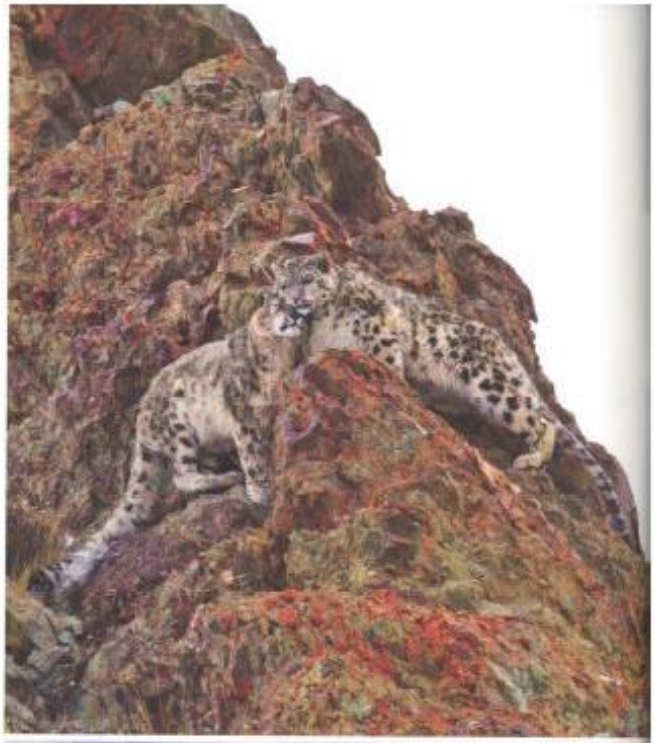


A snow leopard walks down a slope in Hemis National Park, Ladakh, India – note its broad paws that work like furry snowshoes.



GHOST OF THE MOUNTAIN

Famously agile and elusive, the snow leopard is feared by Himalayan villagers whose livestock it takes, but **Janaki Lenin** visits an innovative project helping both people and cats thrive.





Once more I scan the barren, rocky slopes surrounding the village of Kibber. Even in this remote spot high in the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh in the far north of India, the odds of seeing a snow leopard are 100 to one. The secretive cat has a beautiful rosette-patterned coat to break up its outline, coupled with an unnerving ability to transform itself into just another rock.

"Even a trained researcher can pass within metres of a snow leopard without seeing it," cautions Yash Veer Bhatnagar. A scientist with the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), and India programme director for the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), Bhatnagar has worked in these parts for over two decades. His team set camera-traps, conduct field studies and strive to reduce the burden that wildlife conservation imposes on local communities. And, just sometimes, they spot one of these endangered big cats.

High above the village in the Spiti Valley, at the western tip of the Tibetan Plateau, yaks graze. These shaggy cattle plough fields and provide milk, wool, meat and manure – and they're central not only to villagers' livelihoods, but also to their religion. Every time a snow leopard takes a yak calf, the owner's family suffers a substantial loss. And many calves are taken every year.

Perched at 4,200m, Kibber sits above the tree line. A veneer of grasses and short vegetation thinly covers the surrounding slopes. In the far distance I spot the village herder leading hundreds of sheep, goats, cows and donkeys up to a meagre pasture – effectively a high-altitude desert. Below me, in irrigated fields, people gather grass and the stalks of harvested crops.

The four-month-long growing season is coming to an end, and the villagers have harvested bumper crops of green peas, their big cash earner, and barley, the traditional staple. Once winter takes hold, people and livestock will be confined indoors, living off stored rations. During the harsh working day, nobody has time to answer my questions. Neither does a snow leopard deign to show itself – but that's no big surprise.

MYSTERIOUS AND ELUSIVE

The feline is as mysterious as it is elusive. Even today much of its behaviour is still unknown, though advances in technology are starting to fill the gaps. How to protect such a sparsely distributed species across its range is a conundrum – but one that's being tackled in innovative ways here.

Estimates made over two decades ago suggested that 200–600 snow leopards roamed some 75,000km² of the Indian Himalaya, at altitudes ranging from 3,200m to 5,200m. Ongoing research has refined those estimates, positing about 500 snow leopards across 100,000km² – though vast expanses of these mountains are still to be surveyed.

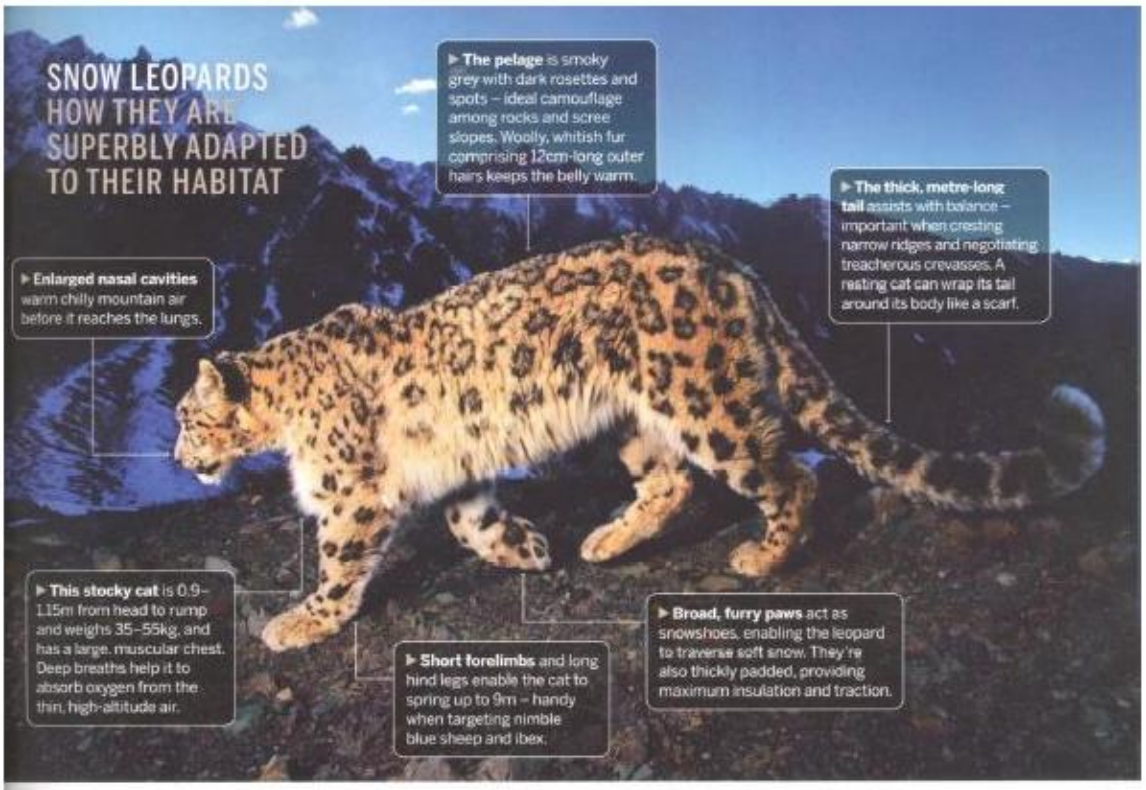
Besides camera-trapping and genetic research, the ecology of snow leopards has been little studied in India. In 1989 Raghunandan Chundawat radio-collared an animal in Ladakh, part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir – it remains the only such study of the species to have been conducted in the country. Chundawat followed the cat for just over a month in late winter, measuring its home range at 1,900ha.

Koustubh Sharma, senior regional ecologist for the SLT, cites one reason why researching these cats is so challenging. "They can climb up and down these mountains," he says. "Humans can't. Researchers discontinued radio telemetry because they realised that, in trying to walk with the snow leopards, they were estimating their own home range. They couldn't cross those ridge lines like snow leopards did."

Even setting camera-traps can be a gruelling process. "Imagine checking batteries and changing rolls of film on a 600m-long ridge line every day," says Sharma. "I'd have a burn-out in the first week. Now at least we have better camera-traps that can be left in place for six months." Other advances such as satellite telemetry and infra-red motion-sensor digital cameras have revolutionised the research.

One revelation from this work has been the huge variation in the size of the leopards' range. Scientists

Top: mating takes place between early January and mid-March; adult snow leopards are otherwise generally solitary. Above: UK tour operators offer guided trips to see the snow leopards of Hemis National Park.



in Mongolia have followed many more individuals for longer periods. They estimated that a male has a range of 250–400km², and a breeding female 70–80km². However, when one female Mongolian snow leopard was fitted with a satellite transmitter, she spent most of her time within a core zone of nearly 1,600km² and walked ridges and cliffs covering over 4,500km² – an astonishingly large area.

High-altitude protected areas in India account for no more than 20 per cent of snow leopard country, and can hold at best just a few cats. Besides, in Kibber villagers have customary rights to graze their animals within reserves. Competition between domestic and wild herbivores for the scant forage in this harsh landscape was severe.

The blue sheep, or bharal, is the primary prey of snow leopards in Kibber – but there were only about 100 in this area in 1998, when scientists first counted them. Himalayan ibex were rarer still. To increase the population of snow leopards it was first necessary to increase the supply of prey. But instead of simply declaring an area off-limits to grazing and throwing residents off their own land, a clever initiative has demonstrated truly collaborative conservation.

TO INCREASE THE SNOW LEOPARD POPULATION IT WAS FIRST NECESSARY TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF PREY.

Yak predation is a major cause of conflict between the villagers of Kibber and snow leopards.

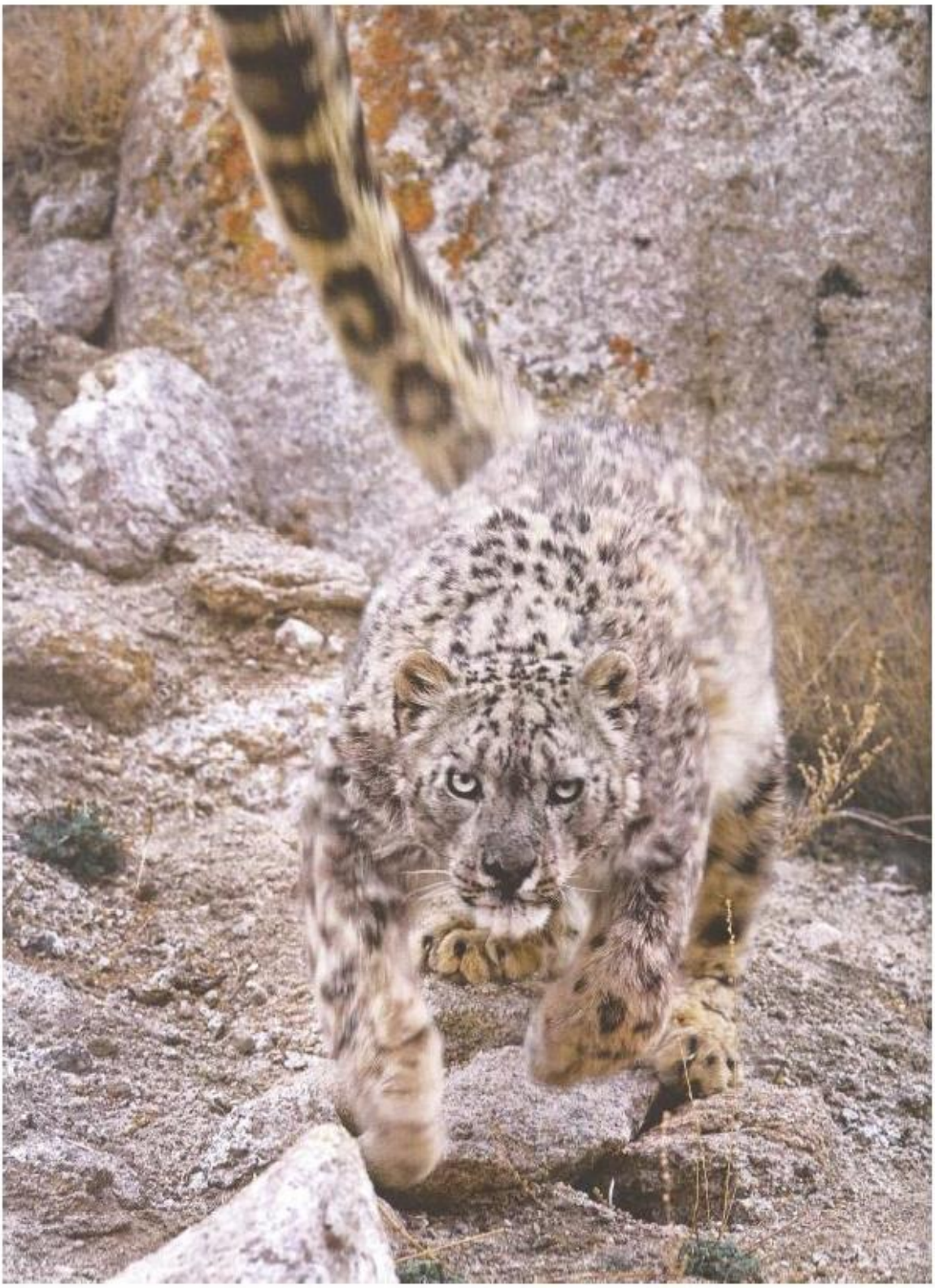


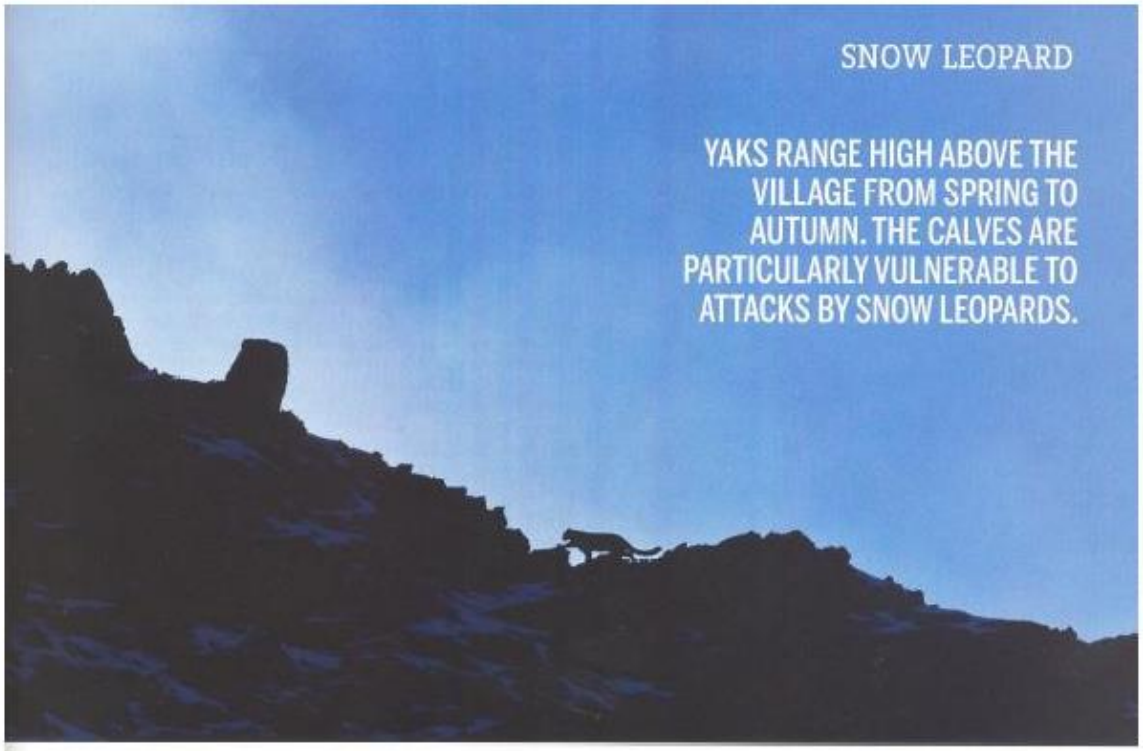


COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

In 1998 the NCF and the SLT struck a deal with the villagers of Kibber. Charudutt Mishra, both SLT director of science and conservation and a trustee at the NCF, identified unprotected areas of prime blue sheep and ibex habitat. He proposed that villagers set aside 5km² – about 6 per cent of their grazing area – to create reserves for wild herbivores. In return the NCF agreed to pay a lease fee of 20,000 Indian rupees per year (about £197).

Mishra convinced the villagers that if wild herbivores had more access to natural forage, their numbers would increase – and with a greater supply of wild prey, the leopards' predation of livestock would fall. Sure enough a 2003 survey showed that blue sheep in this reserve increased three-fold in five years. In 2004 villagers agreed to set aside more land, bringing the total to 2,000km². ▶





SNOW LEOPARD

YAKS RANGE HIGH ABOVE THE VILLAGE FROM SPRING TO AUTUMN. THE CALVES ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO ATTACKS BY SNOW LEOPARDS.

After dark a group of villagers huddle in Tanzin Thinley's living room to discuss their efforts. "There are advantages and disadvantages to having reserves," says Dorje 'Changaiz' Chhering, one of the village elders. "When the number of blue sheep increased, they started coming to our fields."

At the beginning of April, after the first glacial meltwater trickles downhill, villagers sow their crops. Since these sprout much more quickly than wild grass after the cold winter, blue sheep gravitate towards their fields. "As soon as we go home, they destroy our handiwork," one villager complains. To offset this unexpected development, the NCF employs a guard to chase the wild herbivores away.

DOMINO EFFECT

This issue has been overtaken by another problem, however. "Everyone gets upset when blue sheep eat green peas because they are a cash crop," says Thinley. "So some people built rock walls around their fields. But then pikas [small, marmot-like mammals] began sheltering in the walls, emerging to browse at their leisure. At least blue sheep leave something – pikas leave nothing." Now the NCF plans to test solar-powered electric fences to keep out the 500 or so hungry blue sheep.

Community reserves aren't the only reason for the resurgence in blue sheep – an increase in the acreage of green peas being grown left insufficient manpower to look after livestock. This forced local residents to cut the size of their herds of goats, sheep and cows, which in turn reduced competition with the blue sheep.

More blue sheep means more prey for snow leopards. Good news, you might think, except that the NCF anticipated that more snow leopards would also result in more predation of yaks. Small livestock, cows and donkeys return to the village every evening accompanied by the herder, so run little risk of being taken by snow leopards. But because yaks range freely high above the village from spring to autumn, bringing them back down each day isn't practical. During this period, the yak calves are particularly vulnerable to attacks by snow leopards.

Above: the snow leopard is an expert climber. Much of the cat's range crosses national borders, making conservation more difficult. Opposite: its beautiful fur was formerly in high demand in the global fashion industry. Below: the blue sheep is the cat's main prey around Kibber village.

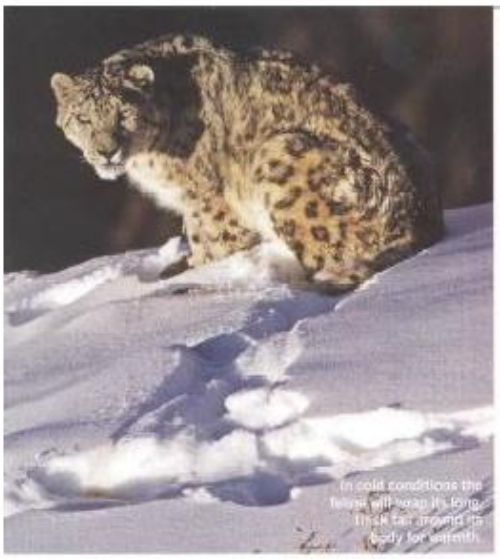


There is a state-run compensation scheme for predated livestock – but it pays a pittance, takes ages and often rejects villagers' claims. In 1997 Mishra noted that the annual loss to each family amounted to 12 per cent of its livestock holding: about £80. The Forest Department recompensed just 3 per cent of this loss, roughly £2.40.

Most of the villagers are Buddhists so hesitate to take the life of any sentient being, yet they have systematically killed Tibetan wolves (a subspecies of the grey wolf). When these canines – one of the two main Alpine predators – became rare, snow leopards were naturally blamed for most of the livestock losses. Fortunately, though people have been unhappy with the cats they haven't killed any since the early 1990s. But the threat of retaliation remained.

When Mishra broached the idea of an insurance scheme, he found immediate takers. The scheme would be managed by a committee of villagers which sets premiums – as little as 240 rupees (£2.36) per year for a demo, or cow yak. Compensation for a predated demo is 13,000 rupees (£128), much better than sums paid by the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. The premium for a yak calf is 600 rupees (£5.91) annually, since it is at greater risk.

At the time of writing, 43 households have insured 194 animals. Are villagers happy with the scheme? Everyone nods vigorously. "What's not to like?" one asks. "There are niggles, but we're ▶



In cold conditions the feline will wrap its long, thick tail around its body for warmth

sorting them out." One rule for claiming insurance on a predated animal is that the carcass cannot be retrieved – the snow leopard must be allowed to eat its fill and leave the rest for vultures. A couple of villagers with 'high-risk' animals feel that they would get more money if they sold the meat from predated livestock, so don't subscribe to the insurance scheme. Why don't others do the same?

ART OF PERSUASION

The answer demonstrates the success of the conservation programme in changing attitudes. "Sure, the snow leopards trouble us," Changaiz says, "but protecting animal life is also important. When there are many kinds of wildlife, these species are the pride of the village."

Altogether the NCF and its collaborators invest 325,000 rupees (£3,202) in the scheme each year, covering more than 500 animals in nine villages in Spiti and Ladakh, conservatively valued at 6,500,000 rupees (£64,039). In addition, 450km² of reserves are leased from eight villages at a cost of 575,000 rupees (£5,665) per year. The next step is to scale up both programmes to include more villages, though that would be a huge investment for a small non-profit.

"We didn't achieve this alone," Bhatnagar says. "We had support from communities, the district administration and the Forest Department." Collaboration is the backbone of Project Snow Leopard, the conservation strategy by which each of India's five snow leopard states (Himachal Pradesh; Jammu and Kashmir; Uttarakhand; Sikkim; and Arunachal Pradesh) will work with communities to demarcate an area of 2,000–5,000km² as a conservation zone.

Next morning a villager tells us that his yak calf was attacked during the night. As the barn door opens, the shaggy little thing nervously springs to its feet in the dark. Neck wounds are the only evidence I've encountered to prove the presence of snow leopards. I'll have to return for another chance to see these ghosts in the flesh.

JANAKI LENIN is a writer. Her My Husband and Other Animals (Westland) explores her life with herpetologist Romulus Whitaker.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about snow leopards at www.snowleopard.org, www.snowleopardconservancy.org and www.worldwildlife.org

SNOW LEOPARD HOTSPOTS

The species lives in 12 countries in and around Central Asia. Estimates of the total population vary: the IUCN says 4,080–6,590; Panthera, 4,500–10,000.

CHINA

China is home to perhaps 60 per cent of the world's population of snow leopards, with over 1 million km² of the species' habitat spread across the far west and around the Tibetan Plateau. Since 2009 the charity Panthera has worked with partners including Chinese NGO Shan Shui and the Snow Leopard Trust on research and community-based conservation activities in Qinghai, Sichuan and Xinjiang.

HEMIS NATIONAL PARK AND ULLEY VALLEY, INDIAN HIMALAYA

A number of commercial companies run tours to Ladakh with expert guides and trackers, claiming sighting success rates of up to 50 per cent. UK operators offering dedicated snow leopard trips include Naturetrek (01962 733051, www.naturetrek.co.uk); Steppes Travel (01285 787419, www.steppestravel.co.uk); and Wildlife Worldwide (01962 302096, www.wildlifeworldwide.com).

NEPAL

An estimated 350–590 snow leopards survive in Nepal – one of the larger populations within the species' range. A network of Snow Leopard Conservation Committees, established in conjunction with WWF, set camera-traps in remote locations, work to reduce human–animal conflict through livestock-insurance schemes and protective corrals, and act as citizen scientists assessing populations.

SOUTH GOBI, MONGOLIA

The second-largest population of snow leopards – estimated at 500–1,000 individuals – survives mostly in the west of Mongolia. The Snow Leopard Trust co-ordinates conservation and research programmes, including livestock-insurance schemes run by the community. A long-term study in the South Gobi region has collared 21 cats to date, revealing valuable insights into behaviour as well as the size of their range.

WANGCHUK CENTENNIAL NATIONAL PARK, BHUTAN

More than half of the land area of this small Himalayan kingdom is protected. It hosts probably fewer than 200 snow leopards, but they are occasionally sighted during high-altitude treks. WWF camera-trap surveys of Wangchuk Centennial National Park revealed a population of snow leopards as well as Tibetan wolves, Himalayan serow and healthy numbers of blue sheep.



Nature News Network – Nature News
03 March 2016
http://kyrgyzstan252.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=49182752&last=1&item=7

Anti-Poaching Heroes Honored on World Wildlife Day

A total of ten Kyrgyz wildlife rangers have received a Citizen Ranger Wildlife Award for their courage in the fight against illegal hunting in the country's snow leopard habitat in 2015. They were publicly honored in a ceremony in Bishkek today, on World Wildlife Day.



The Ranger Rewards Program aims to both recognize and empower Kyrgyz wildlife rangers for their difficult, sometimes, dangerous job

Chinasilov Baktibek, a regional wildlife inspector, received an award for his role in **bringing to justice a poacher who had illegally hunted and killed a brown bear and an ibex** in Sary-Chelek reserve. The poacher he captured with the help of two colleagues has been sentenced to pay a $12,000 fine.

Another reward was given to Abdykarimov Urustamaly Hamdamalievich, a ranger working with the Department of Rational Use of Natural Resources. **He stopped and apprehended a group of poachers in Surma-Tash reserve** after they had killed two pregnant ibex. The poachers have since paid a fine of $3,000.

The award ceremony was **presided over by Mr. Sabir Atadjanov**, the Director of the State Agency of Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic, who presented the awards. Other senior officials in attendance included Mr. Kumar Kambetaliev of the Department Rational Use of Natural Resources, and Ms. Aigul Turdumatova, of the Department of Protected Areas.



Mr. Atajdanov personally thanked each of the rangers as he presented them with their awards and official certificates.

The event also attracted representatives of various local and international conservation organizations, as well as a contingent of media professionals. The Citizen Ranger Wildlife Award is the result of innovative program designed to **empower those on the front lines of the fight against poaching and illegal hunting.**



The award-winning rangers found themselves in the center of the media's attention after the ceremony

The First Line of Defense

"Rangers and local communities in protected areas are the first and best line of defense for wildlife", says Charu Mishra, Science & Conservation Director of the Snow Leopard Trust, a partner on the rewards program "**They work under difficult circumstances to protect the natural heritage of their country**, and we're committed to helping them do that as well as possible."



Kyrgyzstan's snow leopards and their wild prey species are threatened by illegal hunting. Wildlife rangers are on the frontline of the fight to protect them.

The Citizen Ranger Wildlife Rewards program was piloted in 2014 **in partnership between the State Agency of Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic, Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan, and Snow Leopard Trust, with WFN Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré (managed by the Whitley Fund for Nature), and Woodland Park Zoo.**

The program provides public recognition and financial award for those rangers and private citizens who successfully apprehend poachers and help bring them to justice.It has since been expanded nationally to cover all of Kyrgyzstan's Protected Areas, thanks to a **grant from IWT Challenge Fund through the UK Government.**



A lonely, beautiful workplace! Kyrgyzstan's rangers normally work far from the spotlight, in the country's most remote mountain areas.
IWT Challenge Fund is also supporting **law enforcement trainings for rangers in all protected areas of Kyrgyzstan, which are being led by INTERPOL.**

"With these awards, **we are giving these anti-poaching heroes some well-deserved recognition**. We're also showing the public what an outstanding job all our brave rangers are doing every day", says Sabir Atadjanov.

"Both the trainings and the awards mean a lot to these rangers", says Kuban Jumabai uulu, the Director of the Snow Leopard Foundation Kyrgyzstan. "They're dedicated to protecting Kyrgyzstan's precious wildlife, and if we can further empower them to do that, **we can make a real difference in the fight against poaching**!"



The award winners posed for a group shot after the ceremony

Citizen Ranger Awards were presented by Mr. Atadjanov to Chiniev Juman, Chinasilov Baktibek, Abdykarimov Urustamaly Hamdamalievich, Malabaev Daniyar Atamirzaevich, Tashtanov Nurbolot Kazatbekovich, Aibashev Abdibap Pakirovich, Talipov Kumar Kaseyinovich, Akmatov Jilrgalbek Jumalievich, Mukambetov Kanat Turarovich, and Savdanbekov Shamil Tokonovich.

Lonely Planet – Travel News and Information
9 May 2016
11,000,000 monthly Visitors
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/2016/05/09/endangered-snow-leopards-protected-reserve-mongolia/

Endangered snow leopards to get protected reserve in Mongolia's Tost Mountains

Snow leopards will soon have a protected home in the Tost Mountains in southern Mongolia.



Snow leopard. Image by Eric Kilby / CC BY-SA 2.0

The country's parliament has approved a proposal to turn more than 8000 square kilometres of mountain territory into a nature reserve protected under Mongolian law. The area is a traditional habitat to snow leopards and already supports a breeding population of the endangered bit cats.

Scientists have been studying the Tost snow leopard population since 2008. According to the Snow Leopard Trust, 20 leopards have been tracked through the use of GPS collars, and at least 12 leopards have been tracked using the same areas at one time, indicating there is a consistent community of the big cats within the territory that will comprise the new protected reserve.



The new reserve is set to become one of the biggest areas of protected habitat in the world. Charu Mishra, Science & Conservation Director with the Snow Leopard Trust, said in a press release, that the "Nature Reserve will be a bridge between two existing Protected Areas, the Great Gobi and the Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park. The resulting landscape will be one of the world's largest continuous protected snow leopard habitats."

As part of the legal protection outlined by the new measures, the only economic activities that will be permitted within the reserve are those not damaging to the local ecology, such as traditional agriculture and livestock cultivation. Mining, construction and hunting will be banned. This is particularly significant in Mongolia, where mining represents a large portion of the country's annual GDP.



Snow leopards were listed as 'endangered' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species in 1972 and a reassessment in 2008 estimated the total global population of snow leopards to be only between 4080 and 6590. According to Take Part, around 1000 of these are believed to live in Mongolia at present. Snow Leopard. Image by Rob Oo / CC BY 2.0

Çağan Şekercioğlu
Turkey
KuzeyDoga

Community-based conservation, ecological restoration and ecotourism at Kuyucuk Lake, Turkey

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2014 Partnership Funding Winner
2008 Winner of the Gold Award



"***Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré will support landscape-scale conservation of large carnivores in northeastern Turkey through research, awareness raising, environmental education and lobbying the government to create new protected areas, including completion of Turkey's first wildlife corridor***". **Çağan Şekercioğlu**

Çağan featured in four articles this year including a documentary feature in 'Turkey's Changemakers' show (Season 7, episode 1). The following articles form a selection of the Çağan's media coverage. To view Çağan's WFN profile, follow this link.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WhitleyFund for Nature – NGO, News Feature
3 October 2016
https://whitleyaward.org/apply-for-conservation-funding/partnership-funding-by-fondation-segre/cagan-sekercioglu/

ÇAĞAN ŞEKERCIOĞLU – LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION OF LARGE CARNIVORES, TURKEY

KUZEYDOGA



Double Gold Award winner, ***Çağan Şekercioğlu*** is in the top 1% of the world's most cited conservation scientists and oversees the largest active conservation project in Turkey which is protecting, connecting and restoring habitat for endangered wildlife, providing a vital corridor between Turkey and neighbouring Georgia.

North East Turkey is a biodiversity hot spot but receives little conservation attention. A relentless construction agenda threatens to dismantle environmental laws and wipe out wildlife populations, putting Turkey's biodiversity in crisis.

In its second year, Cagan's project has made the following progress towards its goals:

Goal 1: Create the next generation of conservation leaders in Turkey.

- A team of young experts has been established through the training of PhD, MSc and undergraduate students who have benefited from hands-on training as field assistants and have gone on to pursue careers in conservation.

Goal 2: Generate population estimates for large carnivores in this data-deficient region using population surveys, ecological research and mark-recapture analyses.

- A trained sniffer dog was used to collect over 1,200 carnivore scats (droppings) during Year 1 of the project from which DNA has been extracted to identify individual animals as part of a molecular mark-and-recapture study to estimate population size. A total of 49 individual brown bears have been identified. Analysis of scats for other species is on-going. This is the first genetics-based scientific population estimate for any wildlife species in Turkey.

Goal 3: Track the movements and understand the habitat requirements of large carnivores in the region.

- GPS collars have been fitted on a total of 21 bears, 11 wolves and 2 lynx to track their movements and provide crucial information on habitat use, range and behaviour.

- This is the first project to use crittercams (video collars) on bears and wolves in Turkey. It has led to significant media attention for the project, providing a 'carnivore's eye view' of the corridor, and has even deterred poachers from killing collared animals.

- Two scientific papers have been published including the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken on human-wildlife conflict in Turkey and the discovery of **world's first migratory brown bears**.

- A group of 16 brown bears were monitored: six of the bears seasonally migrated between feeding and breeding sites along the corridor, the first known brown bears to do so. The other 10 bears stayed in one spot all year long: the city dump – which is planned for closure and could increase human-wildlife conflict in urban areas if waste is not stored in bear-proof containers which Cagan is advocating.

- Tracking data was crucial towards securing approval of Tukey's wildlife corridor in 2011 and will play an important role in understanding wildlife ecology and guiding conservation measures such as identifying where animals most frequently cross roads and where underpasses would therefore be most effective.

- Data gathered during collaring shows lynx in the project area are the smallest in the world, weighing just 15kg. This could be due to a lack of natural prey, strengthening campaigns to reintroduce prey species and highlighting the need to reforest degraded areas to improve habitat suitability.

Goal 4: Use camera traps to monitor mammal diversity and abundance.

- The first comprehensive camera trap survey in north-eastern Turkey has been completed. A network of 40 camera traps was set-up to monitor mammal populations and interactions in the Sarıkamış forest.
- Over 80,000 photos were collected at 65 stations over three years. These data have been analysed and are currently pending publication.

Goal 5: Increase community Involvement.

- Community surveys conducted in 53 towns and villages since 2010 found that the percentage of people using guns in reaction to large wildlife has declined, and there has been an increase in the percentage of people avoiding large wildlife instead. Knowledge of wildlife ecotourism and desire to participate has more than doubled since 2010 following education and outreach.
- Increasingly, people call KuzeyDoga staff and/or government officials when a bear or wolf attacks their livestock, instead of shooting them. People are now aware of deterrent solutions like non-lethal electric fencing of bee hives and are now insuring their livestock against predator attacks.
- The project was featured in over 250 news stories about wildlife research and conservation efforts including local and national newspapers, radio and TV programmes and international news outlets. This included 11 documentaries on National Geographic Wild, TRT Belgesel (national TV documentary channel), IzTV (dedicated documentary channel), and CNN Turk (the most respected news channel of Turkey).

Goal 6: Build political support for large carnivore conservation.

- Data collected by KuzeyDoga is being used to lobby the Turkish government to increase protected areas and conservation efforts in Turkey during national and international meetings and in national media.
- The official process to secure the wildlife corridor as a 'Protected Forest' is ongoing in relevant departments of the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and reforestation of the wildlife corridor by the Ministry has begun.
- Following successful lobbying, to reduce road kill incidents KuzeyDoğa is working with government to construct a wildlife crossing that will connect two patches of Sarıkamış forest that are currently bisected by a high-speed, four-lane interstate highway. The location of this wildlife overpass was determined by using the data collected from GPS collars.

- The project was chosen as one of the five most successful United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects in the world and KuzeyDoga was the only Turkish NGO invited to the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) 5th Assembly meeting in Mexico.

- KuzeyDoga was elected an IUCN member in April 2016, becoming one of only five NGOs from Turkey that are IUCN members. The NGO represented Turkey at the 2016 World Conservation Congress in Hawaii.



UNews
23 June 2016
http://unews.utah.edu/migratory-bears-down-in-the-dumps/

MIGRATORY BEARS DOWN IN THE DUMPS

HUMAN FOOD SOURCES DRAMATICALLY ALTER BEAR BEHAVIOR

University of Utah biologists working in Turkey discovered two surprising facts about a group of 16 brown bears: First, six of the bears seasonally migrated between feeding and breeding sites, the first known brown bears to do so. Second, and more sobering, the other 10 bears stayed in one spot all year long: the city dump.

The behavioral split between the two bear groups shows how dramatically the availability of food, particularly human-related food sources, can change bears' lifestyles. Understanding the difference in behaviors is key to designing conservation strategies among increasing human-caused fragmentation of the bears' habitats.



PHOTO CREDIT: Karla Garcia

Cağan Şekercioğlu (left) and Mark Chynoweth at a wildlife crossing sign along the Kars-Erzurum highway that bisects Sarıkamış Forest.

"Bears are an incredible species that can adapt to many different environments," says graduate student Mark Chynoweth, a member of the research team along with U biologist Çağan Şekercioğlu and colleagues from Switzerland, Croatia and Turkey. Their work is published today in the *Journal of Zoology*, with co-authors Gabriele

Cozzi and Arpat Ozgul from Zurich University,Josip Kusak from University of Zagreb, and Emrah Çoban and Ayşegül Çoban from Kafkas University.

Swiping picnic baskets



PHOTO CREDIT: Cagan Şekercioğlu
A juvenile Eurasian brown bear.

Today's visitors to U.S. national parks, especiallyYellowstone and Yosemite, are confronted with the consequences of past visitors allowing bears to get too close to human establishments. Feeding the bears used to be a commonplace highlight of a Yellowstone visit. Up until World War II, the park even erected bleachers near park dumpsters so visitors could watch the bears come eat every night. Now, visitors are instructed to not even leave empty coolers in cars, because bears have learned to associate the boxy plastic coolers with a quick snack – and may tear the door off to get to it. Yogi Bear's running gag about stealing picnic baskets has now become a major wildlife management problem.

In northeast Turkey, the problem is much the same. Brown bears from nearby forests feast in the Sarıkamış city dump at night. Because dump-feeding is hardly a natural behavior for bears, Şekercioğlu, Chynoweth and colleagues set out to learn just how much the dump had affected local bear behavior.



PHOTO CREDIT: camera trap, KuzeyDoğa Society
A mother bear and her two cubs stop for a drink in Sarıkamış Forest, eastern Turkey

Şekercioğlu had first visited northeastern Turkey in 2001 to study butterflies. The region connects two of the 35 global biodiversity hotspots, the Caucasus and the Iran-Anatolia hotspots. After hearing about populations of wolves and brown bears in the area, Şekercioğlu started studying wildlife with camera traps in 2006 and started tagging bears with satellite tracking collars in 2012. He and his colleagues tagged a total of 16 bears in and around the small town of Sarıkamış, adjacent to Sarıkamış Forest Allahuekber Mountains National Park (SAMNP) and started watching where they went. GPS receivers recorded the location of the bears every hour. Tagging the bears, Şekercioğlu says, "was a great thrill." and became the subject of Turkey's first National Geographic wildlife documentary, "Sarıkamış: Tracking the Brown Bear."

Dump divers



PHOTO CREDIT: Karla Garcia
A mother bear with her three cubs at the Sarıkamış garbage dump in eastern Turkey.

The tracking data from the bears showed two very distinct foraging behaviors. Six bears, dubbed "wild" bears, made regular seasonal migratory trips of more than 100 km (62 miles) and up to 250 km (155 miles) round trip from a dry, overgrazed pine forest to a rich, wet oak forest, stocking up on food before hibernation.

"Brown bears are known to travel long distances in search of food," Chynoweth says. But the behavior he observed was more than just a long-range hunt for dinner. The repeated seasonal trips between hibernation and feeding grounds could be considered migration. "Other bear species do migrate, most notably polar bears," Chynoweth says. But no one had ever seen migration in brown bears before.

In an undisturbed ecosystem, brown bears have no need to migrate, Chynoweth says. All of the food they need can usually be found near their hibernation and breeding grounds. But the bears of Sarıkamış Forest live in a Scots pine forest with few nuts or fruits in the understory, and may have established migratory patterns to find food outside of their normal hibernation area.

"Despite their large size and slow looks, bears can also cover a lot of distances at a steady, tank-like pace across all sorts of terrain and back in search of food resources," Şekercioğlu says.

The other 10 bears didn't migrate at all, though. They stayed all year-round near the most reliable source of food they could find: The Sarıkamış city dump. The dump bears'

"residential" lifestyle further highlights the bears' ability to adapt their behavior to food sources, though the researchers fear that closing the dump may not return the bears to their previous wild ways.

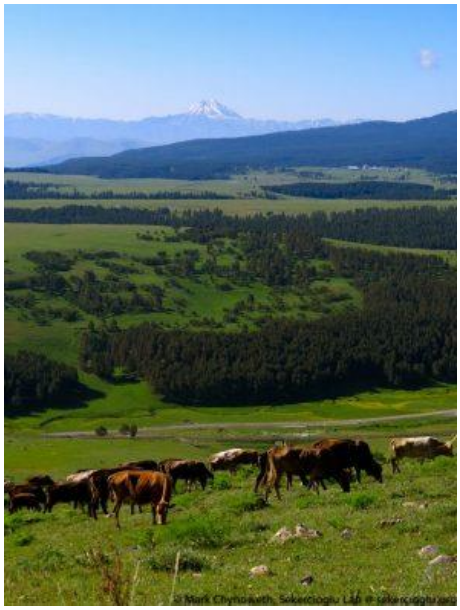
Re-wilding Yogi Bear

Closing the dump, the researchers write, could result in one of three scenarios. The first sees the bears dying of malnutrition, an unlikely outcome given bears' knack for finding food. The second, and most likely possibility, is that the dump bears, who are already habituated to humans, venture farther into Sarıkamış to forage and inevitably come into contact and conflict with humans.

A third possibility sees the dump bears returning to their regular migrations. In 2008, long before bear tracking began, Şekercioğlu had proposed Turkey's first wildlife corridor, a reforestation effort to connect areas of fragmented forest and provide habitat and cover for migrating animals. The slow reforestation process began in 2013. To Şekercioğlu's delight, the wild bears' migratory path coincides with the previously proposed corridor route.

Connecting wildlife

PHOTO CREDIT: Mark Chynoweth



Sarıkamış Forest is a fragmented forest dominated by human activity including livestock grazing and timber extraction.

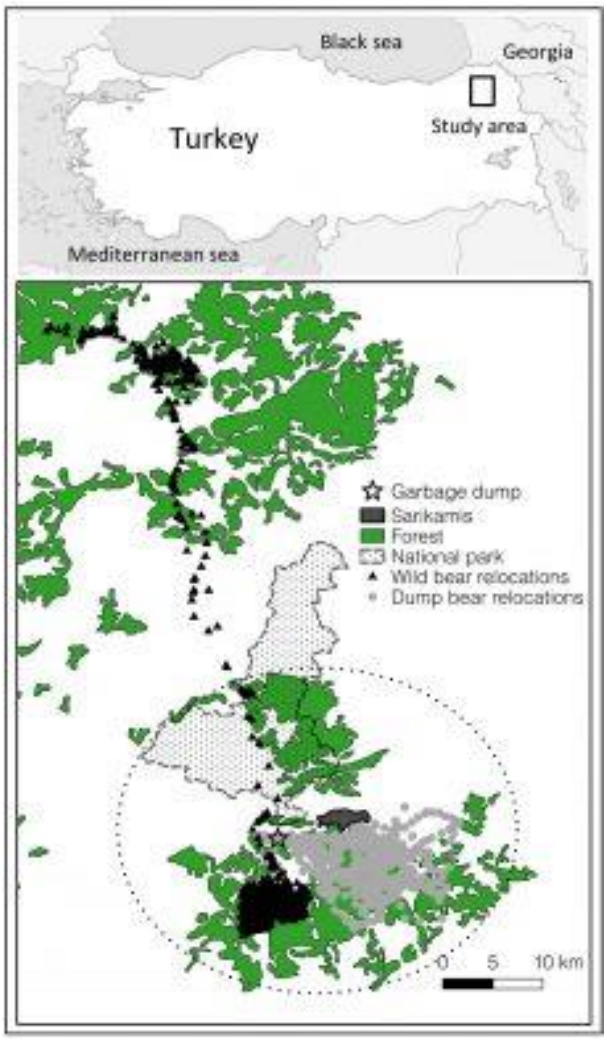
"The borders of a national park or other protected area do not 'contain' wildlife," Chynoweth says. The protected SAMNP covers only 225 km² (87 miles²) while the ranges of some brown bears' the authors tracked extended over 1600 km² (618 miles²). Human disturbances outside protected areas, such as garbage dumps, can still influence wildlife.

Still, an understanding of bear behavior can lead to expansion and connection of protected areas, such as the wildlife corridor, that are tailored for animals' maximum benefit.

"We hope that this corridor, by providing more forest and increasing forest connectivity, will encourage more bears to move/migrate to the wet Black Sea/Caucasus forests," Şekercioğlu says, but adds: "It is pretty hard for garbage bears to give up garbage."

The paper can be found at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jzo.12365/full.

The work was funded by Forschungskredit der Universität Zürich, Claraz Foundation, Christensen Fund, Fondation Segré, National Geographic Society, National Science Foundation, University of Utah, Whitley Fund and Nature Türkiye Foundation. The research was conducted with permission from Turkey's Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs' General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks.



Sabanci Foundation
30 October 2016
http://www.farkyaratanlar.org/site/en/fark_yaratanlar/131/Cagan-Sekercioglu.html



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Fernando Trujillo
Colombia
Fundacion Omacha

Strengthening local and regional conservation initiatives for the protection of rivers & dolphins in South America

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2014 Partnership Funding Winner
2007 Whitley Award winner



"*Our project will integrate scientific research with grassroots and political action to conserve all of South America's river dolphins. Partnership Funding by Fondation Segré will allow us to work effectively and with high impact locally and nationally, and also across borders.*" Fernando Trujillo

During the past year Fernando has been featured in five news articles and a film produced by Fernando's NGO. To view Fernando's WFN profile, follow this link. The following is a selection of articles from Fernando's media coverage.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

WhitleyFund for Nature – NGO, News Feature
3 October 2016
https://whitleyaward.org/apply-for-conservation-funding/partnership-funding-by-fondation-segre/fernando-trujillo/

FERNANDO TRUJILLO – STRENGTHENING LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONSERVATION INITIATIVES FOR THE PROTECTION OF RIVERS & DOLPHINS IN SOUTH AMERICA

FUNDACION OMACHA



2007 Whitley gold winner, ***Fernando Trujillo*** promotes trans-boundary conservation of freshwater habitats and their wildlife using river dolphins as a flagship in the Amazon and Orinoco basins, covering their entire global range across Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

South America's three species of river dolphin face increasing pressure as a result of competition with the fishing industry and are even killed for bait. Pollution and habitat loss from mining and the development of hydro-electrical dams is also a growing threat.

Fernando has made the following progress towards his goals during year two of the project:

Goal 1: Evaluate, monitor and communicate the status of river dolphins in South America.

- Four expeditions have been conducted to estimate abundance of river dolphins in the River Tapajos (Brazil), Orinoco (Venezuela), Amazon (Peru/Colombia) and Caqueta (Colombia).

- A scientific paper was published reporting a 75% probability that in the Colombian Amazon, pink dolphin numbers had declined. The paper was selected by the well-known journal **'Science'**as an example of an effective approach to evaluate population trends for species where different methods have been used to collect population data.

- 36 scientists from Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela have been trained in dolphin surveys, building in-country capacity for freshwater conservation.

- A river dolphin workshop was held at the 10th Biennial Meeting of the South American Aquatic Mammal Society in Cartagena city with 28 presentations and 94 attendees.

- A database that maps the locations of active and proposed dams created during Year 1 of the project, is being used to indicate where damming projects and dolphin habitat overlap in order to pin-point where development will have the largest impact on cetaceans.

- Protocols for inclusion of river dolphin abundance estimation in Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been developed in collaboration with WWF and are being translated into Portuguese. This will ensure dolphins are considered when dams are being planned and steps are taken to mitigate their impact, or prevent harmful projects from going ahead in key habitat.

- Fishery agreements in the Tarapoto lakes systems (Colombia) are benefitting ~2,000 indigenous people from 23 communities who are already seeing positive results, with fish populations showing signs of increasing.

- After 10 years, the project's existing floating house was renewed. Situated at the mouth of the lakes, the floating house is used by locals to conduct monitoring and enforce the fishing agreements to enable sustainable management of these lakes and their resources.

- The initial draft of the Action Plan for river dolphins and manatees is expected to be approved imminently by the Government of Peru.

Goal 2: Provide Technical capacity building to strengthen river dolphin conservation.

- 106 researchers have been trained in the analysis of field data during three workshops held in Venezuela (26), Peru (20) and Colombia (60).

- More than 500 researchers are now using the South American River Dolphin Protected Area Network (**SARDPAN**) online forum designed to enable resource sharing, publication of research and aid government decisions on freshwater conservation.

Goal 3: Grassroots capacity building to strengthen river dolphin conservation.

- A total of 253 people have been trained in good dolphin watching practices in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia to promote local initiatives that encourage the conservation of dolphins or their habitat; 103 people in Colombia and Peru received training in sustainable fishing practices; and 65 artisans were trained in handicraft production to boost incomes for people living in dolphin habitat in Colombia and Peru.

- Staff exchange trips between Omacha and other South American NGOs including WFN alumni **Joanna Alfaro-Shigueto** identified opportune regions in which to promote good dolphin watching practices, develop fishing agreements and initiate artisan programmes expanding the project.

- Following scientific, social and political support, the Lakes of Tarapoto are expected to be declared a **Ramsar site**, giving this 90,000ha wetland which incorporates dolphin feeding and nursery grounds, international recognition of its importance.

- Two interpretation centres have been built in Peru and Colombia to rehabilitate and house injured freshwater wildlife and educate the public about these species.

- 20,000 people have been reached by a mobile exhibition providing educational materials about dolphins in Colombia.

- A film about Fernando and his work called 'Omacha Man' will be presented at the 2017 Sundance Festival. The film exposes illegal gold mining in the Amazon basin and its harmful effects on wetland ecosystems and indigenous communities suffering mercury poisoning. Watch the **teaser trailer**. Out soon!

Goal 4: Find alternatives with the goal of banning the 'mota' catfish fishery.

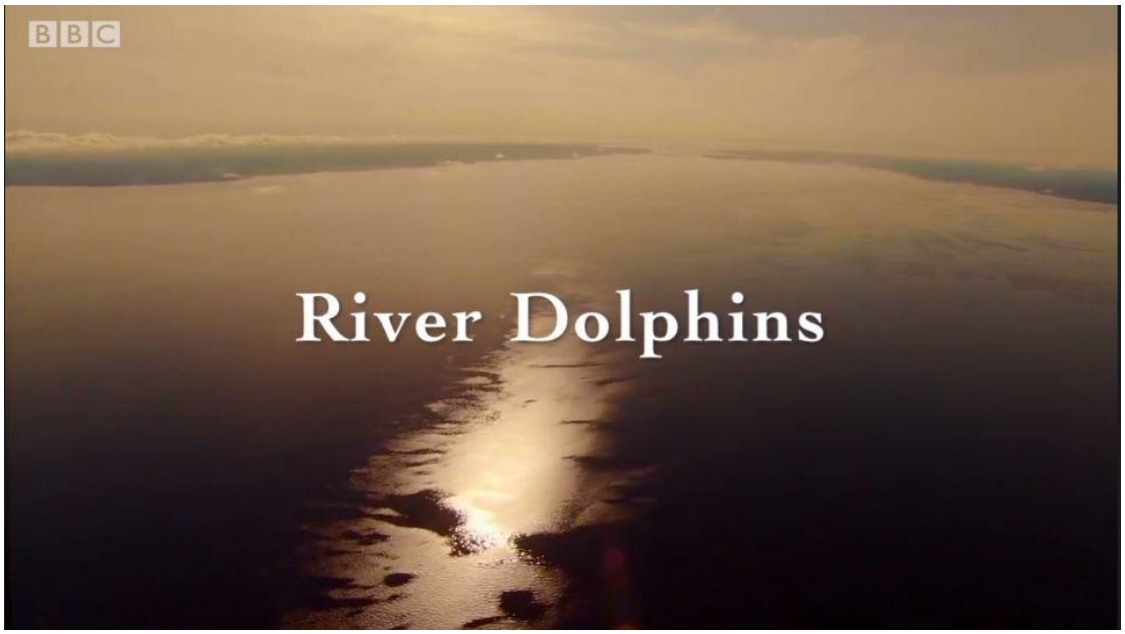
- Research shows mercury levels in mota fish exceed the limit set by the World Health Organization, making them unsafe for human consumption. As a result of an international campaign, Brazil banned trade in mota fish until 2020.

- The Government of Colombia have made recommendations that people avoid consumption of mota fish and large supermarkets have stopped selling it which will not only benefit human health, but reduce the killing of river dolphins to be used as bait in the mota industry.

- 260 mota fish samples were analysed. Results found 95% of samples contained significant levels of mercury.
- Following the ban, Brazil's traders are encouraging hunting of dolphins in Peru, making work to address this in these countries pertinent.



Oceans Initiative via Vimeo – NGO, Marine Research
24 January 2016



Amazon river dolphin conservation

This video accompanies a peer-reviewed, scientific publication in the journal, Biological Conservation: sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320715302160 It outlines work by biologists (at Fundacion Omacha in Colombia, Oceans Initiative in Canada and the US) and statisticians (at University of St Andrews in Scotland, and NOAA Fisheries in USA) to conduct surveys for two species of river dolphins in Colombian and Peruvian sections of the Amazon River. There are two species of dolphins that live in this river: a grey one (tucuxi, or Sotalia) and a pink one (boto, or Inia). The pink river dolphin is perceived by some fishing communities as competition for fish. There are also reports of deliberate killing of pink river dolphins for bait in a lucrative catfish fishery. Our team compared three sets of survey data since 1993, using advanced statistical methods to account for changing survey methods over time. The trend estimates are preliminary and tentative, but we are reasonably sure that the two species have opposing trends. Our best evidence suggests that the pink river dolphins are declining; and the grey river dolphins are stable or even increasing. Our future research aims to conduct one more survey at the "best" time of year, to improve our confidence that these trends are real. If they are, we will work to understand why the two species are undergoing different trends, so we can identify solutions to benefit pink river dolphins. As we discuss in the paper, there are plans to build many hydroelectric dams throughout Amazonia, which would fragment river dolphin habitat and populations. Omacha works with local communities to understand threats that river dolphins face, and to identify workable solutions. Oceans Initiative is a team of conservation scientists that builds collaborations between biology and statistics to inform evidence-based conservation actions.

Science
11 March 2016
5,616,090 monthly visitors
http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/03/can-long-dead-reverend-help-save-amazonia-s-freshwater-dolphins



Luciana Christante/Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Can a long-dead reverend help save Amazonia's freshwater dolphins?

About a decade ago, biologists set out to count river dolphins along a murky, meandering stretch of the upper Amazon River between Colombia and Peru. Although these distant freshwater cousins of seagoing whales face growing threats from pollution, dams, and hunting, the results seemed to suggest they were doing well. By the end of the 2007 survey, the team had spotted 116 groups of pink river dolphins (*Inia geoffrensis*), as well as 220 groups of a second species, the gray river dolphin or Tucuxi (*Sotalia fluvia*). Those numbers are higher than in two prior tallies done in 1993 and 2002.

But because the tallies had all been done differently, conservation scientists could not say for sure whether the dolphin populations were growing, merely stable, or already in dangerous decline. Now, researchers have used a 250-year-old statistical approach to draw firmer—and potentially worrisome—conclusions about the dolphin population trends.

Researchers count the dolphins by standing in a boat and scanning the vast river—dozens of kilometers wide in places. But techniques varied among the three surveys: One used just a single observer, for example, while others used two. The surveys were also done at different times of the year and at varying water levels. That's problematic because

the dolphins might bunch up during some seasons, making them easier to count, but swim deep into the Amazon's flooded forests when the water is high, making them nearly impossible to find.

"It's a pretty frustrating situation, because you really need to know how the animals are doing if you want to do effective conservation," says marine mammal scientist Rob Williams, who got involved in studying the dolphins in the early 2000s, while at the University of St. Andrews in the United Kingdom. But Williams, who has expertise in statistics, saw a potential solution: Call on the talents of **the Reverend Thomas Bayes, an English Presbyterian minister who in the 1750s** outlined a **flexible statistical approach** that enables researchers to combine and analyze disparate types of information—such as surveys done in different ways. It wasn't until the advent of modern computers, however, that Bayesian methods became widely practical; since then, **they've swept through the sciences**.

Now, Bayes has helped Williams and his colleagues extract some potentially meaningful trends from the messy dolphin data. **The message is decidedly mixed, they report in this month's *Biological Conservation***: Although there is a 75% probability that the gray dolphin population was stable or increased between 1993 and 2007, there's an equal probability that pink dolphin numbers declined.

The study represents "a really nice" example of how conservation scientists can cope with problematic survey data, says fisheries biologist Trevor Branch of the University of Washington, Seattle, who was not involved in the research. The researchers "were quite careful" in their analysis, he says, but notes that there are other possible interpretations: for instance, some dolphin populations may have declined and then rebounded, rather than simply increased.

The authors agree that more work is needed to confirm the decrease in pink dolphins. But the trend "could be a warning sign of a significant problem that we need to understand better," says co-author Fernando Trujillo, the scientific director of the **Fundación Omacha**, a conservation group in Bogotá. It could signal, for instance, that pink dolphins are being killed in substantial numbers by Amazon fishers, who sometimes see the animals as competition for fish, or use their flesh as catfish bait. (**Brazil recently took steps to end that practice**.)

"Once you have trend data, you are able to look for the causes of the trend," Trujillo says. But without data, he adds, "it is hard to persuade people to make changes or take needed action." (Click here to see a video on Amazon dolphin research and conservation efforts.)

Cheaper, better, faster?

Designing and fielding relatively cheap and easy surveys that can help shape conservation strategies is a challenge. "It's a really common problem in conservation biology," says Williams, now a **Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation** and co-leader of the **Oceans Initiative** in Seattle, Washington. "There's rarely enough money to rigorously monitor populations … especially in developing nations, so you are often dealing with very sparse data."

It would be prohibitively expensive to survey and monitor South America's four species of freshwater dolphins using traditional "gold standard" methods, Williams notes. "So if we aren't going to see a dramatic increase in spending for that kind of monitoring—and it is likely we won't—we need to decide what a 'silver' or 'bronze' standard looks like."

To that end, the new study lays out a potentially doable strategy for keeping tabs on the dolphins. It calls for a single, streamlined abundance survey every 5 to 10 years, with smaller low-cost surveys every few years that focus on other issues, such as how the animals move seasonally. And it urges the use of Bayesian methods to strengthen the statistical power. "The math can be hard," Williams says, "but that isn't an excuse for ignoring the problem."

Trujillo notes that more than 150 dams are now proposed for the Amazon, and that coming up with workable methods for understanding how these and other projects are affecting the mammals will be critical. "The dolphins are a good indicator of the health of the whole river system," he says. "So we need to assess how they are responding—before it is too late."

Meridiano 70
16 March 2016
http://www.meridiano70.net/?id=2712

Las toninas Tania y Paula de regreso a aguas del río Arauca



En un trabajo conjunto entre biólogos de la Fundación Omacha, el cuerpo de Bomberos de Arauca, Corporación Autónoma Regional de la Orinoquia Corporinoquia, miembros del Ejército Nacional y funcionarios de departamento ambiental de Occidental de Colombia, se logró el rescate de dos toninas – hembras adultas- que se encontraban encalladas en el caño Agua Limón.

Tania y Paula, como fueron llamadas las dos toninas por el equipo de rescate, luego de ser curadas fueron llevadas a las profundidades del río Arauca, en el sector de Remolinos del Padre, gracias a un trabajo preciso y cuidadoso realizado por el equipo de profesionales designados por cada entidad.

Los expertos ambientales determinaron que Tania, la primera tonina en ser liberada, midió 2.26 metros y que Paula alcanzaba 2.40 metros de largo.

Federico Mosquera, biólogo de la Fundación Omacha, afirmó que "salvarle la vida a estos dos ejemplares hembras contribuye a la conservación de esta especie de delfín rosado de la Orinoquía colombiana, la cual se encuentra amenazada".

El rescate de estos delfines en inmediaciones del campo petrolero Caño Limón hace parte de la responsabilidad social que Ecopetrol y Oxy tienen en sus operaciones. Las Compañías continuarán apoyando estas iniciativas enfocadas a la protección y conservación del medio ambiente.

Llanera
16 March 2016
http://llanera.com/?id=19993

Toninas rescatadas en aguas de Caño Limón son llevadas al río Arauca





Dos toninas que se encontraban encalladas en el caño Agua de Limón fueron rescatadas en un trabajo conjunto entre biólogos de la Fundación Omacha, el cuerpo de Bomberos de Arauca, Corporación Autónoma Regional de la Orinoquia Corporinoquia, miembros del Ejército Nacional y funcionarios de departamento ambiental de Occidental de Colombia.
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Part 5: Media Coverage of Previous Winners

Previous winner

Ekwoge Abwe
Cameroon
2013

Community protection of endangered great apes in Ebo Forest, Cameroon

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Fondation Segré

Ekwoge has featured in a Discover Wildlife article this year. Ekwoge's WFN profile is available at this link.

Discover Wildlife
1 March 2016
http://www.discoverwildlife.com/news/rare-gorillas-caught-camera

DISCOVER Wildlife
Wildlife and photography at its best from BBC Wildlife Magazine

Rare gorillas caught on camera

First-ever footage of great ape in Cameroon's Ebo Forest could help campaign to protect the habitat and its many species of primate.



Girls on film: a pregnant female gorilla poses for the camera. © Gorilla Guardian Clubs

Gorillas in Cameroon's Ebo Forest have been caught on camera for the first time.

Trailcam footage taken by the Gorilla Guardian Clubs programme shows three individuals in the forest, including one pregnant female.

This clip shows the mother-to-be clearly catching sight of the camera.

The Gorilla Guardian Clubs is led by Ekwoge Abwe, who grew up in rural Cameroon and is now a passionate great ape conservationist.

The Ebo Forest covers 2,000km², making it one of the largest tracts of forest left in the region, and is home to 11 species of great apes and monkeys, including a significant population of an endangered chimpanzee subspecies.
Its small population of western gorillas could be a new subspecies, but this is yet to be confirmed.

The Whitley Fund for Nature released the footage, saying it could add impetus to Abwe's drive to have the forest declared a national park.
Watch other trailcam videos of Ebo Forest's gorillas
Find out more about the Whitley Fund for Nature

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Diego Amorocho
Colombia
2010

Community action for the conservation of sea-turtles and their marine habitats

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the friends of the WFN

Diego has featured in a WWF article this year. Diego's WFN profile is available at this link.

WWF – Wildlife Conservation NGO
16 June 2016
http://www.wwf.cl/?272071/Las-tortugas-son-seres-magicos-y-misteriosos

"Turtles are magical and mysterious beings"

On the occasion of World Day of Sea Turtles, Diego Amorocho, Coordinator of Species Program for Latin America of WWF, share their experiences with these amazing animals and the importance of theAction Plan Sea Turtle for Latin America and the Caribbean WWF published Recently. Why do we have to import sea turtles?
The balance of marine ecosystems and life cycles of the species that inhabit it are regulated by sea turtles. Without their presence food chains would be disrupted. For example, the Cana turtles feed on jellyfish, without it the beaches would be filled with bad water. A disaster for tourism. Hawksbill turtle feeds on sponges that live on coral reefs. Without them, sponges recubrirían corals. Green turtle feeding on seagrass meadows and. To prune them maintain that healthy ecosystem. When these weeds grow out of control, they start to release poisonous compounds such as cyanide character.

Where they live?
The distribution of sea turtles is pantropical, ie that are located in tropical regions on all continents. In America they live from southern California to northern Chile, the Caribbean, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina even.

What do we know about them?
These traveling travel long distances from the moment they are born, swimming in open for almost 10 years in their growth and feeding sea.Amazing as Parez, only up to 30 or 40 years of age reach sexual maturity, then embark on long journeys to copulate and again undertake the journey to the place where they were born, to spawn. This process happens

every 3 or 4 years and represents only 1% of their lives. The females are the only ones that come to the surface, the males never do and why it is so difficult to know many biological aspects of these animals.

Why do you say that turtles are magic?
I think the turtles are magical and mysterious beings inhabit our planet since before the dinosaurs and are still here. They are exceptional sailors and as ambassadors of the sea, they belong to all. They make extraordinary tours to keep their species and live hundreds of years, for example a turtle can be born in Colombia, growing up in Costa Rica, reproduced in Australia and return to Colombia to spawn.

What I remember how excited turtles?
Every time I release tortuguitos I think that in 30 years, that animal, which was the size of a coin, now returns to the beach weighing 60 kilos and lay their eggs. It is very exciting to witness the beginning of a long-running and mysterious life.

What do you most admire turtles? Its resilience. Despite the exploitation they have suffered since pre-Columbian times, traffic tortoiseshell that was made in the conquest or high consumption of green turtle crew of pirates, not to mention all the dangers facing today, they have resisted, evolved and continue scouring the seas.

What is the current landscape of sea turtles? All turtle species are in some degree of danger, but in some places the situation is worrying. The situation of the Pacific Leatherback is very critical breeding colony populations in Mexico and Costa Rica have dropped more than 90% in 20 years. Out of a population of 20,000 turtles are now less than 1,000 and if we do not take urgent measures to coordinate regional actions, this species will disappear in less than 10 years. Hawksbill goes through a complicated situation, there are people who capture to make crafts with their shells.

So what independent countries' efforts are not enough?
Protecting sea turtles, animals that travel without visas by the oceans, requires a regional effort that transcends borders and political ideologies. The ambassadors of the sea need, more than ever, we work together to protect them.

What is the importance of this plan of action?
After a hard work, we can identify the current status of sea turtle populations and put this roadmap with the key points and conservation priorities for the period 2012-2020. This action plan aims to strengthen the research process and define a legal framework for regional work is coordinated more effectively.To learn more about this plan go to: http://panda.org/mundodetortugas

What can people from the cities to protect sea turtles? Look at this interesting gif prepared by WWF Peru

- Do not eat turtle eggs or meat.
- Denounces the illegal trafficking of hawksbill.
- Never buy necklaces, bracelets, glasses or crafts made with tortoiseshell.
- In nesting periods, no clothes fires and calls the lights of hotels and houses on the nesting beaches, are turned off because the lights disorient females and prevent normal playback.
- Take care that dogs and other pets from digging and destroy eggs and / or close tortuguitos to leave the nest.
- Do not litter and helps clean the beach. Turtles can confuse plastic bags with their food.



Previous winner

Randall Arauz
Costa Rica
2004

Sharks and fisheries: Conservation and advocacy for endangered marine species, Costa Rica

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Winner of the Whitley Award sponsored by the William Brake Charitable Trust & the Whitley Gold award

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Randall has featured in four articles this year, a selection of which follows below. Follow this link for Randall's WFN profile.

The Tico Times
24 February 2016
http://www.ticotimes.net/2016/02/24/costa-rican-conservationist-awarded-prestigious-marine-conservation-fellowship

THE TICO TIMES News

Costa Rican awarded prestigious marine conservation fellowship



Randall Arauz studies a hawksbill sea turtle in Punta Coyote, Costa Rica, as part of his work designing coastal management policies. (Courtesy of Pew Charitable Trusts)

Costa Rican environmentalist Randall Arauz took home $150,000 Tuesday in support of his work promoting ocean conservation in Costa Rica.

Arauz, president of the environmental group Pretoma, was selected as one of five recipients of the Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation. During the three-year fellowship, Arauz will use the grant money to support his work in ocean preservation.

"The policy work we are trying to do here is very difficult and has met a lot of opposition, so it's nice to get some affirmation," Arauz said. "It's a very prestigious award and it's nice to get a pat on the back."

A marine biologist by trade, Arauz is best known for his successful campaign to halt shark finning in Costa Rica as well as Pretoma's continued work towards influencing public fishing policy. For this work, Arauz was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2010.

Recognizing his past achievements, a panel of international marine conservation leaders nominated Arauz to submit an application for the fellowship.

Arauz plans to use the grant money to launch a policing campaign in Cocos Island National Park, a marine protected area where illegal fishing is commonplace. The campaign will use unmanned aerial vehicles, drones, to fly over the park and watch for pirate fishing boats.

Additionally, Arauz plans to coordinate with regional NGOs to push for stronger international conservation policies, and to serve as a watchdog over Costa Rica's fishing policy.

"We want to make sure that what Costa Rica sells to the world is what is actually happening here domestically," Arauz said. "We want to make Costa Rica the international conservation leader that Costa Ricans and the world expects it to be."

Bagheera – News about Endangered Species
20 June 2016
http://www.bagheera.com/journal/conservationists-appeal-for-protection-of-silky-sharks.htm

Bagheera

Conservationists Appeal for Protection of Silky Sharks



La Jolla, California – Conservationists are calling on the global community to increase protections for silky sharks under the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC),* which is holding its annual meeting next week in Southern California. In particular, conservationists are supporting a proposal from the European Union (E.U.) that calls for 3-month closures on targeted silky shark (Carcharhinus falciformis) fisheries, and for banning the use of wire leaders (a type of gear that catches more sharks). **Click here to download the E.U. motion.**

Silky sharks are the most common shark caught incidentally by tuna longline and purse seine fisheries throughout their range, particularly those using fish aggregating devices. Silky sharks are the most-caught species in longline fisheries in the Eastern Pacific, constituting up to 90 percent of the total catch of sharks. Silky sharks are classified as**'near threatened**' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In the Central and Eastern Tropical Pacific silky sharks are even more endangered and classified as '**vulnerable**.'

"Simple measures put into place can make a huge difference to protect silky sharks," said Randall Arauz, International Policy Director of Turtle Island Restoration Network. "The proposed measures would also be a huge benefit for an array of endangered marine species (sea turtles, sharks, billfish), as they constitute ecosystem based solutions."

"In spite of global recorded declines of silky shark populations, fishing them has remained unabated," complained Maike Heidemeyer of the Costa Rican organization PRETOMA. "Fins from an estimated 0.5 to 1.5 million silky sharks are traded globally per year, and the meat is sold for massive domestic consumption in fishing nations, like Costa Rica."

"If this proposal is not enacted, the survival of the silky sharks in the eastern Pacific will be in the balance and this highly migratory species may become extinct," warned Alex Antoniou, Executive Director of Fins Attached. "A precautionary approach must be considered."

*The IATTC is the Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) responsible for the conservation and management of tuna and other marine resources in the eastern Pacific Ocean. The commission has 21 member countries and has significant responsibilities for the implementation of the International Dolphin Conservation Program.

"The IATTC can set a global precedent in 2016 by enacting shark protective measures," said Arauz, who won the 2010 Goldman Environmental Prize for his work to protect sharks. "Conservationists will be coming out in force to the CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species) meeting in South Africa in September, with the goal of winning binding commitments to protect silky sharks and other shark species. Closures by the IATTC can move us along in the right direction."

Turtle Island Restoration Network, www.SeaTurtles.org, and its 250,000 members and supporters, works to mobilize people and communities around the world to protect marine wildlife, the oceans and the inland waterways that sustain them.

Fins Attached, www.finsattached.org conducts research, promotes conservation and provides education for the protection of marine ecosystems. The health of any ecosystem is controlled by its apex predators.

PRETOMA is a Costa Rican NGO that works to conserve, manage and restore, populations of endangered marine wildlife.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Tess Gatan Balbas
Philippines
2014

Taking local action to save the world's rarest crocodile

Winner of the Whitley award donated by WWF-UK

Tess has featured in two articles, follow this link for Tess's WFN profile. A selection of the media coverage follows.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Synchronicity Earth – Environmental NGO
8 March 2016
http://www.synchronicityearth.org/blog/2016/03/happy-international-womens-day/

Happy International Women's Day!

This blog celebrates the amazing women in our portfolio – many of whom work in male-dominated contexts, some putting their lives on the line to protect nature; to defend their communities; or to promote the rights of women and girls. Their work is inspirational.

- In Sabah Malaysia, Hutan has helped to change attitudes towards women through reforestation. When Hutan started its reforestation programme several years ago, it was very difficult for women to work in the region, let alone to spend long days out in the field away from home. However, Hutan has developed strong and lasting relationships with local communities and a few key women have helped to showcase just how important their roles are in planting and caring for seedlings. Today, Hutan's reforestation work is led by a majority-female team. Reforestation efforts have exceeded expectations and other girls and women now have female role models to aspire to!

Photo: Transporting seedlings to the planting site; credit: Hutan



- The International Rivers Africa programme is led by Rudo Sanyanga. We first started supporting Rudo's work because of her amazing dedication and tenacity in a region that faces growing threats to its biological and cultural diversity. For the first two years, Rudo was working in isolation, but our funding helped her to recruit a colleague – Ange; both regularly visit Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and help to build community capacity and understanding about the large dams under development. Rudo and Ange also work hard to fight for local people's rights and to protect biodiversity when damaging plans go ahead.

- **Mabuwaya Foundation's Deputy Director Tess Gatan Balbas** is dedicating her life to preventing the extinction of the Critically Endangered Philippine Crocodile. She passionately leads her staff and local communities in Luzon Province so that they can live a more peaceful existence with the species, helping to restore its habitat and providing a breeding programme that boosts survival rates. In recognition of her hard work, passion and knowledge, Tess was awarded a prestigious Whitley Award for Nature in 2014.

- In North Kivu in Eastern DRC Reseau CREF is working across its membership of around 30 local organisations to improve gender equality within natural resource management. With rape rates at around 50 an hour, the DRC - and especially the East of the country - is one of the most dangerous places to be a woman. Marginalised groups, including poor rural communities and indigenous forest peoples, are particularly at risk. Through its work to empower women to manage and conserve forests, Reseau CREF is slowly helping to change gender dynamics and attitudes to women, which will ultimately contribute towards making this a safer place for women to live and work.

- In Papua New Guinea (PNG), Act Now! was co-founded by lawyer and activist Effrey Dademo. Effrey is helping to lead the fight against destructive land grabs for agribusiness and logging which threaten the vast biological and cultural diversity in PNG. While politics are extremely male-dominated in PNG, Effrey is providing a strong role model for women.

- As part of the AgroEcology Fund, we support partners around the world to research, practice and advocate for agroecological solutions – many of which are developed by women who play a vital role in protecting traditional seeds and practicing farming techniques that reflect natural cycles; improve food security and nutrition; help to protect communities and habitats from the impacts of climate change; or challenge large destructive agribusiness companies.

Photo: Women digging zaï holes in Bilanga Yanga, Burkina Faso; credit: Groundswell International



- In Vietnam, Green Innovation and Development (Green ID is led by Nguy Thi Khanh who strives to protect Vietnam's remaining wildlife and build an energy approach that meets the needs of local people and does not rely on large scale energy infrastructure. She has been working with local women to help them to make changes to their homes by improving access to environmentally friendly sanitation facilities, building materials and energy.

- In Bhutan, Rebecca Pradham - originally from northeast India - has dedicated her life to saving the White-bellied Heron, at times almost entirely alone, often spending weeks in remote places to monitor the herons. Rebecca cares passionately about this species and hopes to help protect it and all it represents in the health of Bhutan's freshwater systems and forests.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Sandra Bessudo
Colombia
2005

Community and Governmental involvement in shark conservation in the Malpelo World Heritage Site, Colombia

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Winner of the Whitley Award

Sandra has featured in one article and two radio interviews this past year. Follow the link to view Sandra's WFN profile. A selection of Sandra's media coverage is shown below.

Tara Expeditions
2016
http://oceans.taraexpeditions.org/en/m/environment/ocean-biodiversity/sandra-bessudo-une-vie-dediee-a-malpelo/

The Tara team began collecting coral specimens in the Gulf of Panama, and also lent a hand to the Malpelo Foundation in their long-term study of whale sharks and the ecosystem of the area. On the way, reaching the marine sanctuary of Malpelo Island (west coast of Colombia), the crew started an unusual activity — attempting to put GPS tags on whale sharks.

Sandra Bessudo, funder of the Malpelo Foundation, has been fighting to preserve the incredible marine biodiversity of tiny Malpelo Island for the three last decades. On this inhospitable rock threatened by illegal fishing, the French-Colombian biologist has created a marine sanctuary unique in the world and renowned for its extraordinary natural riches.



In certain spots around Malpelo, the diversity of marine life is as impressive as its abundance © David Hannan / Ocean Ark Alliance

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER MALPELO?

I fell in love with Malpelo in 1987, the very first time I came to the island. I vividly remember my first dive. I think I'll never forget it. The conditions were rather special: we were on a fishing boat which a group of us diving instructors had fixed up. We didn't know the site at all, so we were quite excited. We saw schools of hammerhead sharks and were wondering if they could harm us. We remained very alert, but with time we got to know these animals and realized they were completely harmless.



Hammerhead sharks at Malpelo © François Aurat / Tara Expeditions Foundation

WHY HAVE YOU DEVOTED YOUR LIFE TO THE PROTECTION OF MALPELO?

After the first dives, I saw the incredible natural beauty of the island, but also understood all the problems facing the site. At that time, several fishing boats were anchored directly on the coral, with their decks full of dead sharks. Once you dive with sharks, it's very painful to see them lying dead on deck. At that moment I realized something had to be done to protect Malpelo, to preserve these magnificent species.

WHAT DID YOU DO THEN?

I became totally involved and succeeded in convincing the President of Colombia to declare the island a Marine Protected Area. Then in 1999 we created a foundation: the Foundation for Malpelo and Other Marine Ecosystems. With this foundation we have developed various programs of ecotourism, surveillance, communication, education and, of course, a scientific research program to create a data base of many species over the

long term. In 2006, UNESCO declared Malpelo a natural World Heritage Site. This is extremely rewarding and compensates all these years of work.



Tara anchored near Malpelo Island (Colombia) © Tara Expeditions Foundation

WHAT IS TARA'S INVOLVEMENT AT MALPELO?

For a long time I'd been talking with Romain Troublé (director of the Tara Foundation) to figure out if we could do something here in Colombia, obviously at Malpelo. We had already worked together during the COP21 in Paris with a common goal: that in the negotiations, the oceans would be taken into account as an important ecosystem in the fight against climate change. This week at Malpelo means a lot to us. It's the first time a boat like Tara has come to Colombia to help us do research. It's very important for us to continue our scientific programs in cooperation with other countries, but also to show people the importance of this kind of mission. By following the rest of the Tara Pacific expedition, we'll be able to compare the Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary with dozens of other sites on the planet.

Plongez! - Radio Interview
23 February 2016
http://www.plongez.fr/sandra-bessudo-malpelo/
http://caracol.com.co/programa/2015/11/30/hora_20/1448921785_400785.html



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Shivani Bhalla
Kenya
2014

Warrior Watch: Enabling the coexistence of people and lions

Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the Garden House School Parents' Association

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Shivani has featured in seven articles this past year. Follow the link to view Shivani's WFN profile. A selection of Shivani's media coverage is shown below.

National Geographic – Society for Research and Education
1 December 2015
http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2015/12/01/scale-up-working-title-2/



High Fives Make Big Differences for Big Cats

For World Lion Day, we asked you to high 5 and give $5 to save big cats in the wild. Thanks to everyone who participated, including Nat Geo Explorers Dereck and Beverly Joubert, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Leonardo DiCaprio, we raised almost $200,000 to fund on-the-ground conservation projects. Watch our highlight video and see if you are featured in the tremendously successful #5forBigCats campaign.

Earlier this year, National Geographic's Big Cats Initiative (BCI) asked big cat lovers around the world to High Five Give $5 Save Big Cats to help raise awareness and funds for big cat conservation. The goal was to create a virtual global high five chain for World Lion Day on August 10th, 2015.

Participants shared the virtual high five posts on Facebook and Twitter, and donated a minimum of $5 to the BCI. Participants were encouraged to share their own high-five video with the hashtag #5forBigCats. Celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paul Stanley, and others donated, participated, and helped spur total donations well in excess of $200,000. The proceeds raised allowed BCI to scale up long-term field conservation projects on the ground in Kenya and Tanzania run by Shivani Bhalla and Amy Dickman.

Shivani Bhalla is the founder and executive director of Ewaso Lions. The primary focus of her work is to reduce human-lion conflict in Northern Kenya and promote coexistence via educational and community-based conservation programs. The BCI has become a key supporter in Ewaso Lion's Warrior Watch program. This specific program engages the Samburu warriors to become community ambassadors for lion conservation in their region. Ewaso Lions is able to achieve this goal by building upon the traditional protection role of these warriors while encompassing human-carnivore conflict mitigation techniques. The Warrior Watch program has influenced local perceptions toward conservation, increased tolerance of large carnivores, and empowered the warriors.



Shivani Bhalla in the field with Samburu Warriors (Photo courtesy of Ewaso Lions)

The allocated funds from *High Five. Give $5. Save Big Cats* allowed the Warrior Watch program to greatly expand their numbers and reach. This funding will be used to train more warriors and secure long term sustainability for their field program. Ewaso Lions will be able to expand their work with local communities in Northern Kenya, leading to a greater ability to support big cat conservation in the Laikipia-Samburu ecosystem of Northern Kenya.



Ewaso Lions team (Photo courtesy of Ewaso Lions)

Amy Dickman is the director of the Ruaha Carnivore Project (RCP) in Tanzania. The Ruaha landscape is home to the second largest lion population in the world. However, lions face severe conflict with humans in this region due to retaliatory killing. When lions harm local villagers livestock, villagers retaliate and kill the lions. The RCP works toward mitigating conflict through the use of boma (fence) fortification, a community benefits program and a trial livestock guarding program with Anatolian Shepherds.



Livestock owner and improved boma (Photo courtesy of Ruaha Carnivore Project)

With the allocated *High Five. Give $5. Save Big Cats* funds the RCP will extend their boma predator-proofing projected, scale up community benefit programs, and assist the livestock guard dog program to test crossbreeds and local dogs in contrast to Anatolian Shepherds, which are very costly. The community benefit programs have shown great success improving attitudes of target households. Presently, the RCP has fortified more than 100 bomas, with a 99% success rate in preventing depredation. Increase community benefits will allow the RCP to focus on healthcare, education and veterinary health.



BCI Grantee Dr. Amy Dickman stands alongside members of the Barabaig tribe, with whom the Ruaha Carnivore Project works to conserve big cats in this part of rural Tanzania (Photo courtesy of Ruaha Carnivore Project).

Big cat conservation is no easy task, but thanks the overwhelming enthusiasm from the public to high five for big cats, these two projects will be able to increase their efforts toward impacting these magnificent carnivores and the communities with which they exist.

Post drafted by Kelly Flanigan.

About the Big Cats Initiative:

National Geographic's Big Cats Initiative (BCI) was founded in 2009 with Explorers-in-Residence, filmmakers and conservationists Dereck and Beverly Joubert as a long-term effort to halt the decline of big cats in the

wild. BCI supports efforts to save big cats through assessment activities, on-the-ground conservation projects, education and a global public-awareness campaign, "Cause an Uproar," launched in partnership with Nat Geo WILD. BCI has funded more than 83 field-based conservation projects in 26 countries. For more information, visitCauseAnUproar.org.

BBC Earth
3 August 2016
http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20160802-these-brave-women-have-found-a-way-to-live-alongside-lions

A male-dominated culture has meant that Samburu women rarely get a say in how their society handles big cats, but one project is trying to change that Lionesses have a lot of power in lion society.

The females typically work together to hunt down prey, and form crèches to look after their cubs. This cooperative behaviour brings in lots of food, and ensure that plenty of lion cubs survive to adulthood.

The female lions' empowerment stands in stark contrast to the human societies that live alongside the lions in Kenya's Samburu National Reserve. There, as in many other cultures throughout history, women have been discouraged from taking control – in part due to a male-dominated culture.

As it happens, lions – despite the lionesses' efforts – are**vulnerable to extinction**. So what might happen if we took a leaf out of the lions' book and began to allow women to make more decisions?

One Kenyan lion conservation organisation, **Ewaso Lions**, decided to find out.



A pair of lions (Credit: Karl Ammann/naturepl.com)

Ewaso Lions helps local communities find ways to coexist with wildlife. This is crucial, because one of the greatest threats to lions is **humans killing them**.

As some of Samburu's lions live outside formally protected areas, they often come into contact with the Samburu livestock. In retaliation for cattle killed by lions, the Samburu sometimes hunt the lions.



Conservation training (Credit: Ewaso Lions)

The **Mama Simba** project began when local women went to Ewaso Lions asking to be educated. Mama Simba means "the Mother of Lions" in Maa, the local language.

"The women had seen how warriors in their community were being engaged in conservation through **another** of Ewaso Lions's projects," says Heather Gurd, conservation manager at Ewaso Lions. "They were adamant that they could do just as good a job as the warriors if only they were given the chance."



A group of Mama Simba participants, February 2016 (Credit: Ewaso Lions)

Samburu women actually spend a great deal of time in wildlife areas whilst they collect firewood, fetch water and look after livestock. This means they often come into contact

with animals like lions. Yet before this project, the women were rarely actively included in conservation activities.



Ewaso Lions is educating the Samburu women in basic literacy, numeracy, and wildlife conservation. They also train them in beaded art craft, so that they can diversify their income and not depend solely on livestock.

A Samburu woman making a beaded lion (Credit: Ewaso Lions)

Since Mama Simba was launched in 2013, over 300 Samburu women have participated in the programme. There is a core group of 19 who spread the word.

"Empowerment means that women are given a chance to lead, like men do," says Ntomuson Lelengeju, a Mama Simba participant.

Photo below: At the Mama Simba school (Credit: Tyrel Bernardini)

"Women and men are now getting equal opportunities in terms of resource sharing," says Noldonyo Letabare, who also takes part.



As well as benefiting the women, the project should also help the lions.
To achieve this, the women are trained in how to better protect their livestock enclosures from predators. They also learn how to identify carnivore tracks, and tell Ewaso Lions about lion sightings and any conflicts that arise. Photo Credit: Ann Martens



It is too soon to tell whether this new project has benefited the lion population. But there is evidence that people's attitudes towards lions are becoming more positive. Photo Credit: Ann Martens



The Mama Simba uniform is bright red (Credit: Kelly Wilson)

"I have changed as a result of the Mama Simba programme," says Lelengeju. "I now cannot accept people to kill lions."
"Since joining the programme I have learned to love lions, unlike before," says Letabare.

A lion (Panthera leo) in Samburu National Reserve (Credit: T. J. Rich/naturepl.com)





The Mama Simba project aims to empower women (Credit: Ewaso Lions)

"We have seen a real change in the confidence and enthusiasm that the ladies have," says Shivani Bhalla, executive director of Ewaso Lions. "They were once very quiet and shy, never speaking up at any community meetings or talking about wildlife. Now they are vocal about conservation."

National Geographic Voices
24 November 2016
http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/24/pride-of-africa-new-lion-conservation-alliance/

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Pride of Africa: New Lion Conservation Alliance



Lioness resting on a sand bar, Niassa National Reserve, Mozambique (Photograph by Dr. Colleen Begg)

It is a little known fact that there are more rhinos remaining in Africa than there are lions. In fact, until the killing of the lion 'Cecil' by a U.S. hunter in Zimbabwe earlier this year, it was also not popularly known that African lion numbers are in free-fall.

The statistics are disturbing. In 1975, estimates given by the IUCN put African wild lion numbers at approximately 200,000. Forty years on, there are thought to be fewer than 20,000 left. Lions have disappeared from more than 80% of their historical range.

And yet, there is still hope for Panthera leo. Across Africa, dedicated conservationists are working to ensure that this iconic species does not become extinct. And last month, a visionary new lion conservation alliance, PRIDE, was officially launched at Houston Zoo.

As the moniker suggests, the founders of PRIDE (http://lions.houstonzoo.org/) are all women. They are all determined conservation biologists who run individual projects in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique and all of whom have had extraordinary successes in lion conservation: Dr. Alayne Cotterill and Shivani Bhalla of Ewaso Lions; Dr. Leela Hazzah and Dr. Stephanie Dolrenry of Lion Guardians; Dr. Colleen Begg of Niassa Carnivore Project (NCP) and Dr. Amy Dickman of Ruaha Carnivore Project (RCP).

The genesis of the alliance lay in a series of conversations between the six women, which unveiled their shared ethos – that of truly collaborative conservation. "We were all working towards similar goals and realised that there must be a way of working that would make our efforts more effective," says Dr. Alayne Cotterill, a British biologist who has lived and worked in Africa for 19 years. A lack of collaboration between conservation organisations had long given rise to unnecessary and time-consuming problems. Not only did the founders find that they were competing for the same funding, "which made us work less well together", but there was also a dearth of mechanisms for sharing vital data. "We realised that we – and conservation as a whole – didn't have time for such repetitive inefficiency," says Dr. Cotterill. And so, PRIDE was born.



A young male lion rests in the burnt woodland in Niassa Reserve (Photograph by Sue McConnell)

The philosophical aim of PRIDE is the elimination of any competition between the founders, for the sake of the common goal – the conservation of wild African lions. "Our vision is a world where conservation professionals work much more closely together and support each other, to

better achieve their conservation goals," says Dr. Amy Dickman, another British animal conservationist who holds the Kaplan Senior Research Fellowship in Wild Cat Conservation at Oxford University. Theirs is an ideologically sound concept whose message is clear: now is not the time for egos or professional territoriality. If lions are to survive in the wild, genuine cooperation and the down-tooling of personal agendas is paramount. "Everything we do in each individual project will have a greater impact on saving lions because it will be shared among us," says Dr. Dickman. With a study published in early November in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) suggesting that half of lion populations will be lost in key regions of Africa within two decades – if sustained conservation efforts are not made – it seems the nascence of PRIDE is timely.

"Given the perilous state of Africa's rapidly declining lion population, it is imperative that conservationists collaborate as much as possible. It is therefore really encouraging that many of the leading conservationists working to protect lions have come together to form the Pride alliance to share and swap ideas and pool their considerable knowledge," says Charlie Mayhew, Founder and Chief Executive of Tusk Trust.

On a practical level, the six founders have agreed to share "anything and everything" that they feel is of use: organisational talents, leadership abilities, raw data, sensitive material, educational packages, an understanding of key conservation tools – not to mention the vast banks of knowledge they have each accrued and, of course the experiential benefits of having spent 100 combined years deep in the African bush. Fundamental to this collaborative pledge is the founders' implicit trust in one another. This bedrock of emotional security means they feel able to disclose any professional failures without the fear of criticism, so learning from each other's mistakes as well as successes. "The emotional side will be much harder to quantify than the practical, but it is just as important," says Dr. Stephanie Dolrenry, a field scientist who has been working and living at remote sites for more than 15 years. Their vision is teamwork par excellence – accepting human differences and frailties while capitalising on assets, all in the name of the ultimate goal.

Today, the major threats to lions across Africa are conflict with people and the loss of habitat and prey. On a more specific level, threats vary between the Founders' project sites. In Mozambique's Niassa National Reserve, where South Africans Dr. Colleen Begg and her husband Keith have been working to save lions and other big cats for more than a decade, the greatest threat to lions comes from snares that are set to poach bushmeat. In the process of ensnaring game, poachers kill not only lion prey but, inadvertently, lions as well. "This problem could eventually lead to an empty woodland," says Dr. Begg. Her work in Niassa has tackled poaching with the use of the high-tech

tool, SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and also by providing locals with alternative sources of protein, such as rabbits and ducks.

In both Kenya and Tanzania the leading cause of lion deaths is conflict with people over livestock depredation. Over the past 40 years, human population growth in rural Africa has increased exponentially. The conversion of great tracts of land to agriculture or human settlement has led to an unsustainable loss of lion habitat and the poaching of traditional lion prey such as gazelle or zebra. Hungry lions then turn to easy targets – livestock – the loss of which has adverse economic effects on locals. In retaliation, livestock owners shoot, spear or poison the lions that have depleted their livelihood.

The threats to lions are not insubstantial. Yet through their individual organisations, PRIDE's founders have had positive impacts on lion communities' tolerance towards lions in their respective areas. Lion Guardians has observed a staggering tripling of the lion population across a massive area (4,000 square kms) of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem, and over $3,500,000 of potential livestock loss was avoided in 2014; retaliatory killings in certain villages in Ruaha, one of the most important areas in the world for large carnivores, have dropped by at least 80% since the inception of the RCP's conflict mitigation project six years ago; northern Kenya is one of the country's only other regions where lion populations have increased outside fenced areas over the past five years, thanks to Ewaso Lions' community programmes. And since 2012, no lions have been snared in one area in Niassa, after the NCP's livestock breeding and anti-poaching programmes were introduced – whereas 5-6 lions were being snared every year previously.

It is clear that the founders have accrued extraordinary individual successes in their fields. They also share deeply held convictions. One is that the future of the wild African lion lies in the ability of humans and lions to coexist, and that the key to peaceful co-existence is to change the attitudes of those local people who not only live with lions, but whose livelihoods are threatened by the big cats. "Lion conservation is as much about working with people as it is with lions," says Dr. Leela Hazzah, the first female Egyptian carnivore conservationist, who has been studying the motivations behind lion killings for the past decade. "We need to design innovative and culturally-appropriate interventions, which are aimed at changing human behaviour".

Each of the founders has invested hugely in engaging their local communities in conservation, running programmes with elders, children, women and warriors. These programmes fit as closely as possible with the rôles people have historically held within their communities – hence 'culturally-appropriate'. So as warriors in Kenya and Tanzania would traditionally guard their community livestock from large carnivores and theft, it makes sense that their traditional role is adapted, "instead of killing the lions that threaten

the livestock, they learn where they are and warn herders to keep their livestock away," says Dr. Hazzah. Warriors also spend time visiting manyattas [homes] and talking to villagers about how better to guard their livestock. Women have typically always been responsible for looking after livestock at home, when men drive herds further afield. So schemes have been devised that encourage women to strengthen their bomas [animal enclosures] with heavy-duty chain-link fencing and learn how to keep carnivores at bay."It is much easier to slightly tweak cultural values and practices to be more conservation-friendly than it is to completely change them," says Dr. Hazzah.

Combined, the founders' programmes have engaged over 30,000 local people in conservation, and have helped to conserve around a quarter of all the lions left in the world. "Involving all demographics is key in the conservation process," says Shivani Bhalla, a 4th generation Kenyan who grew up watching Kenya's wildlife. "I believe that conservation should become a way of life and I am excited to see that happening in Samburu."



A local boy from Niassa National Reserve acts the part of a lion with a collar in a school play (Photograph by Dr. Colleen Begg)

That livestock are kept alive is vital. But it is also essential that local communities are made aware of the direct benefits of living with lions. PRIDE founders have thus equipped schools and healthcare clinics; established community funds; sponsored local

football teams; provided pastoralists with veterinary care for their livestock; initiated workshops for local women on conservation and safe herding practices and funded local children through secondary boarding school. "I strongly believe that lion conservation is not only about providing benefits to communities to conserve lions, but also inspiring them to conserve," says Shivani Bhalla. "Often the communities we work with have had no voice in conservation, and we give them that opportunity."

Although much of the PRIDE members' work focuses on human-dominated land, which represents over half of the remaining lion range, the Founders are also convinced that all but the most famous and visited parks and reserves in Africa – such as the Selous National Park or the Serengeti National Park – must also be secured. "Most protected areas in Africa are not receiving anywhere near the funding they need to be effective," says Dr. Begg. "We need to get realistic about lion conservation and recognise that it is going to cost a lot of money." PRIDE's founders have recently been fund-raising in the U.S; a gala event held at Houston Zoo on the night of the launch raised $872,000 for PRIDE and for lion conservation worldwide.

PRIDE's ultimate goal, in their own words, is 'to secure lion populations into the future through effective collaboration'. Their formidable union brings together a unique collaboration of skills and experiences. And it also pools something less tangible but no less powerful – their respective passions. Each of the women is driven by a strong affinity for lions and an intense love of the African wild. "I am stubborn and passionate about large wilderness areas," says Dr. Begg. "I personally refuse to contemplate a future for our children without lions, elephants and rhinos." Dr. Cotterill agrees. "I instinctively feel sure that if the roar of a wild lion can no longer be heard anywhere on this planet, it will be a profound loss to us all."

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Achilles Byaruhanga
Uganda
2004

Conservation of Nabajjuzi Swamp, Uganda

Winner of the Whitley Award by the Studs Trust

Achilles has featured in a Daily Monitor article this past year. Follow this link to view Achilles' WFN profile.

Daily Monitor – Newspaper, Uganda
3 March 2016
31,000 circulation per day
http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Travel/The-african-elephant-is-under-threat/-/691238/3101102/-/90x4qw/-/index.html

Daily Monitor

The African elephant is under threat

The relationship between elephants and communities is most times not good. Where there are no barriers like trenches, Tumwesigye says elephants move from protected areas and destroy community gardens and other property resulting in serious human-elephant conflicts



The biggest threat to elephants in Uganda and globally is habitat loss. PHOTO By Edgar R. Batte

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed March 3, the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as World Wildlife Day. It is aimed at celebrating and raising awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora. As part of events to celebrate the day,

Uganda's ministry of Tourism has organised a marathon whose aim is to raise awareness, not only about the plight of elephants - which are under threat - but all wildlife species.

Chimpanzees are said to be some of the closest relatives of man with 99 per cent nearness but the elephant is not far in Intelligence Quotient (IQ. The land mammal has very good memory that can last 10 years.

A story is told of an elephant in Kasese that was injured by some people on an expedition. It kept memory of the incident and when they returned eight years later, it could remember and revenged the earlier incident. What is more is that an elephant has ability to pass on memory and emotion to another generation. It is one of the most sensitive animals. But it is not for its memory that it has been a target of threat. It is for its tusks that have ivory, so when elephants are killed, tusks are removed, sold and made into anything from jewellery to religious objects.

Conservationist Achilles Byaruhanga explains that poaching is a big issue and there are underlying factors. And whereas the whole blame may be put on international cartels and criminal gangs and the market in some Asian countries, there is also poverty challenges at home. "It becomes so attractive to kill an elephant to cash on ivory when communities have few alternative options for livelihood. Communities are easily led into poaching because they have no income generation alternatives," he argues.

Gone in 10 years.

At current poaching rates, elephant populations may not survive 10 years in the wild. Byaruhanga says that by the end of 2015, elephant numbers had increased in Uganda despite increased poaching in many other countries. Uganda's elephant population is estimated at 5,200. UWA's deputy director conservation, Charles Tumwesigye, the population is showing a steady increase having been reduced by poaching from around 30,000 in the 60s to 1,800 by 1991. "Since 1991, we have seen a steady increase to 2,400 by 2000, 4000 in 2006, 4,400 in 2010 and 5,200 in 2014," he says. The next countrywide census will be conducted in 2017. Elephant range in Uganda has greatly reduced since the 60s. Current distribution of elephants restricts them to protected areas.

According to United Nations, World Wildlife Day is an opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that conservation provides to people. The theme, "The future of wildlife is in our hands" reinforces the inextricable link between wildlife, people and sustainable development. "On this World Wildlife Day, I call on all citizens, businesses and governments to play their part in protecting the world's wild animals and plants. The actions taken by each of us will determine the fate of the world's wildlife. The future of wildlife is in our hands," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said.

Human-elephant relations.

The relationship between elephants and communities is most times not good. Where there are no barriers like trenches, Tumwesigye says elephants move from protected areas and destroy community gardens and other property resulting in serious human-elephant conflicts. He says elephants are destructive and when they pass through a garden even if they do not crop raid, the damage caused by trampling is still big enough. Byaruhanga observes that the biggest threat to elephants in Uganda and globally is habitat loss. "The habitable areas for the biggest animal on land has been shrinking over time and now elephants are living in confined areas called national parks," he explains. This has meant that the mammals do not move as they would liked. The consequence of this is that there are incursions with people and destruction of crops or houses creating conflict with people. This may result in retaliatory killing or even poaching for ivory, the most prized part of an elephant. But that has not been the case. UWA has taught communities ways through which they can deal with the wild animals.

Babu Olanya, a warden at Murchison Falls National Park says that some of the methods locals use is mixing grease and chilli on ropes then tie them around their gardens. The elephants are irritated and throw-up at the smell of chilli.

African Wildlife Foundation (Awf) communication officer, Abiaz Rwamwiri, explains that the rudimentary method has helped increase food security. A good relationship between communities and the park, and good attitude towards conservation efforts is being forged.

Awf is funded by United States Agency for International Development (Usaid) and it implements a biodiversity program that follows a modelling strategy through the 'Conservation Enterprise Development Model'. Besides the chilli, locals have also come up with more methods to deal with problem animals. Digging trenches is another. The trenches are a metre wide and a metre deep. Animals cannot jump over the trenches for fear of falling in. Byaruhanga argues that the relationship between communities and people is a hate-love one.

"In some cases where communities are getting support from UWA and others benefiting from tourism activities, communities are largely friendly. It will be in a few cases where there may be conflict due crop raiding," he states. He adds that the laws do not provide for compensation due to destruction of property by wildlife. The conservationist observes that in cases where communities face destruction of crops, houses etc, there may be animosity between the animals and the population. "This may lead to persecution of the wildlife including elephants," he further argues.

Uwec's Atim suggests people need to understand wildlife and for this to happen, they need to be educated. "Education is key. Communities living near protected areas need to be sensitised about wildlife in general, what they are, of what benefit they are and the dangers they pose," Atim observes, adding that once knowledge sets in then communities' issues need to be addressed. "In our work with communities around the Murchison Falls, we found that there is a section of people that just carry on legacy. Their

great grandparents were poachers. Majority, though, do it for survival, so if we can provide alternative livelihood sources, we can sort out a large number of those that engage in the practice for survival," he elucidates. She likes the new approach by UWA under which they signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with communities to farm bees within a certain radius of the park. The approach is two-fold because it is all-inclusive where community members will feel a part of the resource and they will do anything to ensure that the resource is protected. Animals like elephants fear bees so they keep within their parameters and this will reduce their movement closer to human settlements,"Such initiatives at the end of the day, benefit both the animals and the locals and it is very important for the locals to feel that this is their resource. They can only understand this better if they are involved in some way," she observes.

Elephant distribution countrywide

UWA's deputy director conservation, Charles Tumwesigye says the highest population of about 2,900 is in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Murchison Falls National Park hosts the second largest population of about 1300 followed by Kidepo Valley National Park with about 550 elephants. Other populations occur in Kibale National Park, Toro/Semliki Wildlife Reserve, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Ruwenzori Mountains National Park and Katonga Wildlife Reserve. The steady increase is attributed to restoration of law and order and good governance in the country that has controlled poaching in protected areas. Some elephants also moved from Virunga in DRC to Queen Elizabeth in Uganda during the time of insurgency in eastern DRC. Elephants always move away from armed conflicts and are greatly affected by insecurity. "Uganda is estimated to have more than 5,000 individuals with 2,900 in Queen Elizabeth National Park and over 1300 in Murchison Falls National Park. Other populations are scattered in other parks such as Kidepo Valley National Park and some forest parks like Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Kibale National Park, etc," he explains. But as tour operator Amos Wekesa reveals, more than 200 elephants were killed in Queen Elizabeth alone in the recent past. According to the Wildlife Conservation Society, 35,000 African elephants are killed annually, a revelation they made during the World Elephant Day last August. With the announcement, they kick-started a campaign dubbed '96 elephants', which is the estimated number of elephants that die each day. Belinda Atim is the public relationsoOfficer (PRO) of Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC). She explains, "It is humans who do the poaching, destroy habitats and in the case of the elephants have caused the loss of about 800, 000 elephants in the last three decades."

Poaching, a global threat

Charles Tumwesigye, the UWA deputy director conservation, confirms that poaching for ivory remains the biggest threat to elephants and that is despite the international ban on ivory trade. There is a thriving black market for ivory especially in eastern Asia which is a major driver for elephant poaching in Africa to supply the market.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Gerardo Ceballos
Mexico
2006

Ecology and conservation of the prairie dog grassland ecosystem of the Janos region, Chihauhua, Northern Mexico

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Winner of the Whitley Award, sponsored by the William Brake Charitable trust

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Gerardo has featured in two video interviews this year. Follow this link to view Gerardo's WFN profile.

Deep Green Resistance – Radio Interview
10 April 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3qW1t6um7c



The Open Mind – TV Interview
4 June 2016
http://www.thirteen.org/openmind/environment/nature-and-extinction/5449/



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Rachel Graham
Belize
2011

Marine conservation through community outreach and participatory research

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Winner of the Whitley Award

Rachel has fatured in three articles this year, a selection of the media coverage is shown below. Follw this link to view Rachel's WFN profile.

Save our Seas
15 December 2015
http://saveourseas.com/update/fishy-stories-from-the-deep/

Fishy stories from the deep

How do you begin to gather information about a small-scale fishery that is completely unregulated? The easiest way may be to just ask the fishers. But that may not be as easy as it sounds. Although Belize is a small country, the fishers there do not necessarily have dedicated landing sites or seafood dealers, so tracking them down requires good timing and a bit of luck.



Traditional fisher and MarAlliance team member Evaristo Muschamp conducts an interview in San Pedro. © Photo by Cameron Rhodes

So far, members of the MarAlliance team have interviewed 41 fishers from eight different fishing communities around the country to get an idea of the scope of the deep-sea fishery (deeper than 150 metres) in Belize. Of the respondents, 24 (58%) dedicate at least a portion of their fishing effort to the deep waters. Deep-sea fishers interviewed included commercial and recreational fishers, as well as licensed tour guides. At an average age of 48 years, most commercial deep-sea fishers operate out of boats smaller than eight metres (25 feet) in length and spend an average of four days at sea at a time, often using offshore cays and atolls as base camps. Their gear is mostly multi-hook vertical long-lines that are pulled in by hand or with a small pulley or winch. Although most deep-drop fishers learned the techniques from their family or friends, some received training in Jamaica and others participated in government-funded training in cooperation with Japan and Trinidad.



Fishers from Placencia pull in 400 metres of line by hand onto a home-made spool. © Photo by Ivy Baremore

The majority of commercial fishers who have been deep-sea fishing for more than five years ventured to the deeper waters out of curiosity and a love of fishing. The fishers that are newer to the deep waters (less than five years' experience) largely started 'deep drops' because they feel they can catch bigger fish in the deep sea. Restaurant and customer demand for large, high-quality fish fillets has also driven more fishers into deeper water, and many said they can make more money deep-sea fishing than they could in coastal areas. In fact, of the 17 commercial fishers interviewed who do not currently engage in deep-drop fishing, 10 (59%) said they were considering trying it out in the near future. The most common reasons given going deep are bigger fish and market demand. The most common reasons given for not going deep were fear of the deep waters and the high cost of fuel.



A young fisher new to deep-drop fishing shows off a large queen snapper, which was listed as the most preferred deep-sea fish species. © Photo by Ivy Baremore

Not a single respondent to the survey listed sharks as a targeted species, and most said sharks were considered a nuisance, or worse. Most fishers also indicated that there is not a market for shark meat in Belize and therefore they do not land sharks when they are caught. However, there is direct evidence that deep-sea sharks have been and are being landed; the market demand is probably coming from Guatemala. All fishers had caught sharks while fishing in deep waters, and the 'most unusual' sharks captured by fishers (identified from photos) were sixgill, sevengill and gulper sharks, as well as 'blob sharks', which the fisher identified as a possible megamouth after reviewing photos online.



A deep-sea fisher at Lighthouse Reef Atoll with a smoothhound shark in 2004 Photo by Rachel T Graham. © Photo by Rachel Graham

Fishers' perceptions of the fishery were somewhat varied, and opinions were likely to be most similar within a community. Most agreed, sometimes strongly, that deep-sea fisheries are the future of Belize's fishing industry, and the majority found deep-sea fishing to be overall more profitable, though also more difficult, than coastal fishing.

As coastal fisheries continue to decline and demand for high-quality fish fillets increases, the deep-sea fishery in Belize is primed to explode. Results from these surveys show that young fishers are increasingly interested in trying their luck out 'in the blue'. Fishing effort in deeper waters will continue to increase, as will by-catch of unstudied (and possibly undiscovered) deep-sea sharks and finfishes. In addition, government initiatives aim to move more fishers offshore, even though there is virtually no information about the species, habitat or ecosystems of the deep waters of Belize. We are striving to fill this gap by continuing to conduct surveys – both independent and fishery-dependent – and by monitoring so that informed management can be put in place. To paraphrase one fisher we interviewed, 'We need to see what is in the deep before everyone gets out there.'

San Pedro Sun - Newspaper
24 February 2016
http://www.sanpedrosun.com/conservation/2016/02/24/unsustainable-shark-fishing-is-killing-the-belize-marine-ecosystem/

THE SAN PEDRO SUN
The Island Paper & Online News Source
"Serving San Pedro since 1991"

The marine conservation community is in an outrage over the recent report of the gill net and long line fishing of sharks occurring near the Lighthouse Reef Atoll. Both MarAlliance and Oceana in Belize have expressed their discontent over the unsustainable practice which in drastically damaging our marine ecosystem. But in the fishermen's defense, the practice is legal in Belize, as there are no laws against gill net or line fishing, or even fishing for sharks. In fact, the only shark species protected in Belize are Whale Sharks and Nurse Sharks, allowing other species such as Caribbean Reef Sharks and Hammer Heads to be legally killed.



Reports surfaced on Sunday, February 21st, when MarAlliance posted on their social media page images of the shark massacre. The pictures posted represented a portion of a single day's fishing with nets and longlines, and included at least 32 sharks representing three species, including the endangered great hammerhead and pregnant Caribbean reef sharks. "The sharks were landed at Sandbore Caye and Hat Caye at Lighthouse Reef Atoll. Little to none of the shark meat is consumed in Belize (it's full of neurotoxic

mercury) as it's traditionally exported to Guatemala. And Hammerheads (meat and or fins) cannot be legally exported across national boundaries without a specific export license that is ultimately approved by the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). This international convention, to which Belize is a signatory, notes that countries wanting to export listed species (such as the Hammerheads and even conch – both listed under the Appendix II) must prove internationally through a process called a non-detriment finding prepared with Belize's independent Scientific Authority, that the fishery for the listed species is sustainable. However, fishing for large, long-lived, late maturing and low production sharks including Hammerheads and Caribbean reef sharks are recognized worldwide as Unsustainable," stated MarAlliance.



Sharks play an important role to Belize's Tourism Industry

MarAlliance further explained the importance of a healthy shark population to Belize's marine ecosystem. "These sharks were a mainstay of dive and snorkel tourism at the atoll and help to support many local businesses that rely on tourism for their income. These dead sharks represented millions of dollars in lost revenue, not only to Belize's tourism sector and the many families and politicians they support, but also to coral reef ecosystem resilience, as these animals play a critical role in maintaining reef health. Live sharks and rays generate far more income to a country than shark fishing," said Executive Director of MarAlliance, Dr. Rachel Graham.

Vice President of Oceana in Belize, Janelle Chanona also commented on the matter. "Since 2010, Oceana has been advocating for a ban on gill nets, and this was out of the result of the feasibility study that we did when we went about selecting campaigns to work on in Belize. So we have been wholly supporting the fishermen of Belize, since we started in Belize in 2010, saying the gill nets are so indiscriminate [that] they need to be banned from use in Belize. I think this is where the use of technology certainly serves to highlight the scope of this issue. Last February we had the instance of a rare Scalloped Hammerhead drowning in a gill net in Hopkins. Two weeks ago we had another Hammerhead, same thing, and I think Rocky Point, off Monkey River, and now MarAlliance posted several photos of Hammerheads, reef sharks, tiger sharks, harnessed using gill nets. Gill nets are used as the primary gear to harvest sharks, and what this is showing you is just a snapshot of what has been happening. If we're not managing how many sharks are being extracted, that promises to put the entire ecosystem into an imbalance," said Chanona, who indicated that Belizean fishermen have been asking for a ban on gillnets since 1997.





As apex predators they maintain a balance in the marine ecosystem

Also supporting the ban on gill nets, long lines and shark fishing is the Belize Game Fish Association. "The Belize Game Fish Association has been working for some time to fight gill nets and to fight shark fishing and, you know, shark fishing is something that worldwide has had a massive impact on the state of the oceans. So we've been

pushing very hard to try to get shark fishing either extremely regulated, but preferably completely removed from or banned, on the laws of Belize. It has a massive detrimental impact to the economy of Belize. Belize is completely… largely dependent on tourism. A quarter of our GDP comes from tourism and I think one in five jobs are tourism-based or at least benefit from tourism. And removing sharks or using gill nets to capture sharks on our reefs means that tourists can't go see them, and being able to take the tourists time and time again to Lighthouse Reef, as most people have come to expect, to see sharks is no longer going to be possible if this sort of shark fishing continues, especially using nets because nets. It's not just removing sharks, it's going to move everything else along the reef," said President of the Belize Game Fish Association, Andrew Roe.



In response to the conservation groups, the Belize Fisheries Administrator Beverly Wade stated that the Government of Belize has launched a National Sharks Working Group and is disappointed at the way MarAlliance handled the matter. "In a recent correspondence to the department for the renewal of that organization annual research license, there is a line there telling us that in the two primary areas where there has been research conducted, and where shark fishing is being done, that population seems stable. This is coming from people who are actually out there carrying out the research. So it's not that the shark fishing is functioning in a vacuum somewhere. There is no argument that there is a need for us to look at probably more regulations for our shark fishers, but regulations have to also be based on sound information. It is a matter of putting in regulations to address whether there is conservation targets or whether there is sustainable targets at the end of the day. It depends on what is the recommendations coming out in terms of how you move forward with a resource like this," argued Wade. Wade went on to indicate that the practice is sustainable according to the research conducted by the department.

According to the Belize Fisheries Department, only about 60 fishermen are licensed to catch sharks with the peak season of fishing sharks being November to March. Wade indicated that about 25 thousand pounds of shark meat are exported yearly. The landing sites for shark fishermen are Sandbore Caye, Rocky Point and Robinson Point. "I will say that we are very much disappointed in the treatment of the fishermen. I honestly think that is wrong and from the mere fact that the fishers allowed people to document what they are doing, it shows you that those people knew they were not doing anything that was illegal," ended Wade.



In an effort to end shark fishing, MarAlliance has launched a petition where they ask Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development, Honorable Gaspar Vega, to ban the use of gill nets and long lines. "The use of unsustainable and unselective fishing gears such as nets and longlines are disproportionately contributing to the decline in Belize's finfish as well as a host of other protected or threatened species including turtles, manatees, recreational fish, sharks and rays. These gears also represent an inequitable means of fishing where a few fishers capture large numbers of animals at the expense of many fishers who work hard to sustain themselves, their families and the country's fisheries using sustainable hook and line fishing. Current legislation limiting the number and size of nets is unenforceable and the use of longlines is not restricted. Moreover surveys conducted have shown that the majority of Belize's fishers support a ban on nets and longlines to reverse fisheries' decline," stated Graham.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Rosamira Guillen
Colombia
2015

Proyecto Titi: expanding conservation efforts to protect the cotton-top tamarin in northern Colombia

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Sarah Chenevix-Trench

Rosamira has featured in a Creative Mornings article this past year, to view Rosamira's WFN profile, follow this link.

Creative Mornings
30 April 2016
https://creativemornings.com/talks/rosamira-guillen-ambientalista-y-directora-de-proyecto-titi

CREATIVE MORNINGS Barranquilla

Rosamira Guillen · Ambientalista y directora de Proyecto Titi

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Rosamira Guillen es Arquitecta con un Máster of Landscape Architecture de la Universidad de New York; especialista en Gestión Medio Ambiental de la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid y tiene un título en Estrategias de Gestión de Recursos Internacionales. Entre sus logros se destaca el merecimiento a las becas: J. William Fulbright, Fulbright, Encyclopaedia Britannica y fue Miembro Honorario del

International Honor Society Sigma Lambda Alphal. Hoy en día es Directora Ejecutiva de la Fundación Proyecto Tití, que describe como "un modelo efectivo de conservación para Colombia. El compromiso que tiene nuestro equipo de trabajo de proteger al tití cabeciblanco y su hábitat, al tiempo que se proveen oportunidades para que las comunidades locales se involucren con la conservación de este primate en peligro crítico, con toda seguridad marcará la diferencia en la vida de muchos colombianos". En Abril y bajo el tema global de RIESGO, Rosamira compartirá su historia y las realidades de trabajar por el bienestar de una especie en peligro en un momento de crisis medio ambiental.

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Café Orgánico Isabelita es cultivado en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Colombia) y fue creado para promover la cultura del buen café en el país. // Isabelita Organic Coffee is grown in the Sierra Nevada in Santa Marta (Colombia) and it was created to promote the good coffee culture in Colombia.

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Estudio elGozo es una empresa austro-colombiana que se creó en barranquilla cuando se encontraron dos formas diferentes de ver el mundo: la antropología y la cultura visual. A partir de estas dos miradas desarrollan metodologías que permiten usar lo audiovisual como herramienta para empoderar a las personas, sus comunidades, a los proyectos y sus equipos técnicos. Las piezas audiovisuales resultantes de estos procesos participativos sorprenden gracias a la presencia de los enfoques de las comunidades y al riguroso cuidado de la estética. Estudio elGozo es además el encargado de la creación y grabación de todo el material audiovisual de CreativeMornings/Barranquilla.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Este sábado #CMBaq se presenta en el marco de La Kermesse del MAMB. Vamos a tener la oportunidad de conocer más talentos y productos locales.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Melvin Gumal
Malaysia
2014

Protecting Borneo's iconic great apes: Conservation of orang-utans in Sarawak

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Winner of the Whitley Award for Conservation in the Ape Habitats, donated by the Arcus Foundation

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Melvin has featured in six international articles this year including the Borneo Post and Star Metro. Follow this link to view Melvin's WFN profile. A selection of Melvin's media coverage is included below.

The Borneo Post – Newspaper
23 May 2016

Addressing the unfounded allegations of exploitation in Sarawak, the permanent secretary of Resource Planning and Environment, Datuk Sudarsono said that Batang Ai (Ulu Menyang) has more than 2 thousand orangutans.He noted that the government declared 14,000 hectares in Ulu Menyang as an orangutan conservation area.

He also said Sarawak has positive orangutan conservation efforts and hopes to maintain and enhance the current number of orangutans.Sudarsono who was invited to witness the pledge signing by 13 different organizations, in a show of their support towards orangutan and shark conservation, made the remarks in an interview.

He called on local and international corporations to contribution to the state's Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund.He also said "If all of us individuals and organizations take that first step, we assume responsibility towards a certain issue, then some of our actions will create a big impact in the universe""Similarly, in shark conservation, if we stop eating shark's fin, there will be no demand. Hence there will be no supply thus we can ultimately achieve the purpose of protection sharks."

In order to promote orangutan and shark conservation, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak campus and Sarawak Biodiversity Center jointly organized the "Ride for the Wild" cycling event. The event which commenced in the morning at Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak campus includes a 13 km and 38 km ride. It attracted more than 100 enthusiastic participants.
See below for articles in the press regarding this event:

6 THE BORNEO POST Monday, May 23, 2016 HOME

'Contribute towards state's wildlife conservation'

By Lim How Pin
reporters@theborneopost.com

KUCHING: Datu Sadarsono Osman has called upon corporations in Sarawak and Malaysia as well as across the globe to contribute to the state's Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund.

The permanent secretary to the Ministry of Resource Planning and Environment said corporate individuals, who were busy with their businesses, could give money to the fund towards conservation of wildlife.

"Obviously you would not have the time to deal with orangutan directly, but by contributing to the fund, the people with the right expertise will get on with the conservation work.

"By contributing to the fund, they will also be able to enjoy some tax benefits," he said when met by the press after witnessing a pledge signing by 18 organisations in support of orangutan and shark conservation during a simple ceremony held at Hilton Hotel here yesterday.

Organisations that signed the pledge were Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Program, Ulu Ai Conservancy Sarawak Energy Berhad, Sarawak Biodiversity Centre, Raw Kitchen, Orangutan Sdn Bhd, Royal Malaysian Police, Hilton Kuching, Borneo Convention Centre Kuching, Borneo Adventure, Aiman Batang Ai Resort and Retreat, Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus and Permai Rainforest Resort. Sadarsono said he was happy to be a part of the pledge signing ceremony to conserve sharks and orangutans.

"Especially so when Sarawak, our state, has been accused of orangutan genocide which is not true at all.



Sadarsono (centre, seated) with (from left, seated) Melvin and Gregory pose with representatives of the pledge sign ng and some participants of the ride. — Photo by Muhammad Rais Sanusi

> Obviously you would not have the time to deal with orangutan directly, but by contributing to the fund, the people with the right expertise will get on with the conservation work.
>
> Datu Sadarsono Osman, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Resource Planning and Environment

"The government has recently declared some 14,000 hectares in the Ulu Menyang Batang Ai as conservation area for orangutan," he said, adding that the state government would do its level best in the conservation of orangutans.

According to him, it is estimated that about 2,000 orangutans are found in Ulu Menyang Batang Ai.

On the conservation of sharks, Sadarsono said individuals ought to assume responsibility and stop eating shark fin soup.

He was pleased to note that two hoteliers were among those who signed the pledge towards the good cause.

"When we think of ourselves as individuals, we always feel that we are just little tiny dots in this universe. We always feel that we are insignificant. And when we think of the problems of the world, we feel very helpless.

"If all of us as individuals and organisations take that first step, we assume responsibility towards a certain cause, then some of our actions will create a big impact in the universe."

A 'Ride for the Wild', jointly organised by the Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Chapter, Sarawak Biodiversity Centre and Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus, was held in conjunction with the pledge signing ceremony.

Over 260 individuals took part in the ride which began and ended at Swinburne Sarawak.

All proceeds from the event were channelled to conservation education activities to create awareness among the community.

Among those present were director of Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Program Dr Melvin Gumal and Swinburne Sarawak deputy vice-chancellor and chief executive officer Prof. Janet Gregory.

Sin Chew Newspaper
23 May 2016



04 | 2016年5月23日 | 星期一 南砂 | 星洲日报

蘇達索諾向企業界喊話

資助野生保育享扣稅

> 若有意为人猿保育尽一份绵力，却得于工作繁忙无暇参与，企业机构可透过金钱上的资助做出贡献，任何捐出资金援助的本地企业机构，可享有扣税优惠。■苏达索诺

（古晋22日讯）砂资源规划及环境部部长兼砂华人事务部长苏达索诺呼吁国内外企业机构，透过金钱资助方式，贡献予州政府所成立的野生动物保育信托基金。

苏达索诺指出，若有意为人猿保育工作尽一份绵力，却得于工作繁忙无暇参与，企业机构可透过金钱上的资助做出贡献，让这方面的专家进行相关保育工作。

■皆当艾辟人猿保育区

苏达索诺也提到，砂司法机关会援助本地企业机构，可享有扣税优惠。

他今日受邀见证来自12个不同领域机构有份的人员，签署人猿与鲨鱼保育誓言书，意思访问时如此表示。

他说，为了让人猿有栖息之地，政府也宣布在皆当艾乌鲁孟烟（Ulu Mentan）开辟一个1万4千公顷的土地，作为人猿保育区。

“我们常认为，一个人的力量很小，不足以带来任何改变，但若人人都能踏出第一步，就能达至成效，其正能量威力是不容小看的。”

针对一项有关砂州婆罗人猿未在环境们不幸惨死，苏达索诺民说，乌鲁孟烟目前拥有逾2千公里，当局希望能维续维持基至提高有关人猿数量。

至鲨鱼保育方面，他表示，同样的，只要停止食用鱼翅，这种小动物也可以带来正面的效果。

保育人猿鲨魚

逾百人騎腳車簽誓言書

各领域代表签署人猿与鲨鱼保育誓言书后，与在见证者合影；前排左起为野生动物保育协会主席海尔文吉玛、苏达索诺及科威本科技大学砂分校校长杰妮佛。

各领域代表进行人猿与鲨鱼保育誓言书签署仪式。

（古晋22日讯）为响应人猿与鲨鱼保育工作，“Ride for the Wild”骑自行车活动，今早于斯威本科技大学砂分校展开，吸引逾百人参与。

这项活动由野生动物保育协会（WCS）、斯威本科技大学砂分校及砂生物多样性中心联办，有三场活动共分为13公里和环骑行及38公里组别。

骑行活动结束后，参与者动身前往古晋市区参加签署一项签署人猿与鲨鱼保育誓言仪式，并获得砂资源规划与环境部部长兼砂华人事务部长苏达索诺见证。

野生动物保育协会主席海尔文吉玛说，人猿与鲨鱼（包括黄鲨鱼）保育工作经常被忽视。

根据历史记录，砂州于1100年时期，人猿族遍布处可见，不过，随着时代变迁，时至今日，人猿只出现在皆当艾、兰扎邦道及诗巫第一省。

Arcus Foundation
25 May 2016
http://www.arcusfoundation.org/blog/great-apes/can-save-orangutan-not-late/

"We Can Save the Orangutan. It's Not Too Late."

Melvin Gumal, director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Malaysia Program, received the 2014 Whitley Award (the international conservation prize) for his decades-long effort to conserve the world's rarest orangutans in Malaysia's state of Sarawak, Borneo. He and his team of researchers involve local communities, parks management, and government in enforcement of existing laws and development of livelihood sources that discourage illegal hunting, logging and aim at protection of forestland.

In August 2015, the chief minister of Sarawak issued a historic edict to block the expansion and creation of new oil palm plantations, the issuance of new timber licenses, and the commercial trade in orangutans.

There are two species of orangutans: one in Sumatra and another on the island of Borneo, of which there are three sub-species: the Northwest, Northeast, and Central Bornean orangutan. The number of orangutans in Sumatra is less than 7,000, while the cumulative number of orangutans in Borneo—which includes the two Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak—could range from 40,000 to 50,000. Although the the orangutans in Sumatra are in trouble, I feel there's a great chance the ones in Borneo will survive.

In the area that I work in, close to about 2,000 square kilometers, we have a little over 2,000 orangutans [of the most threatened Northwest sub-species]. It is very difficult to ascertain exactly what they are doing in their daily life. We've have people follow

orangutans over time. For four months, we had one person of our crew going in their habitat where he only saw the orangutans twice. And in the morning, they disappeared.
Quite a while ago, everybody primarily thought that orangutans were arboreal, until our work in 2013 and 2014 showed that these animals actually do come to the ground. Personally, I've seen them on the ground: not in captivity, not in rehabilitation centers, but in the fields and in the swamps. I thought it was abnormal, but once the literature and people started piecing together camera trap work, they found that they do come down often. These are some new things we are finding right now.

When I was given the Whitley Award, the effect was that Sarawak had won an award, which is important for orangutans. It gives them huge support and we have a sense that maybe we're doing the right thing.

The orangutan itself is protected [through endangered species laws], but the land on which they live is not. So if you want orangutans to survive, you have to protect the land as well. People say that they'll survive in logged forest, but there's a level of stress associated with that. Much like we go home and live easy, we want orangutans to be able to be free and not be completely stressed out every time they go home. We need to give that to orangutans, too.

One of the major threats for orangutans on Borneo is complete land conversion from forest to oil palm plantations. You have massive land clearance where the forest just disappears. My colleagues working in Kalimantan [Indonesian Borneo] have images of solitary orangutans up in a tree, and the rest of it is cleared forest. Orangutans are also getting killed by the people working in the plantations going after productivity of oil palm crops. You don't want them coming through and taking your fruit branches for food. So you actually have not just land clearance, but also killing of orangutans.
But, in the forested area where I'm working, instead of shrinking, it has been the reverse: We've been able to increase the land area on the island of Borneo under protection for orangutans. Since 1983, there's been about a 40 percent increase in land area and more than a 40 percent increase in the number of orangutans under protection. Our aspirational goal is close to a 70 or 80 percent increase in land area under protection and up to an 83 percent increase in the number of orangutans under protection.

However, just because we have a ray of sunshine…doesn't mean that in the future, it's going to be the same. There is always a constant push to go for development, which means one has to be on their toes the whole time.

Meeting our goals will mean not just land protection but a level of engagement among agencies to secure greater enforcement and greater cooperation on the ground. It will be

self-sustaining, rather than just having outsiders push to make protect the land. If we can achieve this in the long run, we're on a really good path in trying to protect orangutans.

I think that we'll get through this and that we'll see orangutan numbers increase. We will be able to hold on to the orangutan. But I would like people to push as much as possible.

If you really want to save orangutans, you will go through all the tools in your toolbox and use the ones that work. If we have that mentality, it can be done. It's not too late.

For more information regarding the state of orangutans and great apes worldwide, please visit State of the Apes.

The Sun Daily - Newspaper
6 September 2016
http://www.thesundaily.my/news/1961572

Bornean orangutan one step away from extinction




HONOLULU: Malaysia may lose its iconic species - the Bornean orangutan - as it is now one step away from extinction, revealed International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress 2016.

IUCN Red List assessment, which studies the number of species in the wild, revealed that the Bornean orangutan (Pongo pygmaeus) has moved from Endangered to Critically Endangered.

Critically Endangered is the highest risk category assigned by the IUCN Red List that identifies species that are in all probability already extinct but for which confirmation is required; for example, through more extensive surveys being carried out and failing to find any individuals.

Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia director Dr Melvin Gumal who also wrote the IUCN Red List report told theSun that the orangutans are the rarest subspecies in the world.

"Across Borneo, the loss of orangutan numbers are big enough to push their status to the 'critically endangered' category. They often are killed when they lose their habitats during forest clearing for plantations, young orangutans are sought as exotic pets and at rare occasions they are consumed by the locals as protein source," he said.

Dr Melvin Gumal was honoured in 2014 and awarded the Whitley Award for Conservation in Ape Habitats, one of eight prizes by the Whitley Fund for Nature, for his efforts in protecting the great apes.

However, all may not be lost for these giant apes. Dr Melvin says if the killing stops, they will have a chance to survive.

"We don't want to lose them like the Sumatran rhinoceros which are now extinct in the wild of Peninsular Malaysia. Conservation efforts need to be stepped up by increased patrolling and habitat protection with the support of locals," he added.

He said the orangutan population is declining sharply as the forests they live in are turned into oil palm, rubber or paper plantations, and others are killed by humans.

“This is the first time in many decades that we have a clear understanding of Bornean orangutan population trends,” said Erik Meijaard, one of the assessors of the species who is also a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission’s Primates Specialist Group and director of Borneo Futures, an initiative dedicated to preserving Borneo’s biodiversity.

“As orangutans are hunted and pushed out of their habitats, losses to this slow-breeding species are enormous and will be extremely difficult to reverse.”

The Red List says that the two major reasons why the orangutan population are in sharp decline are destruction, degradation and fragmentation of their habitats, and hunting.

"Recurrent forest fires, especially in peat forests, cause additional sharp declines about once every decade. Bornean orangutans decreased by more than 60% between 1950 and 2010, and a further 22% decline is projected to occur between 2010 and 2025. Combined, this equates to a loss of more than 82% over 75 years, 1950–2025," it says.

IUCN Red List showed four out of six great apes are one step away from extinction including the Eastern Gorilla, Western Gorilla and Sumatran orangutan.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Panut Hadisiswoyo
Indonesia
2015

Protection of Sumatran orangutans and their habitat, Indonesia

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated for Conservation in Ape Habitats donated by the Arcus Foundation

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Panut has featured in three articles this year including National Geographic. Follow this link to view Panut's WFN profile. A selection of Panut's media coverage is below.

Beacon Reader
16 October 2016
https://www.beaconreader.com/annette-gartland/orangutan-rescue-teams-confront-danger-cruelty-and-illegality

Orangutan rescue teams confront danger, cruelty, and illegality

OVERVIEW

Panut Hadisiswoyo is an award-winning environmentalist who founded the Orangutan Information Centre (OIC) on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The OIC team members face huge challenges in rescuing and protecting orangutans and restoring habitat that was destroyed by palm oil companies and others. They have replanted large areas of forest and are seeing the return of orangutans, elephants, and other animals to those areas. They run education projects, support sustainable farming, and promote eco-tourism.

Profile of Panut Hadisiswoyo and the Orangutan Information Centre in Medan, Sumatra.

In April this year, Hadisiswoyo won the prestigious Whitley Fund for Nature Award, which is donated by the Arcus Foundation. In September, he won the Pongo Environmental Award, given by the Orang Utan Republik Foundation.

As director of the Orangutan Information Centre (OIC) in Medan, Sumatra, Panut Hadisiswoyo faces a host of complex daily challenges. Not only are he and his team working to rescue and protect orangutans; they are also restoring habitat in the national park, fighting encroachment, helping to build up local sustainable farming, educating children about conservation, and producing books.

Members of the OIC team are also creating a register of local plant species, monitoring flora and fauna, promoting ecotourism, mapping forest areas with the help of drones, and teaching locals how to prevent conflict with animals who are being driven into populated areas because their forest homes are being destroyed.

There is now almost zero encroachment around the OIC's forest restoration site in the Sei Betung area, Hadisiswoyo says. There are even former illegal loggers who are now supporting the OIC's work and some are involved in an eco-tourism project in Tangkahan.

Hadisiswoyo points to deforestation as the main cause of human-orangutan conflict. The deforestation triggers poaching, and the primates get pushed on to farmland. "All these things are related," Hadisiswoyo said, "but the root of the problem is orangutans losing their habitat. Their habitat is fragmented and they are captured by humans and humans sell them to businessmen."

Since 2012, the OIC has rescued 79 orangutans, including 24 this year. Fifty-four of the primates were rescued from isolated community farmland and plantation areas and 25 were confiscated from private residences.

"The 52 orangutans that were rescued from farmlands were still exhibiting typical natural behaviour from living in the wild, albeit in a conflict situation," Hadisiswoyo said. "They were translocated and released into protected forest blocks."

The remaining orangutans have entered the rehabilitation process and will be reintroduced to the protected forests in Sumatra. Five rehabilitated orangutans have been released to a reintroduction site.

"Adults, juveniles, mothers with babies – they end up in plantations looking for the forest that used to be here, for the fruits they need to survive," Hadisiswoyo said. "These rescues clearly indicate that orangutans are losing their habitat at an alarming rate. While rainforests are cleared to make way for oil palm development, orangutans and many other species are being put at extreme risk; they cannot survive when their home is destroyed."



Rescue on April 3, 2015.



Rescue in March 2014 of a young male orangutan isolated on farmland in Langkat, North Sumatra.

In a rescue on April 3, the OIC's Human Orangutan Conflict Response Unit (HOCRU) found an adult male isolated in a tiny patch of forest surrounded on all sides by oil palms. He was very underweight, and the vet found a bullet in his chest, which was removed on the scene.

"It is likely that the orangutan would have starved, or been shot again if he had not been rescued," Hadisiswoyo said.

"People shoot orangutans to protect crops, to kill a mother in order to capture her baby to sell, or just for sport in some cases."

The orangutan rescues often involve risks to the OIC team and the orangutans, but the primates are in more danger when marooned in patches of forest surrounded by oil palms, so the challenge has to be met.

In trying to confiscate orangutans being kept as pets, Hadisiswoyo has put his life on the line many times. One day in October 2013, he saw an orangutan being transported in a becak (auto rickshaw) in Medan. With complete disregard for his own safety, he raced over to the becak, challenged the man transporting the primate, and demanded that he hand over the animal.

The man Hadisiswoyo challenged was an orangutan trader, who was most likely a middleman for a trafficker, who would then sell on the primate as a pet. The most likely customer would be a local businessmen or a high-ranking police officer.

Hadisiswoyo tells how risky it was for him to try and reclaim an orangutan from a trader.

"The guy said he loved the orangutan and would kill me if I took it. I forgot my own safety and jumped in the becak. I was trying to take photos. I didn't want to jump out as I was determined to get the orangutan. I forgot that I was risking my life."
In an extremely lucky development for Hadisiswoyo, the becak broke down. He called his team, and the forestry department, but the forestry department staff were unavailable.
"In the meantime, the trader managed to contact his friend, a big guy on a motorbike, who came and grabbed the orangutan and ran away."

Hadisiswoyo and the team managed to detain the trader and demanded to know where the orangutan, who was young and tame, had been taken. Finally the forest rangers arrived and Hadisiswoyo managed to establish where the primate was.
The orangutan was rescued and, the next day, Hadisiswoyo filed a report, which he had hoped would enable the forest rangers to arrest the trader. Nothing happened, however.
"The authorities didn't want to process the case," Hadisiswoyo said. "They don't want to prosecute anyone involved in this trafficking. It is very frustrating."

Cruelty and illegality
Hadisiswoyo tells one heart-rending tale after another: stories of orangutans found riddled with air rifle pellets, and the tale of an orangutan called Jack, who died a week after he was rescued from an amusement park in Aceh, his stomach horrendously bloated from a parasite infection.

Jack's case was not an isolated one. Hadisiswoyo found another orangutan chained by the neck in another Aceh amusement park. "I tried to rescue it, but didn't succeed and wrote two letters to the authorities, but still nothing happened. The orangutan just stayed there. The park had no licence for this animal. I cried when I saw her. She was being given garbage to eat.
"They also had civets, monkeys, and deer; and three sun bears, who are supposed to be protected, who were being given fried rice with soya bean sauce to eat."
The same day as he discovered the orangutan in the amusement park, Hadisiswoyo found another one, about five years old, being kept as a pet. The owner refused to hand over the primate. "The wildlife authority didn't want to take it. In Aceh, many of these businessmen have the backing of former separatist combatants, who are still very powerful. They still carry guns."

On another occasion last year, Hadisiswoyo went with his rescue team to confiscate a male orangutan, aged between 12 and 15, who was kept in a tiny cage in a backyard in Aceh on the property of a high-ranking police officer. The primate had been kept there for more than a decade.
"The police officer started banging the table, insisting that he was the lawmaker," Hadisiswoyo said. "He said I shouldn't try teaching him what was legal or illegal. He got

very stressed and emotional and kept telling me how he loved the orangutan like his own son."

Hadisiswoyo tried to explain that the orangutan would grow to a serious size and could even escape and kill someone. "He is someone who is supposed to prosecute the people who are keeping orangutans, but he himself was keeping one.

"It is completely illegal to keep orangutans as pets, but people think of them as a status symbol, something to show that they are above the law. It is especially shocking when it is members of the police force that keep orangutans as pets, but unfortunately this is not uncommon."

Eventually, the police officer asked for money to give up the orangutan, arguing that he had spent a lot of money keeping the primate. The forest rangers arrived, but did nothing to help, and actually tried to persuade Hadisiswoyo to give in to the demand for money. In the end, Hadisiswoyo and the team had to leave the orangutan behind.

A member of the OIC staff went back to the house a week later to check on the orangutan, but it had already been taken away.

The Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) did eventually intervene and confiscate the primate from the police officer, but instead of being taken to a rehabilitation centre, the animal was sold to Medan zoo, along with a baby orangutan, who had also been kept as a pet.

In yet another challenge to the wildlife authority's own contravention of the law, Hadisiswoyo launched a petition to lobby for the release of the orangutan into the wild. He said at the time that both confiscated orangutans were in good health and would be good candidates for reintroduction to their natural habitat.

"It is the government's own policy that all orangutans confiscated from the pet trade should be returned to the forest, yet the very agency that is responsible for making sure this happens sent these two orangutans to live out their days in a zoo where orangutans die because of the bad conditions."



Pongky at Medan zoo.

In the end, the zoo offered to release one of the orangutans in exchange for another rescued one; an exchange that Hadisiswoyo was unwilling to accept. He did, though, succeed in obtaining the release of the younger of the primates, a female who was taken to the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme (SOCP) quarantine centre in Batu Mbelin, north Sumatra. However, the older orangutan – now known as Pongky – is still in the zoo.

Hadisiswoyo believes that Indonesian zoos are paying traffickers large amounts of money for orangutans.

Hadisiswoyo also tells of one case of an orangutan found on an oil palm plantation with pellets in his cheek, his gums, and his arms. After surgery, the primate survived, but there have been many cases in Indonesia in which rescued orangutans have died.

In one particularly tragic case in December last year, an orangutan was discovered on an oil palm plantation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, with more than 40 shotgun pellets in her body. The veterinary team at the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF) in Nyaru Menteng tried to save the primate's life, but she died the next day.

In the face of such horror, it's a struggle to ward off desperation. "If you give in to hopelessness it all becomes worse," Hadisiswoyo said. "The problems have to be addressed."

Rescue of a mother orangutan and her baby from a forest area that was about to be bulldozed (February 2015).

Thankfully, there are success stories. Hadisiswoyo recalls one rescue in January 2012. "The orangutan's leg was caught in a trap. He was injured right down to the bone. He

was sent to the quarantine centre for surgery and recovered, and was able to be released into the forest. It was wonderful to see."

Canada, and a chance encounter in the Aceh forest

Hadisiswoyo became interested in environmental issues when he was on a youth exchange programme in Canada in 1996. "I was just 19 years old. The programme was to enable young people to understand local culture and experience community engagement. I was given the chance to work in an NGO: a first-nation organisation working with children and young people.

"Then I became engaged with water and timber issues in Williams Lake in British Colombia, and this drove me to want to know more about these issues: why water is so important, how forests are being managed, and why they do selective logging. It gave me a lot of perspective about environmental issues. When I returned to Indonesia I just wanted to work on protecting the environment."

When Hadisiswoyo came back to Indonesia in 1997, he tried to get a job with a European Union forest management project, but ended up working as a teacher and research assistant.

His dedication to saving orangutans and their habitat was sparked by a chance encounter in Aceh in 1998. "I got a job as an English teacher and was assigned to come to the forest in Aceh during the civil war. At that time not many people wanted to come to Aceh, but I didn't have any fear at all because I just liked the job and the fact that I would be in the forest. I actually felt safer than in the city because it was so peaceful."

Hadisiswoyo collected data about biodiversity and bird and mammal density during the day, and taught English to research assistants in the evening.

"One day I was sitting on the veranda of the research camp and, to my surprise, I saw an orangutan, I think juvenile, I think female, come down from the tree, maybe ten metres away, and we had eye contact for a long time.

"I was just amazed. It was my first ever encounter with an orangutan. After that I became more curious about orangutans and wanted to know more. Wild orangutans usually avoid people. I believe that encounter was a sign for me."

At that time, Hadisiswoyo says, there was no specific local project to help the orangutans. There were no local or government initiatives to protect their habitat and stop the pet trade and poaching. In 2001, the OIC was founded, and the campaigning began.

Starting with education

When Hadisiswoyo started the OIC, he didn't intend it to be a rescue organisation. "At the beginning, I wanted to focus on education, but then I saw orangutans in life-threatening situations and I had to set up a rescue team."

Hadisiswoyo wants to write an illustrated book for local children and youngsters that would be about orangutans being trapped inside an oil palm plantation and would include information about ecology and orangutan behaviour.

The OIC provides scholarships, and involves young people in its projects. "When they come and see what we are doing, and participate in our efforts, they understand more about the importance of protecting the forest. Our hope is that they then change their behaviour, and support us."

It's when Hadisiswoyo goes up to the restoration site and other forest projects that his stress reduces and he sees that much has been achieved.

"People see me saving orangutans, but what they often don't realise is that, by saving orangutans, we are saving the forests, and the forests are life. We are saving life.
"We need to get to the point where we are no longer sending orangutans to quarantine centres. We need to focus on law enforcement, bring an end to the sources of conflict, and stop the pet trade.
"Despite all the challenges on the ground, I haven't lost hope. I keep trying to think of something new; innovative solutions for the forest. I must carry on and I want to engage young people and convince them to support what we do. I don't want them to lose hope."
The OIC has 12 patrol teams, but the team struggles to secure adequate funding.
There is close collaboration between the OIC and staff of the Gunung Leuser National Park, who are working together to combat encroachment within the park. The OIC is sharing information obtained from drone missions over the park, which show extensive encroachment in some areas. The OIC also works very closely with the SOCP. Rescued orangutans who cannot be released directly into the wild are taken to the SOCP quarantine centre.

Restoring the forest
Since the OIC's restoration project began in 2007, the team has reclaimed about 500 hectares of land that was illegally planted by palm oil companies. More than 10,000 illegal oil palms have been removed.

The OIC team is now securing a new 200-hectare area in the Langkat district, where there is still illegal cultivation. "We want to do community engagement there," Hadisiswoyo said. "However, it's risky for the staff, dealing with people who will do all they can to grab land. It's gangsters who are cutting down the trees, and selling off cheap plots of land. And sometimes the land mafia are backed up by the military.
"It is a complex situation. The park rangers don't have the capacity to protect the area properly and are not getting the support they need from the government to stop the encroachment."
Since 1990 more than 22,000 hectares of forest have been encroached in the Langkat area, mostly for palm oil. More than 400 families are involved in encroachment in the

Gunung Leuser National Park. The first step is illegal logging, then the land is illegally planted with oil palms or rubber trees.

Panut says he has optimism about what he can do to make a difference, but he is not optimistic about the government's management of Indonesia's forests.

"They still want to triple palm oil production. If they keep sacrificing the forest to do this, it will be an even greater disaster. The policy at the top needs to support the people on the ground."

Education and training remains a top priority for the OIC. There is now a well-stocked library and a learning centre near to the main restoration site. Local university students teach children English and there are also lessons in conservation. More than 50 children, aged between six and 11, have come to the classes since they started in January this year, and some of them come by truck all the way from the border with Aceh, about an hour away.

The restoration project provides employment for local people and there are numerous visitors. This brings added income for villagers, who provide accommodation and food.

It is astonishing how quickly the OIC has managed to create a thriving forest that is again becoming home to native species. The centre has a 24/7 presence in the restored forest, but needs more camera traps to monitor which species are now present; it currently has only six to cover three different sites.

It is not just orangutans who are returning to the restored forest; elephants, sun bears, gibbons and other animals – and birds – are also being attracted back. "The elephants have often destroyed our trees and thousands of our seedlings, but we are nevertheless very happy that they are coming back," Hadisiswoyo said.

Since the restoration project began, the OIC has planted about one million seedlings.

"We plant 20 species on one hectare," Hadisiswoyo says, "but then, because of natural regeneration, more than fifty species are actually recruited by the birds and mammals that disperse the seeds."

Work in the nursery at the Sei Betung restoration site.

Clearing imperata grass.

Members of the local community, Hadisiswoyo says, are very proud of the success of the project, and have formed a group called "Protectors of Leuser" to assist in the restoration and forest protection work.

The restoration project is funded by UNESCO, Lush UK, Rainforest Rescue Australia, Tropical Forest Conservation Action (TFCA) in Sumatra, and American ReLeaf.

In the past, restoration projects in Indonesia were conducted by the government. Local companies were hired to do the replanting, and the survival rate of the trees was very low.

In 2011, the OIC established its Community Agroforestry, Reforestation and Education (CARE) programme in the Ketambe region of Aceh province, where agricultural encroachment was a primary driver of deforestation. The aim now is to expand the network of conservation villages to include Bukit Mas.

"Through our CARE programme in Aceh, eighty farmers received training in agroforestry and organic farming practices and 25 cocoa farmers have been awarded organic certification," Hadisiswoyo said.
"We are supporting them in achieving international export of their products, which will provide a premium and improved income. Twelve farmers, who have been trained as facilitators, continue to be advocates for the development of agroforestry systems, spreading the learning throughout the region."

The eighty farmers in the programme have stopped using pesticides, and the quality and weight of their cocoa bean output has increased by 25 percent. "Through raising local farming capacity and output, the programme has allowed farmers to start intensifying production on existing land rather than seeking out and clearing new plots, without there being any decline in local subsistence or income," Hadisiswoyo said.
The CARE programme has been responsible for deforestation being avoided on 160 hectares of forest. Each of the eighty participating farmers had previously planned to (illegally) expand their croplands by two hectares, but have now pledged to focus on their existing properties instead. An additional ten farmers have stopped working as illegal loggers and are now employed as cocoa bean traders, fruit vendors, and coffee bean sellers.

Hadisiswoyo with Sir David Attenborough at the Whitley award ceremony in April.



After winning the Whitley Fund for Nature award in April, Hadisiswoyo won the Pongo Environmental Award, given by the Orangutan Republik Foundation in the United States, in September.

In 2013, he won the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) Ian Redmond Conservation Award 2013 and was also awarded an Ashoka Fellowship for being an innovative social entrepreneur. In 2012 he was a UN Forest Hero finalist.

The Whitley fund awarded £35,000 (about 54,000 US$), which will be used to expand the OIC's

network of conservation villages and its Community Agroforestry, Reforestation and Education (CARE) programme to a new region bordering the Gunung Leuser National Park.

The OIC will use the funds to establish sustainable agriculture schemes with 100 farmers, and plant 66,000 trees at the new site. The team will also focus on raising awareness about the importance of orangutan and forest conservation in an education project that will reach 1,200 people in communities surrounding the park.
Hadisiswoyo said the award was a recognition of the OIC's commitment to protecting the orangutans and tropical rainforest in Sumatra into the indefinite future.

In his speech at the award ceremony, he said that the forest provided clean water and protection from natural disasters. "I would like to dedicate this Whitley award to the organgutans, the forest, and the people of Sumatra," he said. "I am now calling on everyone who is in a position to take action to work together with me to save what remains of my country's rainforest."

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Jayson Ibanez
Philippines
2015

Preventing further decline of the Philippine eagle on Mindanao Island, Philippines

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Shears Foundation in memory of Trevor Shears

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Jayson has featured in six articles this year, a selection of Jayson's media coverage is shown below. Follow this link to view Jayson's WFN profile.

Sun Star – News
23 January 2016
http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/feature/2016/01/23/he-talks-and-walks-conservation-453285

He talks, and walks, conservation

ONE encounter with him will give you an impression that he is both a great conversationalist and conservationist.

Why? You might ask. Because people like him walks his talk just to educate people on the importance of conserving the environment and species which are facing threats and had accomplished many other things just to push for his advocacy more than anything else which only proves that he is not a blabber but a doer. His Curriculum Vitae will attest to that.

If you have not heard about him, then you probably heard about this bird sanctuary in Malagos in Calinan -- the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) Center. Jayson Ibañez is the Director of the Research and Conservation Program of the PEF.

A quick look at his CV will reveal words such as biodiversity conservation, ecology, habitat restoration, natural resource management among the other pile of words that are closely related to his advocacy. Though not born in Davao, Ibañez said that he considers himself a naturalized Dabawenyos since he first arrived in the city 21 years ago as field biologist of PEF. He has fallen in love with Davao and eventually decided to settle down and live here.

Ibañez recalled in an interview with Sun.Star Davao that he first saw the Philippine Eagle in a picture featured in the National Geographic Magazine in 1981 when he was young.

Little did he know then that he is going to devote his later years in working at the foundation's center which houses this giant raptor. His drive to push for the advocacy was manifested as early as his childhood years as he loved animals and had grown up loving to play out in the rice fields in Pangasinan where he was born.

With this fascination, he took up a Bachelor's degree in Biology at the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and went to Davao City and started his early work at the PEF which only intensified his urge to work for the environment conservation in the region. Eventually he became the Director of PEF'S research and conservation program since September 2009 until the present.

With this interest, Ibañez had already made various research and programs that help elevate awareness and knowledge to protect and conserve the environment along with the species lurking on its depths.

In fact just last April 29, 2015, Ibañez's conservation research has become one of the recipients of the Whitley Award in the United Kingdom. The award recognized efforts to conserve the Philippine Eagle in Mindanao and funded the foundation in meeting their goals to protect and conserve the national bird.

Prior to this, they had also garnered another award from the Yale International Society for Tropical Foresters (ISTF) Innovation Prize which placed them in the second place during its awarding day on January 31 last year.

What with all this work, Ibañez said that, "Money should not be the goal," because "We can also gain wealth from having good relationships and through interacting with nature."

"People should go back to their roots by engaging more in visiting natural places and spending more time in parks [rather]than being in the malls," Ibañez said citing the Biophilia hypothesis which explains that humans have natural desires to be in touched with nature.

"If every Filipino learns to recognize their roots and renew their good relationship with nature then it is a win-win situation for the environment and for us because based on the Biophilia hypothesis it is important to us," Ibañez said.

Inquirer – News
20 September 2016
http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/816900/no-watershed-no-eagle-no-water

INQUIRER.net

'No watershed, no eagle, no water'

DAVAO CITY—In what is seen as a bid to hit two birds with a single stone, an all-stakeholder summit in Davao City has committed to firm up and sustain efforts to protect its treasures: a small colony of Philippine eagles and an almost limitless supply of mineral-like water rated among the world's best.



"No watershed, no eagle and no water," summed up Dr. Jayson Ibañez, head of the Davao-based Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF). "Hence, to protect the eagle we have to protect its habitat."

The PEF is one of the staunchest supporters of the city government's program to protect a chain of watersheds that straddles Mt. Apo.

Ibañez said two pairs of eagles have been seen in the watersheds around Mt. Apo, out of an estimated 200 eagles found in Mindanao. Fiercely territorial, the birds are expected to live in the area during their lifetime.

Mt. Apo, at 2,954 meters above sea level, is also home to diverse plant and animal life, including birds such as hornbill, kingfisher and owl, and animals like deer, warty pig, fruit bat, flying lemur, squirrel and fanged frog.

The Watershed Stakeholders Summit was held in Davao City last month. Organized by the Watershed Management Council, the summit was aimed at gathering

recommendations in addressing the issues like protection, conservation and management of major watershed areas. The event included a visit to the Philippine Eagle Center.

City officials said water emanating from Mt. Apo's Dumoy wells is among the world's cleanest, ranked next only to the Netherlands by an independent study in the 1980s.

Hydie Maspinas, water quality division manager of the Davao City Water District (DCWD), said the city's water supply has passed all 45 major parameters in determining potability.

She described Davao's water, especially those that emerge from the Dumoy wells, as "mineral water that is not bottled."

She said this is because water comes from a volcanic source in the bowels of Mt. Apo. Hydrological analysis by the International Atomic Agency, she said, showed the water is only 50 to 75 years old, which attests to its cleanliness.

The city's 58 wells produce 112 million cubic meters of water annually while the demand fluctuates from 108 million to 154 million cubic meters per year.

The need to put up 36 production wells by 2031 to meet growing demand was deemed a priority, Maspinas said.

Communities, among them indigenous peoples, were tapped to help protect and monitor the watersheds. During the summit, community members were also taught to look into the composition of water such as phosphate, pH level, dissolved oxygen, nitrate and color, among other things.

Summit participants agreed to tap volunteers and forest rangers to monitor activities of informal settlers and to guard against illegal logging. They also agreed to plant more trees, including fruit trees and cacao, along riverbanks.

They promised to take the lead in ensuring that proper waste disposal practices are

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Inaoyom Imong
Nigeria
2015

Saving cross river gorillas through community-based conservation in the Mbe mountains, Nigeria

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the Garfield Weston Foundation

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Inaoyom has featured in a Mongabay article this year. Follow this link to view Inaoyom's WFN profile.

Mongabay Wildtech
27 March 2016
1,920,000 visitors per month
https://wildtech.mongabay.com/2016/03/cybertracking-for-africas-most-threatened-ape/

CyberTracking for Africa's most threatened ape

Cross River gorillas benefit from reduced threat and strengthened law enforcement thanks in part to mobile data collection, management and analysis with CyberTracker monitoring.



- *Protected area staff use the handheld tool CyberTracker to collect data and produce spatial and statistical analyses to guard gorillas in Cross River reserves.*
- *The system aids the conservation of the critically endangered Cross River gorilla and its forest habitat, improving law enforcement by facilitating the monitoring of wildlife, human interferences and patrols.*
- *CyberTracker use is expanding to other reserves in West Africa and around the globe, both on its own and, in places like the Cross River landscape, in combination with SMART analysis software.*



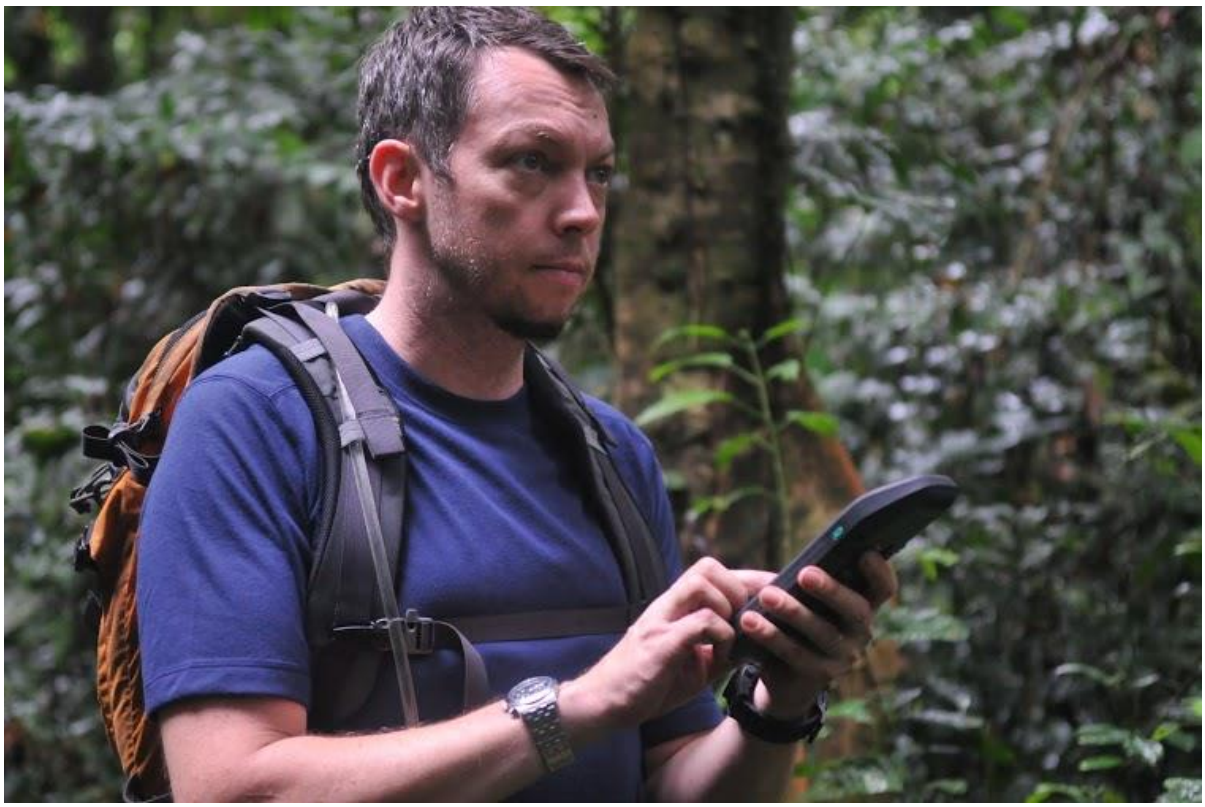
Cross River gorilla at Cameroon's Limbe Wildlife Centre. No more than 300 remain in the wild, scattered among at least 11 groups in the remote highland forests of Nigeria and Cameroon. Photo credit: Arend de Haas.

As dusk descends on Cameroon and Nigeria's montane forest patches every evening, the brawny black apes inhabiting these 3,000 square miles of remote, highly biodiverse jungle crawl into the individual plant-branch beds they've made for the night. Counting these nests, biologists estimate that no more than 200 to 300 Cross River gorillas remain in the wild; poaching and, to a lesser extent, habitat degradation resulting from subsistence agriculture, have decimated their population.

Conservationists have been using the CyberTracker platform to more effectively monitor this gorilla subspecies, the most endangered African ape, and its habitat for over seven years. The system enables patrolling teams to record automatically georeferenced and timestamped observational data on biological indicators (wildlife sightings, calls, tracks), active threats (gunshots, expended cartridges, snares) and law enforcement performance (patrol effort, measured by patrolled days and km) on certain Android smartphones and tablets or rugged handheld computers. Its use has enhanced the efficiency of data collection and analysis, database management, patrols and enforcement monitoring, strengthening conservation efforts targeting the Cross River gorilla and other at-risk species.

"The ability to gather large amounts of geo-referenced field data quickly and analyze and share information simply in a timely manner makes CyberTracker an important tool for law enforcement monitoring," said Inaoyom Imong, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)'s Cross River Director.

"There wasn't any cohesive approach to monitoring gorillas, monitoring threats, and using data from monitoring to plan conservation until CyberTracker," added Richard Bergl, North Carolina Zoo Curator of Conservation and Research. "CyberTracker allowed us to much more easily collect data of conservation relevance on distribution of gorillas, distribution of threats, intensity of threats, areas surveyed, areas patrolled. We were able to set up tables, reports and maps in the software instead of having the data sent to scientists in the US or Europe."



Richard Bergl, North Carolina Zoo Curator of Conservation and Research, designed CyberTracker's gorilla monitoring database and has been training and supporting staff in Nigeria and Cameroon in the system's use. Photo credit: NC Zoo.

CyberTracker has also helped the project monitor the frequency, duration and extent of ranger patrols, serving as a staff management as well as anti-poaching enforcement tool. By keeping rangers accountable and directing patrols to hotspots of human activity recorded by previous patrols, the system has enhanced patrol planning and effectiveness.

"Improved monitoring of law enforcement effort and comparison between sites in the landscape has helped raise awareness of conservation problems such as hunting and illegal farming at specific sites, enhancing our ability to work on solutions moving forward," explained Imong.

Promising outcomes

After CyberTracker became a part of law enforcement in Nigeria's Cross River region, its protected areas have become a rare example of forested equatorial African reserves showing a reduction in wildlife threats. According to Bergl, who led the creation and

deployment of the monitoring system in the Cross River landscape, the patrol data collected from 2009 to 2013 in Nigeria's Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary demonstrates the technology's success in alleviating threats. For many sites in the 100 square-km protected area, use of CyberTracker increased the number of patrol days 100% and increased patrol effort, measured in km walked, 200%. The switch to the mobile monitoring system also corresponded with a significant decrease in expended shotgun cartridges, gunshots and snaring rates. A rising or stable trend in primate encounter rates, increase in patrol effort and decrease in human activity indicators together suggest diminished threat due to enhanced enforcement rather than to diminished fauna, or "empty forest syndrome." Similarly, the neighboringOkwangwo Division of Cross River National Park reported a significant decrease in hunting since adopting CyberTracker, despite a shortage of anti-poaching equipment and funds.

What makes it helpful?

Multiple characteristics make CyberTracker a more effective monitoring tool than the pen, paper, common GPS unit and GIS or statistical software ensemble Cross River conservationists formerly used. Paper data sheets are prone to water damage, whereas CyberTracker's rugged handheld units, the result of several test models, withstand the region's high humidity and temperature and the frequent exposure to dirt, rain and impact in the forest. Handwritten observations can be illegible and laborious; CyberTracker allows for quicker, more coherent data recording. Because all information gathered through this platform adheres to one format, the tool facilitates comparisons among different areas and contributes to an expanding standardized database of landscape-scale conservation data.



Cross River field worker entering patrol data in the CyberTracker handset. Photo credit: NC Zoo.

CyberTracker's automatic integration of observed and geographic data clearly conveys where wildlife, concerning activity and enforcement actions occur. It enables field workers to keep track of their location using real-time satellite mapping and produce visual displays of patrols. Managers can also follow and evaluate rangers' movements and effort with its automated five-minute-interval track-logging feature. The monitoring system's desktop database facilitates swift, simple analysis and reporting of downloaded information, speeding up

communication between rangers and managers and supporting adaptive management. CyberTracker's intuitive touchscreen interface, modeled on rangers', managers', and project directors' insights, makes it accessible to protected area staff with little technical training, formal education or literacy, reducing the risk of input errors. Its automated features allow those lacking GIS knowledge to produce insightful spatial analyses, maps and reports of various classes of collected data to guide timely conservation action.

Originally created in South Africa to aid illiterate Kalahari bushmen in wildlife tracking, and now used worldwide for various data collection purposes, CyberTracker came to the Cross River ecosystem through a partnership between WCS and North Carolina Zoo. Sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Conservation Endowment Fund and North Carolina Zoo, they developed, tested and implemented the monitoring platform in protected areas harboring the Cross River gorilla starting in 2008. By the following January, they had successfully deployed it to these reserves, supplying field and research staff from WCS, the Cameroon Ministry of Wildlife and Forests, the Nigerian National Parks Service and other conservation groups with CyberTracker units. Bergl designed CyberTracker's gorilla monitoring database and has been training and supporting staff in Nigeria and Cameroon in the system's use and maintenance. Meanwhile, WCS has been supervising daily monitoring and protection on the ground.

This video from Nature Wild Life suggests these large animals are quite careful when moving about.

Although CyberTracker has promoted the conservation of endangered fauna, such as the Cross River gorilla, by improving field data collection, the monitoring platform does have drawbacks. Bergl admitted that even though mobile devices are much more efficient and accurate than paper-based alternatives, the former are harder to obtain and maintain. For one, they're more expensive, especially the rugged handsets, which cost $1,500 each. The hardware, particularly standard smartphones, are susceptible to damage in the wet tropical environment, handled by field staff that are not adequately careful with electronic equipment; without proper backup, this could cause data loss. The logistics of safely keeping, recharging, repairing and replacing the units are challenging, threatening to disrupt long patrols. What's more, the software has limited database, query, analysis and mapping functions and cannot be used with multiple tiers of access.

Additionally, the mobile devices could be more user-friendly, considering protected area staff's often low level of digital literacy, which often necessitates basic computer instruction before CyberTracker training. As Imong pointed out, locating satellites to gather georeferenced data can be difficult and time-consuming in dense forest cover, which can delay patrols and decrease patrol coverage. Bergl cites the lack of a manual and supporting materials, formal training, capacity and technical support and funding as other disadvantages. In addition, apart from the observed trends in strengthened enforcement activity and decreased poaching signs noted with CyberTracker, there are no means to directly measure the technology's effect on wildlife populations such as the gorillas'.



Silver-back Cross River gorilla feeding on stem. Photo credit: Ruggiero Richard.

Getting SMART

CyberTracker continues to evolve to meet changing frontline needs, and its success as an anti-poaching monitoring tool has seen it expand to other West African regions of conservation interest. Under Bergl's leadership, it's also in the process of being integrated with the newer Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) across the Cross River landscape; all sites in Nigeria and one in Cameroon have adopted it so far. Coupling CyberTracker's data collection interface with SMART software's greater arsenal of statistics and power of analysis, incorporation of intelligence and planning and automated reporting can further help guide patrols and species research and conservation activities (check out how SMART has been transforming wildlife law enforcement around the world here).

"Using CyberTracker has greatly improved law enforcement monitoring in the Cross River gorilla landscape," concluded Imong. "We expect even greater improvement with the introduction of SMART."

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Paula Kahumbu
Kenya
2014

Hands off our elephants: Delivering African leadership to address Kenya's poaching crisis

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the LJC Fund in memory of Anthea and Lindsey Turner

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Paula has featured in ten news article this past year including a feature in National Geographic and three articles in The Guardian. A selection of Paula's media coverage is included below. Follow the link to view Paula's WFN profile.

National Geographic – Society for Research and Education
30 April 2016
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160430-kenya-record-breaking-ivory-burn/

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Kenya Sets Ablaze 105 Tons of Ivory

The record-setting burn is meant to send a message to the world that ivory has no value and that its trade should be banned.

Smoke fills the sky as Kenyan rangers stand guard over the world's largest-ever ivory burn.



Kenya is burning several pyres of ivory and rhino horn.
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLIE HAMILTON JAMES, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

NAIROBI, KENYAUhuru Kenyatta, the president of Kenya, bent over to light a tray of fuel, the eyes of a thousand observers fixated on his back. Looming in front of him was a massive tower of ivory—one of 11 starkly white pyres set up here at Nairobi National Park, a sprawling wildlife-filled oasis in Kenya's capital city. Doused in fuel, smoke

quickly began to billow from each of the intricately assembled piles. Bright orange blazes soon overtook them, blackening the formerly pristine pyramids.

By the time the last flames flickered out Saturday night, Kenya reduced 105 tons of elephant ivory and 1.35 tons of rhino horn to smoldering ash—the final remains of some 6,500 elephants and 450 rhinos killed for their tusks and horns. As President Kenyatta said in a speech early Saturday, the burn is meant to send a strong and clear statement to the world: "For us, ivory is worthless unless it is on our elephants."

As widely reported here, Africa is in the midst of a poaching crisis, driven primarily by demand in Asia for wildlife products. Three-quarters of illegal ivory makes its way to China, while Vietnam is the largest market for rhino horn. Updated elephant population estimates, issued by the U.S. State Department in March, now hover around 400,000, indicating that one in five elephants have been killed for their tusks during the past 10 years. Last year 1,338 rhinos were killed for their horns, out of a total estimated population of just 25,600 black and white rhinos.

Ivory burns and crushes have become a popular but controversial method for nations to publicly assert their opposition to the illegal wildlife trade. Nearly 20 of those events have taken place in the past 27 years, in countries ranging from the U.S. to China and Gabon to the Philippines (see timeline). Kenya's burn on Saturday, however, is by far the largest in history (Hong Kong held the previous record, destroying 28 tons in 2014). Still, Kenya's burned ivory represents just 5 percent of what is currently held in government stockpiles across Africa.

A Heated Subject

But some nations have resisted displays such as the one Saturday, seeing them as a wasteful loss of a lucrative natural resource. Kenya's stockpile would bring the country a windfall if sold today. South Africa, Namibia, and others—well aware of this—have held onto their ivory in hope of a future legal sale, said Paula Kahumbu, a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and CEO of WildlifeDirect, a Nairobi-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting African-led efforts to protect natural heritage.

"There's a passing of judgment from some that we're doing the wrong thing, because Kenya is a poor country, and we could use the $150 million-odd dollars that they claim the ivory is worth to develop our nation," President Kenyatta said. "But I would rather wait for the judgment of future generations, who I am sure will appreciate the decision we have taken today."

Countries that hoard ivory stocks "are speculators on an evil, illegal commodity," added Richard Leakey, chairman of the Kenya Wildlife Service and chair of the Turkana Basin Institute at Stony Brook University, in a speech before the burn. "There can be no

justification for speculating price rises in ivory down the road, and they should be shamed out of their position once and for all."

Other nations, such as Botswana—which unveiled a tusk-based sculpture in the shape of an elephant in its international airport in 2014—say they prefer instead to use ivory in new artworks, as educational tools, or in museum displays. Tshekedi Khama, Botswana's environment minister, told the *Independent* last week that his country will not destroy ivory because "burning ivory would demonstrate [to communities] that [elephants have] no value."

That, however, is exactly the message Kenya wishes to deliver. There are also practical reasons for destroying ivory. Keeping that material is expensive—requiring storage space and staff to guard it—and risky, since ivory has a tendency to find its way back into the black market through theft or corruption among those meant to watch over it.



Photograph by Joel Bouopda Tatou, AP

"Protecting stores of ivory puts many people's lives at risk, and making sure that it doesn't get out has proven to be very difficult in many countries," said Tim Tear, executive director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Africa Program. "The burning of it makes absolutely clear that it's not getting into the illegal market."

The hope is that Kenya's burn will set an example for others to follow, encouraging formerly reluctant countries to get on board with destroying their own stockpiles.

In some cases, the public is taking up that cry ahead of the government. Tanzania, for example, denied until last year that it had a poaching crisis at all, and it has long been a holdout on destroying any of its ivory. But on Thursday, the nonprofit group OKOA

Tembo wa Tanzania (Save Tanzania's Elephants) published a letter in *Mwananchi*, the country's most popular newspaper, demanding the destruction of all ivory stockpiles, signed by 30 influential Tanzanians and supported by 100,000 Facebook followers.
"I think public opinion will turn very dramatically against ivory," Leakey said. "The publicity that arises from this burn will spread to every corner of the globe, and people will learn that elephants are once again in a terrible state."

History Repeats Itself

In a way, this burn takes Kenya full circle. Thirty years ago, Africa faced a similar poaching crisis, one largely driven by demand for ivory in Japan, Europe, and the U.S. The price of ivory jumped by a factor of 10 from 1969 to 1973, providing impetus for unchecked killings. The following 15 years saw the collapse of many of Africa's elephant populations, reducing continent-wide numbers by half. Desperate to stem the losses, in 1989 Kenya pioneered a radical and headline-grabbing stunt: the world's first ivory burn.
"In '89 it was very much about shaming the people who were buying ivory, wearing ivory, and giving it as gifts—and it worked," Kahumbu says. "Ivory is considered valuable now, but what we need is for the world to again see it as shameful."
That first burn significantly contributed to the decision months later by the body that manages the global wildlife trade, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to ban all international trade of ivory. Under that reprieve, elephant populations slowly recovered. The protection was undermined, however, in 1997 and 2000 when Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe lowered the status of their country's elephant populations under CITES, enabling limited ivory sales to Japan in 1999 and to Japan and China in 2008.

Proponents continue to argue that flooding the market with legally sourced ivory or rhino horn would curtail poaching pressure on animals while providing funds for conservation, but with the one-off ivory sales, ivory demand surged, and poaching intensified. In 2008, for example, Kenya lost 116 elephants, whereas in 2009, following the 2008 ivory sale, that number more than doubled, to 267. "Some people had this simplistic view that when they dumped ivory into China, it would depress prices and drive criminals out of business," Kahumbu says. "But that's not what happened: It triggered interest and caused the price to rise."

Ban in the Making

President Kenyatta is aiming for Saturday's burn to ignite policy changes that would, once again, completely remove ivory from the market. To solidify that goal, on Friday he joined Ali Bongo Ondimba, the president of Gabon, and Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda, at a conservation summit held in in Nanyuki, a town 90 miles north of Nairobi, along with international conservationists, philanthropists, and political representatives from Africa, the U.S., Europe, and China.

Organized by the Giants Club, an Africa-based nonprofit dedicated to securing the continent's remaining elephant populations, the summit provided a platform for discussing methods to end poaching and strengthening commitments to do so. At the meeting's end, philanthropists in attendance offered around $5 million in funding and support, while Gabon pledged to double its national parks staff from 750 to 1,500, and Botswana said it will create a special intelligence unit for supporting rangers.

"The summit and the burn are about awareness raising and demand reduction, which are critically important, but the other part is simply action," said Robert Godec, the U.S. ambassador to Kenya. "We'll see what sort of pledges come out of this, hopefully."
At the burn, Ségolène Royal, France's energy minister, said she will ban all sales of ivory in France, and will strongly encourage other European Union states to do the same.
Plans to shut down all legal international trade in ivory have also been in the works for more than a year. In November 2014, representatives from 25 African nations signed the Contou Declaration, a joint statement calling for a global ivory ban. And earlier this week, the 27 member states of the African Elephant Coalition—a group of African countries committed to ensuring that elephants will have a future—submitted five proposals for the upcoming triennial meeting of the 182-member countries of CITES, in late September and early October in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The proposals call for re-listing all remaining African elephant populations at the highest level of international protection afforded by CITES, which would effectively shut down all legal international sales of ivory. "We cannot solve this global problem alone," said President Ondimba of Gabon in a speech before the burn. "That's why we, with Kenya and other nations, submitted a proposal to close all ivory markets."
That plan's success, however, is uncertain. "In terms of uplisting—good luck, but I don't think it'll work," Kahumbu says. Rather than focus on CITES, she calls for China and countries in Africa and Southeast Asia to immediately shut down their domestic markets, and then work on implementing a global ivory ban.

The coming months will show which, if any, of those goals are realized. But in the meantime, Kenya asserts that it will do all it can to stamp out the trade.
"To lose our elephants would be to lose a key part of our heritage, and we quite simply will not allow it," President Kenyatta said. "We will not be the Africans who stood by as that happened."

National Geographic Voices
September 2016
http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/author/pkahumbu/



Paula Kahumbu

of Wildlife Direct and Hands off our Elephants Campaign

Dr. Paula Kahumbu is the CEO of Kenyan Conservation NGO WildlifeDirectand is leading the hard-hitting Hands Off Our Elephants Campaign with Kenya's First Lady Margaret Kenyatta. Hands Off Our Elephants is a campaign to restore Kenyan leadership in elephant conservation through behaviour change at all levels of society, from rural communities, to business leaders and political decision makers.

She is a Kenyan conservationist with a PhD from Princeton University where she studied Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and conducted her field research on elephants in Kenya

In addition to running WildlifeDirect Paula lectures undergraduate community conservation at Princeton during an annual field course in Kenya.

Paula is the winner of the Whitley Award 2014, Brand Kenya Ambassador (2013), Presidential award Order of the Grand Warrior (2013), winner of theNational Geographic/Howard Buffet Conservation Leader for Africa (2011) and is a National Geographic Emerging Explorer (2011).

She formerly worked for the Kenya Wildlife Service and ran the CITES office and headed the Kenyan delegation. In 2005 she joined Bamburi Cement and ran Lafarge Eco Systems, a company that specializes in forest restoration of limestone quarries. She is a board member of Lewa and the Soysambu Conservancies, a well as Jane Goodall Institute Kenya.

Paula is also an accomplished writer and she has co-authored a global best selling children's book on a true story about a hippopotamus and a tortoise called Owen and Mzee: the true story of a remarkable friendship, it's sequelOwen and Mzee: the language of Friendships, and Looking for Miza a story about an orphaned mountain gorilla in Democratic Republic of Congo in the same series.

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Saving Africa's elephants isn't just a 'white man's job'

Kenyan conservationist Paula Kahumbu leads a new generation of Africans who are taking control of their environmental future



In the cool and serene area of Karen, near Nairobi, in the offices of the conservation organisation she has built, Paula Kahumbu eats chicken and rice and talks about a revolution.

"Conservation is not a monopoly of one particular race or tribe.Conservation is part of all of us," says Kahumbu. "Yet for decades, looking after the environment in Africa has been seen as a 'white man's job'."

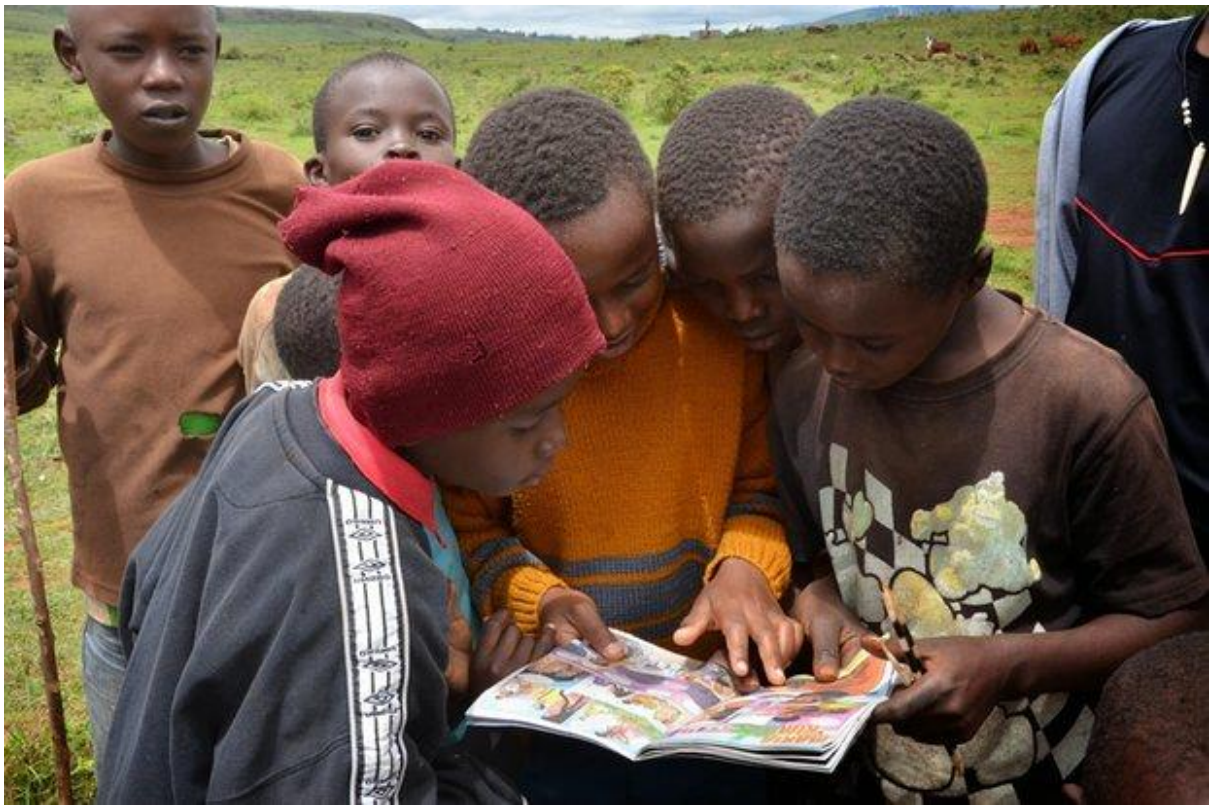
The 49-year-old Kenyan is leading a new generation of African conservationists. But she owes her own debt to that anachronistic European network. By chance, she grew up next door to one of the best-known conservationists of all time, Richard Leakey. With time, Leakey's interest in the wild rubbed off on a young Kahumbu.

"Richard Leakey has been my mentor since I left high school. I have known him since I was a child as he was a neighbour who encouraged me to explore and learn all I could about wildlife," Kahumbu says.

After doing courses in Bristol and Florida, Kahumbu became a ranger employed by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). But while in government and with all the state privileges that came with her position, the irony was she could not fully speak up.

"After a while I realised that there are things I could say and many more that I couldn't say while employed by the Kenya Wildlife Service. There was a limit to what I could do. Government has too much protocol … too many checks on your way to doing the right thing."

Within a couple of years, Kahumbu had set up her own organisation with Leakey,Wildlife Direct, and was campaigning in her own right.



Children read educational comics as part of Kahumbu's Hands Off Our Elephants campaign. Photograph: Whitley Fund for Nature

In the years since that decision, Kahumbu, who has regularly contributed to the Guardian, has become one of the most successful and high profile conservationists in Africa. Her organisation has employed more than 70 people and counts thousands as supporters and donors. Kahumbu is a National Geographic emerging explorer as well as the recipient of the 2014 Whitley Fund for Nature award for her efforts in developing leadership in conservation in Africa.

'The conservation of elephants naturally requires land and space, and therefore it helps all other species.' Photograph: Whitley Fund for Nature

Efforts such as hers are beginning to generate more interest in conservation among the local population, at the same time that a new generation of young Kenyans are taking on the baton and leading the conservation conversation. Kahumbu mentions elephant expert Dr Winnie Kiiru, ecologist Dr Joseph Ogutu, lion expert Shivani Bhalla, rhino expert Dr Benson Okita, ornithologist Martin Odino as well as Ikal Angelei of the Friends of Lake Turkana initiative.

The results of the wars we in conservation fight and win are not instant. They will be felt by generations to come

She singles out peers from not only Kenya, but other parts of the continent. In Uganda, gorilla veterinarian Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka has founded Conservation Through Public Health, which supports the health of wildlife and local communities. Zambia's Thandiwe Mweetwa is a lion expert and a National Geographic awardee. Makala Jasper of Tanzania has fostered the community stewardship of forests and helped tens of thousands of people improve their lives and their environment.

"There are many more out there and I know that through their work, Africa's wildlife stands a chance," says Kahumbu. For her, encouraging more Africans into conservation means inspiring passion and wonder for the natural world.

"We need to show the children how beautiful our country is. Automatically they will want to protect and conserve our environment," she says. Each year her organisation takes primary school children into the national parks "so that from an early age they will know what is at stake".

Currently, together with other conservationists, Wildlife Direct produces Kenya's first wildlife documentary and talk show on local TV station, NTV. The programmes debuted to rave reviews from TV pundits and bloggers. Kahumbu says the two programmes reach an average audience of 4 million viewers every week.

"Through the programmes we hope to engage a much wider audience and tell Kenyans about the beauty within their country. It is only through showing them this that they will appreciate nature and hopefully get into conservation themselves," she says.

Speaking to Africans about conservation is not uncontroversial and her work has not always been straightforward. Wildlife in Kenya, like in many other parts of the world, is under threat from shrinking habitats, poaching and corruption. Because of this, Kahumbu's life has been threatened more than once.

"The sad thing is that in my line of business, those who threaten you are those you least expect," she says. Three years ago she was warned of "dire consequences" if she chose to continue with a court case over the hiving off part of the Nairobi national park to build a road that would link two ends of the city and cut through important habitat.



'We need to show the children how beautiful our country is. Automatically they will want to protect and conserve our environment,' says Paula Kahumbu. Photograph: WildlifeDirect

As the case continued, officials from KWS, the agency where she started her conservation career, would pass on threats from interested parties in the case.

"This was beyond shocking. People I had known for years would pull me aside and tell me it was in my best interest to let the matter rest. That the people involved in the project were very bad men who would do anything to have their way," she says.

Although she puts on a brave face as she talks about this, it is those close to her that she worries about most.

"There is always the fear that if they can't get to me they can get to someone close to me. But we have had to soldier on," she says. Her sense of mission has kept her going even in the face of danger. "I think Kenyans generally are proud of their heritage, and they would support anyone who is fighting for it," she says.

By the entrance to the offices of Wildlife Direct a huge picture of an elephant stares at you as you arrive. "She is called Jabulani, she is South African," Kahumbu explains. Her work has helped many species, but in her heart there has always been one above all others.

"Why elephants? I think they are among the most important species because they are a lot like us and easy to relate to. Their conservation naturally requires land and space, and therefore it helps all other species," she says.

This year has been particularly successful. After three years of planning and lobbying, Wildlife Direct – in partnership with other organisations – got the Kenyan government toburn all its ivory stockpiles in April, with the aim of distorting black market ivory prices.

"That will have a trickledown effect that will lead to the securing of the global elephant population," she says. "Ivory prices are already coming down as a result of that … and countries have banned the trade of ivory and ivory products within their borders. The direct impact of this will be felt later when jumbo populations around the continent recover."

The path towards this recovery has perhaps never been more controversial. At the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) later this month, proposals and counter-proposals aim to either create a blanket global ban on almost any ivory trade or open up controlled sales from some southern African countries. TheInternational Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will debate a total domestic ban at its conference this week.

Kahumbu says elephants deserve the highest level of protection and that the possibility of future trade is a major threat to their survival because it attracts ivory speculators.

"We have been lobbying for domestic bans in ivory trade worldwide for several years. We support it and regret that IUCN and Cites have taken so long to recognise the need for this. It couldn't come soon enough," she says.

As the debate on a total ban on ivory trade goes on, Namibia, South Africaand Zimbabwe are pushing for one-off sales of their stockpiles. "This is outrageous given the plight of elephants, which was triggered by these same countries selling ivory in 2008 to China and Japan. They too should join the rest of the world sooner rather than later," she says. "It is shocking that three southern African nations will not acknowledge this."

Kahumbu's love for elephants has been the consuming passion of her life. She has worked for six straight weeks without a break. But she doesn't mind.

"This is my life. And you can't really take a break from life, can you?" she asks. As she finishes off her late lunch, she reflects on the paradox that is conservation.

"It is immensely fulfilling, but can be thankless too. The results of many of the wars we fight and win in conservation are not instant. They will be felt by generations to come," she says.

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The day we collared Tim, the great tusker

Paula Kahumbu: The latest satellite tracking technology is helping to keep elephants safe from poachers—and away from farmers' crops



Elephant Tim wakes up with a tracking collar round his neck after the successful operation to fit the collar in Amboseli, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

On a beautiful sunny day in Amboseli National Park, against the backdrop of snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro, a small group of cars was gathered at a safe distance around the prostrate bull elephant. The elephant lay still in the dust, head on the ground, his enormous tusks and trunk stretched out in front of him. Tension rose among the onlookers as the minutes passed.

Then the huge elephant flapped his ear, got up gently, shook his head vigorously in a vain attempt to dislodge the strange object around his neck, and walked off. We all breathed a sigh of relief. The operation to attach a tracking collar to Tim had gone perfectly.



Elephant Tim tries to shake off his newly fitted tracking collar in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

We gathered around as, Kitili Mbathi, Director General of Kenya Wildlife Service, thanked veterinary staff and KWS rangers for their professionalism in conducting the operation, and the NGOs present for their support: WildlifeDirect for initiating the plan and providing the finance, Save The Elephants (STE) for donating the collar, and Big Life Foundation and the Amboseli Trust for Elephants for their logistic and scientific back-up.

Addressing members of local Maasai communities present, Mr. Mbathi said: "We are committed to exploring effective methods to keep our communities safe while securing all of our elephants, especially valuable individuals like Tim." The collar would keep Tim safe—and away from farmers' crops.

But how does it work, one of the Maasai women asked. Frank Pope of STE explained the technology (click here for more information): once an hour the collar lets out a beep, inaudible to humans, that sends details of his location to a satellite. This information can be picked up by rangers on their mobile phones so they know where he is. Fascinated, the women crowded around his phone to see how the information was displayed. "I get it," one lady said. "It's works just the same way as my cow bells."



Frank Pope of Save The Elephants explains to Maasai women how a mobile phone is used to see the location of an elephant fitted with a tracking collar, in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

A security team tracks Tim's position on a map on the cell phone. If it shows him moving close to agricultural areas, they can respond, move in to head him off before he causes any trouble. If the GPS shows Tim standing still for several hours, it sends an alert that Tim may be in trouble.

The great tuskers – elephants at risk

Tim is one of the last remaining great tuskers in Kenya. This is the term used to describe African elephants—usually males—whose tusks are so long that they reach the ground. The great tuskers are an irreplaceable symbol of our continent's unique natural heritage. But their magnificent tusks act like a magnet for poachers (and in some countries still for trophy hunters) and mean that these elephants are constantly at risk.

Over the years, the systematic extermination by hunters and poachers of big tuskers—and their gene pool—has acted as a form of "unnatural selection" that is the reverse of Darwin's theory: as a result most elephants in Africa today have smaller tusks that they did 100 years ago.

2014 was a black year, when two of Kenya's most iconic great tuskers, Satao and Mountain Bull, were killed by poachers.Thankfully, Tim is still alive and known to be a prolific father. He is much sought after by females in oestrus and has spent his adult life passing on his genes to elephant population in Amboseli. Now 47 years old, Tim was named by Cynthia Moss, founder of the Amboseli Trust for Elephants, as part of what

has become the world's longest running scientific study of the species. His name indicates that he is a member of the "T family", like his mother Trista (click here to read the fascinating histories of the T family and other elephant families in Amboseli).



Elephant Tim in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

I have interacted with Tim several times and his name matches his feisty personality. He is friendly, smart and charismatic, popular among tourists and looked up to by younger bull elephants. Unfortunately he is also, on occasion, a crop raider. As he enters late middle age, he seems to be getting more brazen. Moreover the younger males in his entourage are learning from his example.

This means that Tim is less popular among local farmers. The Maasai traditionally revere elephants. However the expansion of commercial agricultural in areas once dedicated to livestock production is increasingly brining people into conflict with elephants. Although Amboseli elephants are not usually aggressive, they can be bad-tempered and their large size makes them dangerous. In 2016 alone, 8 people have been killed by elephants in the area and 6 more have been seriously injured.

An elephant raid on a crop plantation can have a devastating impact on family livelihoods. When farmers find elephants in their crops at night, tempers quickly get inflamed. In Amboseli, farmers often take matters into their own hands and try to scare the elephants away with flares and noises as well as spears. Tim has survived more than one spear attack, and has the scars to prove it.

A narrow escape

It was following one of these occasions, almost two years ago, that the idea of attaching the collar arose. In a previous blog post, I described how we discovered Tim, injured, during a board meeting of WildlifeDirect that was held in Amboseli:

It is 4.50 pm and the sun is gleaming on his ivory. An audible "aaaaaahhh" emanates from all of us. Tim is truly spectacular. Then Tim notices us and turns. It is as if he is hiding that which we find so beautiful, which too many Chinese are addicted to, and which translates to dollar signs for greedy poachers.

We sit quietly contemplating the giant Tim. I am acutely aware that it is very strange for this elephant I know so well to be so shy. He is usually proud and confident, and loves attention and cameras. And then the bombshell, as we see the sore his left flank, where blood and white clumps of puss are oozing out. This is why Tim is acting so strangely. He is in great pain.

Thankfully prompt veterinary attention by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust was able to treat the wound. And since then he has been monitored 24/7 by rangers from the local community employed by Big Life Foundation. But WildlifeDirect board member Scott Asen wanted to explore a more effective solution. The problem, he argued is that Tim raid farms. We have to find a way to keep him out of farms. That way, saving an elephant is also a way to help local communities.

Scott personally put up the money to finance the collaring and subsequent monitoring operations. Save The Elephants then donated the collar allowing us to allocate even more funds for monitoring. After months of planning, and one aborted attempt, the team met in Amboseli on Friday 9 September to get it done.

Collaring an elephant like Tim is a big operation and everyone was assigned their roles: one team of vets, led by Dr. Isaac Lekolol was in charge of the collaring, another was assigned the task of collecting biometric data, Big Life monitored the entire operation from a light airplane and a helicopter was on standby. KWS rangers were in charge of keeping order, and the rest of us were there to observe and assist.

The big day

Early on Saturday morning we met up to get the latest on Tim's movements in the night. Big Life rangers had stayed awake all night to monitor him. Tim, together with two other bull elephants, Craig and his nephew Townsend, were grazing in area of scrubland near the National Park boundary.



Elephants Tim (left), his nephew Townsend (centre) and Craig in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016, during operations to fit a tracking collar to Tim. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

The rangers ordered most of the cars, and the local people who had turned up to see what was going on, to pull up and wait a safe distance away. Three cars with the vets and other key personnel moved slowly over the bumpy bushy terrain towards the elephants. The elephants looked up and, with no sign of panic, started to move away. A tense game of cat and mouse—played out in slow motion—followed. As we drove towards them, the elephants moved away. We couldn't get close enough for the vet to get a clear shot. Once the dart had delivered the sedative we had to make sure that Tim remained in an open area.

With the assistance of a couple more cars we nudged Tim towards an open area and away from his two companions, who went off in a huff. They knew something was up, and they didn't like it! Then we slowly circled around closer to Tim, cutting off his escape route when he tried to follow them.

I was in a car about 100 meters away when I saw the vets get out of another car and start to walk towards him. That's when I knew that the dart had been fired and found its mark. Soon the vets were at his side, tiny black figures silhouetted against his huge grey bulk. Tim stood motionless for more than 7 minutes, while we watched and waited. Then his back legs gave way and he slowly crumpled backwards into a seated position. It was essential to get Tim on his side for the collaring operation and the vets rushed in to push him over. Only then could we start putting on the collar.



Kenya Wildlife Service vets push elephant Tim to the ground as he collapses from the effect of a tranquiliser dart, during operations to fit a tracking collar to the elephant in Amboseli, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paula Kahumbu/WildlifeDirect

Luckily STE had realised that none of the collars they had were going to be big enough to go round Tim's neck, and they had joined two together to get it to fit. Tim was the biggest elephant they had ever collared, they told me afterwards.



A tracking collar is fitted to elephant Tim in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

While the professional went to work, measuring his height and length, monitoring his health vitals, and putting on the collar, the other onlookers were invited to come closer and take a look, under watchful supervision of the KWS rangers. We stood in awe: Tim was so huge!



Scientists take biometric measurements of elephant Tim as he lies unconscious during operations to fit a tracking collar in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

Three local women, representatives the Oltome Nadupo Women's Company, a handicraft and trading company supported by WildlifeDirect, came over. They touched his skin and his tusks. They were fascinated by his toenails, as big as saucers. Although they had lived in vicinity of elephants all their lives, this was the first time they had touched one.



Kenya Wildlife Service Director General Kitili Mbathi and Paula Kahumbu with elephant Tim after the elephant was fitted with a tracking collar in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

Then we were asked to move away and the most critical moment of all had arrived, when the antidote would be administered to wake Tim up again. Due to his age, there were serious concerns that he might not recover at all; this had happened before with older bulls. I looked around and the tension on everyone's faces—but especially on Kitili Mbathi's—was plain to see.



Kenya Wildlife Service Director General Kitili Mbathi looks on anxiously during operations to fit a tracking collar to elephant Tim in Amboseli National Park on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

What people said

Afterwards, when Tim had walked off as if nothing in particular had happened, the KWS chief admitted how nervous he had been:

This was my first witness of a collaring of an elephant and I must say that it was an amazing experience. However, there were concerns, because of his age whether he would be able to resuscitate after we put him down but as you can see he is up and gone and it's been very successful.

In response Riana Lemalon the Chairlady of Oltome Nadupo said:

Today is a joyful day and I am excited and thank God for getting the opportunity to be this up close with an elephant. We care for them from a distance but today on behalf of Oltome Nadupo [the company name means 'successful elephant' in the Maasai language], we have been fortunate to be involved in the collaring exercise."

Sitat Sukare, another company representative expressed the hope that the collar would help reduce human–elephant conflict in the area:

It is now easy for communities to identify Tim and I expect that we will be forewarned of Tim's whereabouts and be trained in how the app and collar works. We value elephants just as much as we value our cows and, in our tradition long ago, elephants were considered women's cows.

Backing up these sentiments, Richard Bonham of Big Life Foundation said:

I'm just so happy that it turned out so well because there were a few people who said that it was dangerous. For us in Big Life the main thing now is that we've got an extra tool to monitor Tim and address human wildlife conflict in a more advanced and technological way.



Two Maasai women look on during operations to fit a tracking collar to elephant Tim in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildlifeDirect

Later that day…

In the afternoon, Katito Sayiale of the Amboseli Trust for Elephants and I went out to find him after a tour guide told us that he had just spotted Tim in the Park. We asked if he noticed anything different, and the guide replied: "No, not really. He was calm. Oh, and he had a radio collar. We knew about the plan but we didn't know that it had happened".

Afterwards, when I spoke to the tourists he was with and told them about Tim, they were thrilled to learn that they were first people to have seen him with his new shanga (necklace).

On our way towards where Tim had been seen, we came across the two other bulls, Craig and Townsend, who we had pushed away from him during the darting. They were walking purposefully and we were sure they were looking for their companion. So we followed, and there Tim was, standing quietly in the shade of an acacia tree. Townsend went quickly to his uncle, whom he clearly adores, and reached out with his trunk to greet him affectionately and then, cautiously, inspect the new collar.

Townsend was clearly ill at ease, but Tim seemed to reassure him. "I can live with it", he seemed say, "let's get on with life". Then the three elephants moved away. We heard that later on they turned up at the Amboseli Trust research camp. The researchers were worried that their old friend Tim would hate them for the part they played in the collaring. But Tim was magnanimous, and acted as if nothing had happened.

Our long day was over. Tim was none the worse for his experience and, we hope, safer than before. But this is not the end. In fact it's just the beginning for teams assigned to make use of the technology to keep Tim out of farms, and safe from poachers.



Elephant Tim walks off after having a tracking collar fitted in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, on 10 September 2016. Photograph: Paul Obuna/WildifeDirect

Summing up

Our aim in collaring Tim was not just to protect an individual elephant. We wanted to shine a light on the big tuckers. These iconic animals play a key role our ongoing campaign to win over hearts and minds of people all over the world, and local people on the ground, in support of elephant and wildlife conservation.

The urgency of our campaign was thrown into stark relief the next day when it was reported that another bull had been discovered dead in a nearby ranch, killed by poachers for his tusks. The bull could not be identified because of the state of the carcass. He died anonymously without much grieving. I couldn't help feeling acutely aware that this could have been Tim. Gone without us even knowing it was him.

We know we can't collar all our elephants, but hope that by keeping Tim alive he will serve as an inspiration in the search for sustainable solutions to the multiple threats facing elephants: poaching, human wildlife conflict and lack of space caused by habitat destruction.

I will leave the last words to Scott Asen, the benefactor who made it all possible:

To collar a majestic wild animal so that he can live out his life in peace and safety is an unnatural act. To build fences where farms have been allowed to encroach on historic migration paths in order to protect the lives of both settlers and animals—those, too, are unnatural acts. But if that's what it takes to protect our wildlife, I support and encourage all of it.

Human population growth along with wholesale abuse of the environment have put us at war with wildlife. And it is a war that, if humanity isn't careful, we will win. But it will be a tragic and Pyrrhic victory of epic proportion. Very simply, I worry that a world without animals will be a world we won't want to—or be able to—live in. The last stop on the road to our own extinction.

Postscript, 16 September: Since being collared, Tim has rejoined his friends and has been observed peacefully in Amboseli National Park

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Previous winner

Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka
Uganda
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Mountain gorilla conservation through public health

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Gladys has featured in one article and one BBC interview this year. Follow this link to view Gladys' WFN profile.

The East African - Newspaper
2 April 2016
http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/Revival-of-school-wildlife-club-led-her-to-Vet-science-/-/434746/3143070/-/item/0/-/imlicoz/-/index.html

The East African

Revival of school wildlife club led her to Vet science



Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is an award-winning veterinarian, founder and chief executive of the Conservation Through Public Health. PHOTO | MORGAN MBABAZI

Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is an award-winning veterinarian, founder and chief executive of the Conservation Through Public Health. She divides her time between Uganda and the US.

She is the founder and chief executive of Conservation Through Public Health, an NGO that promotes conservation by enabling communities to coexist with wildlife and livestock through improving their health and livelihoods around protected areas in Africa, and primarily works with the critically endangered mountain gorillas.

In 2007, she became an Ashoka Fellow for leading social entrepreneurs in merging Uganda's wildlife management and rural public health programmes to create common resources for both people and animals.

Her conservation journey began in 1988 when she revived Kibuli Secondary School Wildlife Club in her local high school in Kampala, where she also won the Six Sciences Award. This inspired her to pursue studies in veterinary medicine.

She got her first degree at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London in 1996, and later established the Uganda Wildlife Authority's first veterinary department. In 2000, she did Zoological medicine residency and masters in specialised veterinary medicine at the North Carolina Zoological Park and North Carolina State University, where her research on the human/wildlife/livestock disease interface led her to found the NGO in 2003.

On her list of awards is the 2008 San Diego Zoo Conservation in Action Award; the 2009 Whitley Gold Award for outstanding leadership in grassroots nature conservation; the 2011 Wings World Quest Women of Discovery Humanity Award; the 2014 CEO Communications Africa's Most Influential Women in Business and Government Regional Award in the category of medical and veterinary; and winner in the Health Category of 2015 E4 Impact Business Model competition for Tangaza University.

What's your off-duty passion?
Reading inspiring books and writing.

What would you have been if you did not become a veterinary doctor?
An actress, I used to play leading roles in plays in high school.

What signifies your personal style?
Down to earth, transparent, friendly, and assertive.

How do you manage your wardrobe?
When at work in the field with the wildlife, I wear T-shirts and trousers, when in the office I am smart casual. I like dressing up in traditional or elegant clothes when the occasion calls for it, like at formal events.

While in East Africa, where are you most likely to spend your Saturday afternoon?
Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, where I work, followed by Zanzibar where my husband Lawrence and I went on our honeymoon and continue to visit with our children.

Do you have a must-visit list?
Yes, hot air ballooning during the wildebeest migration from the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania to the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya.

What is East Africa's greatest strength?
The rich and diverse wildlife, culture and landscapes.

What's the most thoughtful gift you've received?
A Kitenge fabric from The Gorilla Organisation depicting images of the kind of work we do with the mountain gorillas and local community, which I made into a dress that I can wear when giving presentations.

What's the best gift you've given?
Coffee linked to our gorilla conservation work.

What big book have you read recently?
Three great books I read recently are: Count Down by Alan Weisman on the dangers of high human population growth for a sustainable environment and secure future for our planet, it has a chapter on Uganda featured our work at Conservation Through Public Health; A Good African Story by Andrew Rugasira, an inspiring story of how he created a Ugandan-owned global coffee brand, and The Entrepreneurial Mind by Kevin Johnson listing 100 habits of outstanding entrepreneurs.

Which film has had the most impact on you?
Exodus, based on the bible because it made the Bible more real through the amazing story of Moses, with spectacular images and scenery of the time.

What's your favourite music?
The music by Youssou N'Dour, I also like Afrigo Band and Lingala music.

Which is your favourite website?
www.ctph.org.

What is never missing in your fridge?
Passion fruit juice.

BBC The Conversation
26 June 2016
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03y4hy1



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Ananda Kumar
India
2015

Using innovative communication systems to enable human-elephant coexistence in southern India

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK

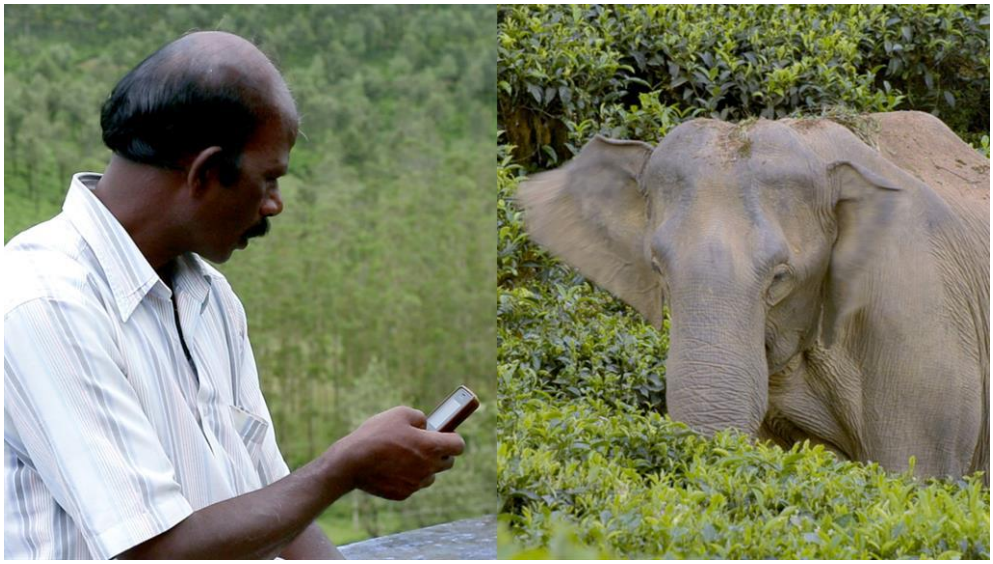
Ananda has featured in seven articles in the past year including National Geographic and the Geographical. A selection of Ananda's media coverage is included below. To view Ananda's WFN profile, follow this link.

National Geographic – Society for Research and Education
29 December 2015
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/12/151229-elephant-early-warning-text-system-india-tamil-nadu-conservation/

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Text Messages Prevent Deaths by Elephants in India

An elephant early warning system saves lives in Tamil Nadu.



WATCH: A text-messaging system alerts people in rural Valparai, India, to the presence of elephants.

In India, millions of people live alongside Asian elephants. Generally, they interact peacefully. But sometimes encounters can turn deadly.

The stakes are particularly high in the southeastern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Between 1994 and 2013, 41 people there lost their lives in encounters with elephants. But now, new technology is helping prevent such deaths: An early warning system texts residents if elephants are near.

The system is good for elephants, too, says M. Ananda Kumar, a scientist with the Nature Conservation Foundation in Valparai, Tamil Nadu. Although elephants are

legally protected in India, that hasn't stopped people from retaliating after loved ones are trampled or houses are damaged.

In the last 18 months, there have been no reported injuries or deaths from elephants, and Kumar credits the warning system for this.

We spoke with Kumar about the program, which he helped develop with the Nature Conservation Foundation.

How did your team come up with the idea for an elephant early warning system?

When we looked at all the human fatalities due to elephants, one thing that came up prominently was most people were unaware of the presence of the elephants.

During the daytime there is a lot of activity in the tea plantations that dominate the landscape, so the elephants are stuck in forest fragments. Night is the only time when they can move from one patch to another. But that's when people are often walking back to their homes from town.

At first we started informing people directly that there were elephants in the area, so they could be careful. But that was very tiring. So in 2006, we started putting information about elephants on the local TV channel. We wanted to reach even more people, so we started gathering phone numbers in 2011. Slowly people have been seeing the benefits of the alerts, and now we have 3,800 numbers in our database.

How does it work?

When someone signs up for the text alert we also collect information on where they live, so we can let them know when there are elephants in their area. But it's not just about one-way communication between us and people. We want to build a network, in which people talk to each other [about where elephants are].

For those with phones that don't support Tamil, the local language, or have screens too small to read texts, they can listen to a voice message. We are also installing systems in buses that broadcast warnings through speakers when elephants are seen nearby. Many accidents happen when people are walking from the bus stop to their home. And in 28 areas with poor visibility we have set up bright lights that flash when elephants are nearby, in order to warn people.

Once someone learns that elephants are close, what do they do?

It works in multiple ways. People can go inside. Or if a person is outside and is traveling to his residence, he or she can take extra precautions. They can avoid going through areas with poor visibility or ask someone to go with them. If people don't know where elephants are they will keep walking and it might be too late by the time they see the animals.

Based on our messages, the local range office can also send teams out to protect people and property.

You've said elephants don't threaten tea plantations, but do they threaten other plantings or buildings?

Yes, elephants cause damage to buildings and houses. Most of the damage happens on the kitchen side, because they are looking for something in there to eat, such as salt or rice.

Most of the homes in the area are owned by the tea companies, which provide them for their workers. So the companies handle any repairs. They also receive our alerts and have teams dedicated to preventing interactions, because an elephant knocking down someone's house is not a pleasant thing.

Have people tried other methods of repelling elephants, such as dogs?

People keep their dogs inside their house because of danger. Leopards pick up dogs. And if a dog barks at an elephant it will charge.

Have the alerts changed how people view elephants?

In the past, when someone died [due to an elephant interaction] people started blaming the animals, instead of the circumstance. But now people are getting to know elephants better and learning how to avoid coming into contact with them. That gives them confidence that elephants are not there to kill people. People are more afraid of what they don't know.

In the past, after elephants caused deaths, people striked against the government, demanding they do something about them. Now people tell us the elephants should be left alone, because the messages are working.

International Elephant Film Festival
06 March 2016
http://www.internationalelephantfilmfestival.org/



'**Living with Elephants**' was shortlisted under the Science and Elephants category for an International Film Festival prize in March this year. Although it did not win in the category, the film was promoted through this festival and screened in the US, Africa and China amongst other countries

This film documents the work carried out in Valparai region and the role that the technology introduced by Ananda, is playing in helping the locals live in harmony with elephants.

Geographical
12 April 2016
http://geographical.co.uk/nature/wildlife/item/1638-battling-the-human-elephant-conflict-dr-ananda-kumar-of-the-nature-conservation-foundation

Geographical

Battling the human-elephant conflict: Dr Ananda Kumar



Dr Ananda Kumar of the Nature Conservation Foundation*Stuart Dunn*

Sara Mizzi of Elephant Family talks to Dr Ananda Kumar, scientist at the Nature Conservation Foundation, about the main causes of conflict between humans and elephants across India and what is being done to help mitigate the problem

Recent news of human incidents with wild elephants that resulted in five people losing their lives in West Bengal, India, is just another reminder of the growing

problem between man and elephant sharing the same space. In your opinion, what are the main causes of human-elephant conflict?

There are several factors: Fragmentation of natural habitats, habitat loss, developmental activities, and change in land-use patterns in and around elephant habitats. These are the main drivers of conflicts between people and elephants.

We often fail to consider the requirements of elephants during the decision-making process in the interface areas between people and elephants. In many cases the ultimate sufferers are the elephants. This is largely attributed to public pressure placed on decision-makers.



As space gets smaller the problem gets bigger. Two elephants pass through a crucial corridor in Assam India (Image: Annette Bonnier)

How can we best address this conflict?

We really need to understand the conflict in a holistic way. There tends to be a mismatch between people, the government and scientists. We need to ask: what are the limitations from the government's perspective and the stakeholders/farmers/plantation companies, what are the requirements of the people and what do we understand from an elephant's perspective as a scientist? We need to align these three together and make a decision.

How best should people react when faced with a situation similar to the one in West Bengal?

It is obvious that the people were in a state of panic when they saw an elephant in a paddy field. They reacted by making loud noises, bursting crackers, and surrounding the animal which made things worse. In general, it is only because people do not know how to handle the situation that typical mob behaviour ends up dominating the circumstance. This is where presence of authoritative persons who are good at mobilising and guiding the crowd would play an important role. Crowd management is one of the key practices

that needs to be strictly followed in human-wildlife conflict management. Be it an elephant or a leopard in human-use areas, there should be adequate space for them to move away. We need to get across to people that these large animals need space. We have to create awareness that violent behaviour would only lead to tragic incidents.

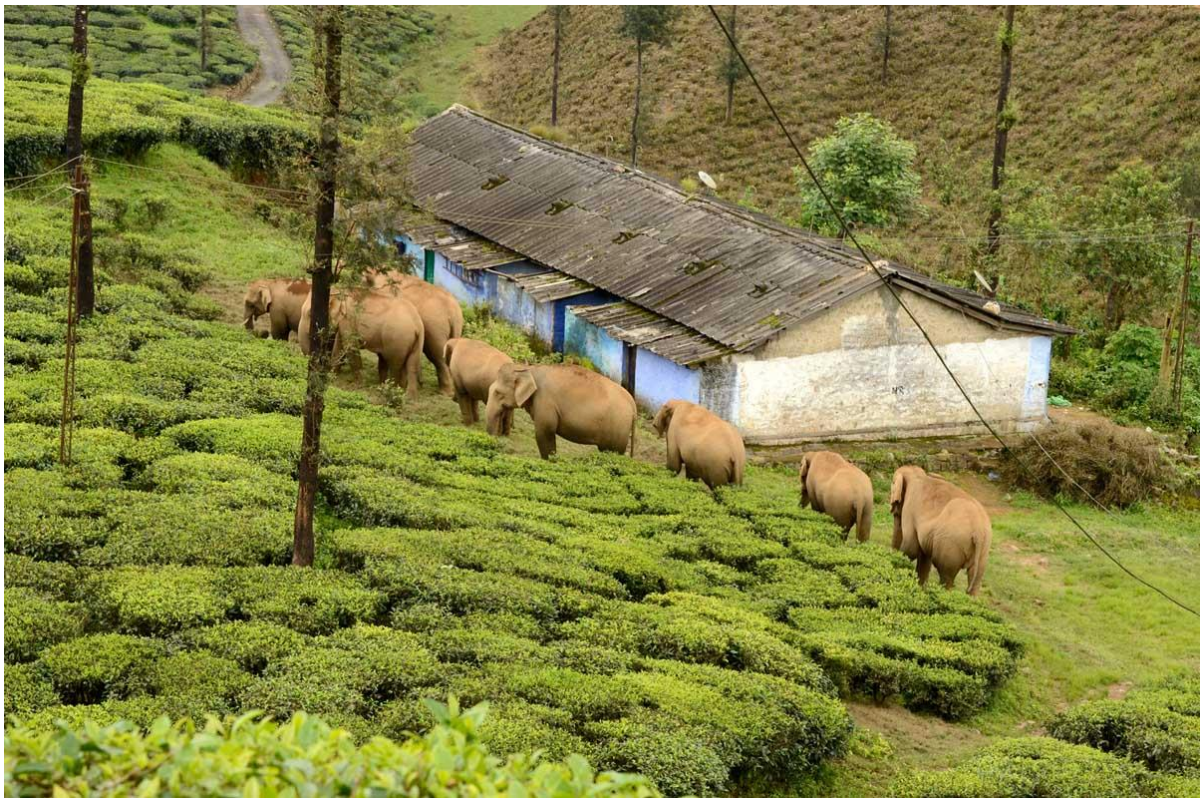


Wild elephants at the doorstep of villagers homes in Assam India. An everyday battle (Image: Annette Bonnier)

Are there specific actions that the Indian government should take to prevent such incidences from happening again?

In many places we do not have reliable and sustained data on human-elephant conflict. Yet perception of conflict seems to have increased among different sections of society. **Project Elephant** by the Indian government has already taken several steps to deal with the issue. However, there are certain key points that must be given serious attention. One is providing legal status to elephant reserves as there are many forests which are not legally identified as such. Critical assessments need to be carried out before any development project is approved in elephant habitats and in the surrounding forests to identify sensitivity of region for elephants and people living in those areas. Though governmental compensation schemes for loss of life and crop damages due to elephants are helping to increase people's tolerance levels, the bureaucratic process of disbursing payments should be minimised and quick payments of compensations to people should be considered. Public and private partnerships should be encouraged for initiating insurance schemes which would cover crop loss or life coverage of people in case of any

eventuality. We should shift our conventional thinking of 'problem elephant' approach to 'problem location' approach.



Wild elephants in Valparai, Tamil Nadu, India (Image: NCF)

As elephants continue to damage farmers' crops and cause lives to be lost, they may be perceived as 'pests' and seen as 'dangerous'...

Perceptions of people towards human-elephant conflict vary depending on socio-economic status. How small farmers view a crop damage incident by elephants is completely different to a big farmer or a Forest Department employee or a biologist.

However, I don't agree that elephants are being seen as 'pests' by the majority of people, at least in India and Sri Lanka. People's tolerance levels are generally high towards wildlife. It is because of this that large amounts of wildlife still exist in human-dominated areas in India. There are 300 million people in India living either close to or inside forests interacting with wild animals on a day-to-day basis. We would have lost many wildlife species, particularly large mammals such as elephants, leopards, or tigers if they were considered 'pests' by people. There are both cultural and religious tolerances of these species coupled with aesthetic significance, prevailing in a large part of Indian society: this is saving many of these species. Of course, when species such as elephants enter a house or farmland, people consider them potentially dangerous due to fear of losing their life and their property, which is a natural instinct. This may follow undesirable reactions that can create panic and danger to both sides. It is the responsibility of scientists, conservationists and administrative people to work towards increasing tolerance levels of people towards elephants by providing safety to people, their property as well as the elephants themselves.



The aftermath of a wild elephant in Valparai Tamil Nadu, India (Image: NCF)

Elephant Family has recently signed an alliance with four other organisations to secure 100 elephant corridors across India by 2025. How much do you see securing elephant corridors as being a solution to this growing problem, not just in India but across Asia?

I believe that protection of elephant corridors is one of the crucial aspects for elephant conservation and mitigation of human-elephant conflict. But we also need to keep in mind that it is not only securing the physical connectivity that is important but also the retention of the functional connectivity as these also play critical roles in conservation of elephants and conflict resolution.

What I mean by functional connectivity is that elephants will not necessarily look at the forest as their complete, ideal habitat. Nearly 65 per cent of Asian elephants live outside protected areas. It is a huge number. They are moving through human-used areas where there may be cropland and plantations. So if you cut off those areas from their movement by having something else, an obstruction or mining, we will lose that functional connectivity. I am really concerned about that part. We need to find places that offer functional connectivity to elephants and see how important they are in terms of elephant conservation, in terms of frequency of movement and how many elephants are actually using those landscapes.



Education and awareness is key to living harmoniously with elephants (Image: Annette Bonnier)

There are an estimated 50,000 Asian elephants left in the wild today, with approximately over half of the population in India. With India's population at over 1.2 billion alone, do you believe that there will continue to be a place for Asian elephants in today's world?

Thanks to the Forest laws in India the National Parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and tiger reserves have been very well protected. Elephant populations in these protected areas are safe. The Indian government has created 32 elephant reserves in India across elephant range states which are also relatively safe for elephants but they would require legal status as protected forests. However, protection of elephants outside these protected forests would become a challenge for elephant conservation. But I am hopeful that elephants in India will continue to live in most parts barring a few areas where they have a bleak future, unless we act sensibly now.

What I know from my colleagues who are working with elephants in other parts of Asia is that elephant population is on decline in most of the Southeast Asian countries. One of the remarkable steps that my colleague from **Nature Conservation Foundation**, Sanjay Gubbi, has done in Karnataka, India, was bring nearly 2,500km² of unclassified forest areas into the protected area network. Such steps are urgently needed to provide space for elephants in other parts of Asia.

If we could actually transform conflict areas to co-existence areas that would be the greatest achievement one can ever do for both humans and elephants.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Dmitry Lisitsyn
Russia
2006

Vostochny wild salmon refuge: conservation of biodiversity, Sakhalin Island, Russia

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Winner of the Whitley Award for Wetlands and Rivers

Dmitry has featured in two articles this year, to view Dmitry's WFN profile, follow this link.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Terrace Standard – Print and Online News
15 February 2016
http://www.terracestandard.com/news/368738771.htm

TERRACE STANDARD

Russians sound salmon alarm



Visiting Russian ecologist Dmitry V. Lisitsyn at the SkeenaWild offices in Terrace. Lisitsyn is on a speaking tour of the northwest with three colleagues from overseas to tell of their experience with the Sakhalin LNG project that opened in 2009.
— *Image Credit: Josh Massey*

A group of Russian scientists and conservationists are on a speaking tour this week, which includes a stop in Terrace tomorrow night, about the dangers that LNG projects pose to local salmon.

One of team, conservationist Dmitry V. Lisitsyn, says the Sakhalin LNG project, which was built and owned by Shell and Gazprom near his hometown on the east coast of Russia, says the end results of the development were much different than promised in the environmental plan, causing the collapse of pink salmon and also of other sea life after it opened in 2009.

The group was brought over by Terrace-based SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, and conservationist Lisitsyn has a similar position with Sakhalin Environment Watch as does SkeenaWild executive director Greg Knox in Terrace.
He says that by comparison, the Pacific NorthWest LNG project planned for Lelu Island near Prince Rupert is about twice the size of the Sakhalin one.
He also said Sakhalin has small rivers near the plant, as opposed to one big one like here.
"There was a very big difference between what they predicted, and what occurred," he said of when the Sakhalin project was okayed in the planning phases by the Russian government.

Based on similarities between the two projects and their locations, Lisitsyn believes the region should expect a large impact on the salmon runs from having a plant built in the estuary at the mouth of the Skeena River.
"I don't have a problem with LNG technology," he said. "What I have a problem with is putting the plants in locations like these."
In the ocean itself, it is the dredging that must be done, noise and light pollution from flare stacks that affects marine life, he said.
The pipelines feeding gas plants cause silt to collect in the areas where the salmon lay their eggs, he said.
"I am surprised there isn't more concern in your area about the pipelines," said Lisitsyn.
He said Shell and Gazprom proceeded with construction of Sakhalin LNG without heeding many of the conditions laid down by Russian environmental authorities.
He said the shortening of the jetty design at a late stage in planning meant more dredging, followed by court challenges against the company for dumping dredged material in the bay.

He said the difference between the rich and poor is greater now after the oil and gas boom on his island, and his environmental group can't afford to rent a space large enough for its purposes.
During construction, about 60-70 per cent of the work force were foreign workers, he added, and now, during operations, fewer than 100 are employed.

Squamish Chief
25 February 2016
http://www.squamishchief.com/news/local-news/russians-tell-cautionary-lng-tale-1.2183247

THE SQUAMISH CHIEF

Russians tell cautionary LNG tale

Group visits Squamish and other B.C. locations where plants are proposed



Dmitry Lisitsyn, who is chairman of the Russian non-governmental organization Sakhalin Environment Watch, shown at an environmental meeting. Photo: Submitted

Liquefied natural gas has created trouble for marine life. That was the message from a Russian delegation that stopped by Squamish over the weekend while on a tour of communities in B.C. slated for proposed LNG facilities.

The group met with My Sea to Sky members and others on Sunday at a Squamish restaurant. The four men – three scientists and a conservationist – were in B.C. to share

what they say happened to salmon and other marine life near Sakhalin, the largest island in eastern Russia and home to Russia's first operational LNG facility since 2009.

"We have the experience of the planning stage, the decision-making stage, the construction, post-construction and production stage," said Dmitry Lisitsyn, who is chairman of the Russian non-governmental organization Sakhalin Environment Watch.

Construction of the Sakhalin facility began in 2003. The men say the project contributed to the decimation of pink salmon runs in Sakhalin's Aniva Bay even though the facility is 30 kilometres from the closest significant salmon river.

The area is also home to other oil and gas infrastructure including offshore oil and gas terminals and a processing plant. All told, the area has the world's largest integrated oil and gas project, according to the Goldman Environmental Foundation.

Construction of the LNG facility and in particular the placing of the pipeline through a watershed significantly damaged the salmon stocks, said Lisitsyn, a conservationist who spoke on behalf of the delegation.

"Sedimentation blocks the oxygen supply to the eggs – this is the most critical type of impact," he said.

The operational stage has less devastating impacts, but there is concern over the impact of tanker traffic, he said.

Before 2009, according to Lisitsyn, 27,400 metric tonnes of salmon were caught in Aniva Bay, since that year 5,000 metric tons are caught per year. The migration routes of the salmon also changed, he said.

"It switched," he said. No one has studied why this happened, but Lisitsyn said the group is trying to organize an analysis to understand if tanker traffic is the cause.

While the delegation did not come specifically to discuss the Woodfibre LNG proposal, the group said the B.C. government should suspend plans to construct the project due to its potential impact on marine life such as herring.

"Herring is very, very sensitive," Lisitsyn said.

Few studies have been done on the impact of low frequency noise from the tankers on marine life, he said.

"The fish are very sensitive to low frequency noise," he said. "There are clear scientific data that salmon avoid noise polluted areas. It can change the salmon migration routes."

Byng Giraud, Woodfibre LNG vice-president of corporate affairs, told The Squamish Chief there is really no comparing the project in Russia and even the Pacific Northwest LNG plant slated for northern B.C. to the facility planned for Howe Sound.

"Those notions of impact on salmon habitat, I don't think they would apply," he said.

In terms of tanker traffic, Giraud there has been shipping traffic to the Woodfibre site for more than 100 years.

"There were actually more barges and vessels when it was a pulp mill," he said.



Dmitry Lisitsyn, who is chairman of the Russian non-governmental organization Sakhalin Environment Watch, during a Russian delegation tour of B.C.'s north last week. - Submitted

Woodfibre LNG plans to protect Mill Creek, the one creek on the site that has salmon, Giraud said.

"[We] plan to green it up to actually minimize impact," he said. "Right now you've got contaminated soils and basically a concrete tube…. We'll be cleaning that up."

The SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition and Wild Salmon Center of Portland, Oregon invited the Russian group to North America.

Lisitsyn said prior to construction of the Sakhalin LNG plant, the surrounding community was almost unanimously in favour of the project.

"The contract was really profitable for local people… jobs and the revenue for local budgets," he said.

Many of the construction jobs ultimately went to temporary foreign workers and there were few jobs available once the facility was operational, according to Lisitsyn.

Giraud said he does not imagine Woodfibre LNG needing to resort to temporary workers.

"We are 50 kilometres from a population of two million people, and frankly with the oil sands downturn, there is a lot of Canadian labour and expertise available," he said.

The Woodfibre LNG proposal is currently in the midst of a three-week federal comment period, which ends March 1, on its possible upstream greenhouse gas emissions.

MP Pam Goldsmith-Jones is hosting a community meeting on the proposed Woodfibre LNG project on Saturday, Feb. 27 at 1 p.m. at the Eagle Eye Theatre in Squamish.

Federal Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna is expected to make a final decision within a few months.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

M.D. Madhusudan
India
2009

Conflict reduction between people and endangered wildlife

Winner of the Whitley Award donated by HSBC Private Bank

Madhu has featured in two media articles this year, one of which follows below. To view the WFN's profile, follow this link.

The Hindu – Print and Online News
20 April 2016
http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/indian-tigers-may-replenish-cambodian-forests/article8477105.ece

THE HINDU

Indian tigers may replenish Cambodian forests



The big cat has been declared 'functionally extinct' in the southeast Asian country.

Cambodia is looking to India to bring tigers back to its forests where they were declared "functionally extinct" recently. The southeast Asian country is trying to get some tigers from India introduced into its eastern region. A formal proposal from Cambodia is likely later this year.

"We are in talks…for six female tigers and two males and we expect more discussions on it this year," Sokhun TY, Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia, told The Hindu.

India has said it is open to the idea, but wants several conditions for the safety of the tigers to be addressed. "We await a formal proposal and have to think of several aspects.

Safety, adaptability to the forests there, risks that our tigers could face are some," said Ashok Lavasa, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. "There is no specific timeline."

Cambodia's dry forests bear similarities to India's, but conservation biologists say they may not be conducive in terms of low prey density and lax enforcement of anti-poaching laws.

Key deer species that serve as prey were absent and generally "much lower than in ecologically similar sites in South Asia" in eastern Cambodia, say Thomas N.E. Gray and colleagues in a research publication.

Other experts are concerned about Cambodia's inability to rein in poaching. "Twenty-six tigers have been killed in the last three months even in India, so what can we expect in Cambodia," asks Tito Joseph, Programme Manager, Wildlife Protection Society of India.

A report by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) says that though there are genetic variations in Asian tigers (Bengal, Malayan, Indochinese and Amur), the big cats from India or Nepal are best suited for the Cambodia plan as they are likely to acclimatise to dry forests.

Officials from 13 tiger range countries converged here for discussions on tiger conservation that concluded on Thursday. India, recently hailed by the WWF as a success story for stepping up conservation efforts, is seen as a role model.

Countries resolve to double tiger count

After the tiger was declared "functionally extinct" in Cambodia by the WWF, that country is contemplating a $50 million (Rs. 32.5 crore) programme to improve enforcement and restore tiger populations.

MD Madhusudan, a wildlife expert at the Nature Conservation Foundation said the idea of sending Indian tigers to the southeast Asian country wasn't outrageous. "Science must decide the right kind of tiger [breeding/non breeding] that could be introduced. As long as the timing is right, it could work."

"We have made gains too, but we would be interested in technical cooperation to better understand India's success," said Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Minister for Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan.

Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said India was committed to the principles of 'restoration, reintroduction and rehabilitation' that formed part of a resolution by the assembled countries to double the world's tiger numbers by 2022 from the 2010 levels of 3,200.

Corrections & Clarifications:

>>The last paragraph had previously referred to a resolution to double the world's tiger numbers by*2020 from the current 3,890*. It has been edited to "double the world's tiger numbers by *2022 from the 2010 levels of 3,200*."

Previous winner

Dino Martins
Kenya
2009 and 2015

People, plants and pollinators: protecting the little things that power the plant

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Sarah Chenevix-Trench

Dino has featured in three articles this year, a selection of which is below. To view Dinoa's WFN profile, follow this link.

Msafiri
1 November 2015
http://www.msafirimag.com/habari/meet-dr-dino-j-martins/

Meet Dr Dino J. Martins

Award-winning scientist Dr Dino J. Martins talks to msafiri about his career as an entomologist and the importance of his work



Name: Dr Dino J. Martins
Age: 38
Profession: Entomologist & Evolutionary Biologist
Organisation: Mpala Research Centre and Nature Kenya
Area of work: Forests in Western Kenya, Drylands of Northern Kenya
Websites: www.discoverpollinators.orgwww.naturekenya.org www.mpala.org

Q As an entomologist, how did you become interested in insects?

My earliest memories are of insects! I spent a lot of time watching and chasing after them as a child; growing up we didn't have television, so after school I would spend my time watching insects. I was incredibly lucky to grow up in Eldoret, a rural area in Western Kenya, where I was able to see first-hand the connection between nature, people and farming at an early age. My favourite activity was, (and still is), spending time in the bush looking at insects!

Q Why are insects so important?

As Professor E. O. Wilson stated so eloquently some time ago: "Insects are the little creatures that run the world." This is truer than ever in Africa where insects pollinate wild plants and crops, disperse seeds, help build soil and recycle nutrients through the whole ecosystem. Understanding biodiversity is essential for sustainable development and conservation in Africa today. Frankly speaking, without the insects, our life on this planet would be untenable.

Q How does your work help Kenya's farmers?

Farmers are at the very frontline of conserving nature in East Africa. Choices made by farmers on what they do with their land, how they plant and manage crops and how they manage pesticides have a huge impact on insects like bees. Over two-thirds of the crops

we grow in East Africa depend on pollinators, and most of these are wild insects, mainly bees.Farmers are our greatest allies in the conservation of biodiversity in East Africa. Most of the forest habitats, for example, are surrounded by small-scale farmers whose actions can go a long way to either protect or degrade the forests, and of course the many endemic species they are home to. Our main message shared with farmers is to celebrate the biodiversity that underpins the life support systems of the planet, to get them, and in fact everyone, to understand the connection between their own lives, food production and wild insects. We work with farmers performing a simple experiment where we bag one flower and leave one open to insects, then watch what develops over the next few days or weeks depending on the crop. It is always uplifting to see the moment a light goes on in the farmers' eyes when they see the connection between insects visiting the flowers and the yields they enjoy. Working to help conserve pollinators and restore habitats has seen yields increase up to ten-fold on some crops, such as passionfruit and watermelon.

Q You recently won a prestigious Whitley Gold Award presented by HRH The Princess Royal in London. How do you feel about winning this award worth £50,000?

I am very honoured and deeply humbled to have been recognised with the Whitley Gold Award, donated by the Friends and Scottish Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature. I take this award as recognition for the immense contribution by pollinators, insects, and small-scale farmers in rural areas around the world, to biodiversity. So I am receiving it, I feel, on their behalf; I am simply the messenger and it is the bees and farmers who are the real heroes here.

Q How will you be using your award funding to help your work and what do you hope to achieve in the future?

The Whitley Gold Award will enable us to scale up our work on the conservation of pollinators in East Africa, tackle the use of unregistered harmful pesticides and raise further awareness among farmers, school children and the general public about this important ecosystem service that puts food on our plates and nutrition in our bodies. We will be developing some practical tool-kits and information for farmers that will be distributed freely through various print and digital media channels. For now, those interested can download a copy of our book on pollinator conservation, with a foreword from Professor Judi Wakhungu, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya, from this link: http://discoverpollinators.org/pollinators/pollinatorhandbook/

Our main message… is to celebrate the bio-diversity that underpins the life support systems of the planet & the connection between their own lives, food production & wild insects.

The Guardian – Print and Online News
2 February 2016
1,027,000 readership
https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/feb/02/zika-spraying-pesticides-is-not-the-way-to-deal-with-epidemic-says-leading-entomologist

theguardian

Global development professionals network

Zika virus: pesticides are not a long-term solution says leading entomologist

Spraying pesticides in landscapes is a quick fix and will fail to stop the epidemic that has now been declared a public health emergency

Spraying pesticides will fail to deal with the Zika virus, a leading Kenyan entomologist has said this week. Dr Dino Martins spoke to the Guardian from his home in Laikipia about the virus that has been declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organisation.

While pesticides are useful for removing flying adult mosquitoes that transmit the virus, he argues they will fail to deal with the epidemic that threatens to become a global pandemic. The virus was first detected in Uganda in 1947, although its exact origins are unknown.

Martins makes an exception for indoor spraying. When pesticide is applied to walls where mosquitoes rest after feeding, it can be highly effective. But spraying in landscapes is extremely dangerous he warns: "It is a quick fix but you pay for it. You kill other species that would have predated on the mosquitoes. You also create a mosaic of sprayed and unsprayed low densities of chemicals that fosters the rapid evolution of resistance."

Mosquitoes have life cycles of a week or less, and each generation is an opportunity for random mutations to occur that might predispose a group of mosquitoes to be immune to pesticides. "In addition, when you use chemicals, you are actually applying a selection pressure on mosquito populations that will drive them to become resistant," says Martins, who studied for his PhD at Harvard.

"We are basically fighting an arms race with mosquitoes rather than cleverly understanding its life cycle and solving the problem there. Resistance can never evolve to getting rid of the breeding sites. But resistance will always evolve to the use of pesticides," says Martins, who runs Mpala Research Centre, a field station affiliated with

Princeton, Smithsonian Institution, Kenya Wildlife Service and National Museums of Kenya.

Martins argues that spraying pesticides will not work in the long term. Photograph: Cathy Watson

The explosion of mosquitoes in urban areas has driven the Zika crisis, and this has at least two causes, according to Martins. One is the lack of natural diversity to keep them under control and the other is lack of waste disposal and the proliferation of plastic. While photos this week show public areas being fumigated, Martins says that it is impossible to fumigate every corner of a habitat where mosquitoes might possibly breed.

"It might seem easier to just to spray but pesticides will not work long term," he says. "We need to ask – what is the weakest point in the life cycle of this vector? For me, it is the larvae because they are fixed and findable. You can destroy them right there. Once the mosquitoes fly, it is far harder ... We need more investment in mosquito control at early rather than late stages."

Martins has, alongside paleontologist Richard Leakey, successfully controlled malaria in part of Turkana, a county of extreme aridity. "We knew that mosquitoes breed in standing water, yet there was almost none around. It took us sometime to work out that they were breeding in the traditional shallow wells, which women dig and then leave once the quality of water has declined," says Martins. Treatment of active cases and indoor residual spraying using WHO-approved long-acting chemicals, combined with encouraging women and young people to fill in the wells, helped to end a severe localised epidemic.

And yet even there Martins found that if people threw plastic bags into the well it increased the survival of mosquito larvae. He speculates that the ban on plastic bags in Rwanda under President Kagame might account for much of the decline in malaria in Rwanda, combined with improved case management and indoor spraying.

"With mosquitoes, and this applies to Zika, chemicals are just one tool. We've not invested in the broad research that will address this problem sustainably or in plastic recycling. Plastic persists and the bags have become a ubiquitous feature of life across east Africa," says Martins. Global warming is unhelpful too: mosquito species that typically occurred in lower altitude warmer areas are now able to survive in high altitude areas, leading to malaria and other diseases.

Reflecting on the way the health and science community have dealt with Zika reveals important lessons for the future of global health. "This is where good surveillance, archiving of data, and public commons scientific spaces are important. It is highly unlikely that the blood samples from when it was discovered have survived - Uganda has gone through problems and science has not been well supported. Yet this is a public health crisis. Having historical information and supporting scientists in developing countries now will solve a lot of problems in future."

Cathy Watson is chief of programme development at the World Agroforestry Centre in Nairobi, which addresses the links between landscapes and human health.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Rodrigo Medellin
Mexico
2004 and 2012

Community based sea turtle conservation, Bangladesh

Winner of the Whitley Gold Award

Rodrigo has featured in one JRS Biodiversity Foundation article this year. Follow this link to view Rodrigo's WFN profile.

JRS Biodiversity Foundation
12 July 2016
http://jrsbiodiversity.org/grants/institute-of-ecology-at-national-autonomous-university-of-mexico/

JRS Biodiversity Foundation

INSTITUTE OF ECOLOGY AT NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF MEXICO

Mexico National Bat Monitoring

LABORATORIO DE ECOLOGÍA Y CONSERVACIÓN DE VERTEBRADOS TERRESTRES

Background

Bats perform a number of ecological services essential for ecosystem integrity and human well-being including pollination, seed dispersal, and insect population control. Threats such as habitat destruction, wind farming, and white-nose syndrome kill millions of bats each year, but there is little information to evaluate short and long-term population trends of bats in tropical countries. Acoustic monitoring of bats is rapidly becoming the tool of choice to document bats at large spatiotemporal scales. However, most bat monitoring programs occur on localized scales in temperate areas and center on only a few species, over short time periods. These programs are limited in scope due to high costs and human resource requirements. In the tropics, there is currently no standardized effort to monitor bat populations, even in the short term. The Mexican Federal Government approached Dr. Rodrigo Medellín to ask if he could help design a long-term, nationwide bat monitoring program to add bats to the existing National Forest Inventory (NFI), one of the best large-scale longitudinal natural resource monitoring programs in the world. The NFI is an enormous effort that deploys staff over 60,000 points across Mexico which are visited every 5 years (12,000 points per year), and tracks not only forest resources, but population data for birds, large mammals, invertebrates, fish, and reptiles. Thus, there is a need in Mexico to develop an efficient, sustainable, consistent acoustic monitoring protocol for bats across the entire country.

Key Objectives and Activities

The goal is to design and implement a standardized, nationwide, long-term acoustic bat-monitoring program in Mexico, integrating the latest technology in bat detectors and automated data analysis. This project will develop and validate acoustic monitoring protocols at a small number of sites, providing a proof-of-concept for expanding the spatiotemporal scale of acoustic monitoring, and generating best-practices for monitoring in other locations. Bat occurrence data will be contributed to Mexico's premier open-access biodiversity data repository, CONABIO, and made available to scientists, stakeholders, and land managers. These data will facilitate assessments of natural and anthropogenic impacts on bat populations, and can be used to develop mitigation, restoration, or conservation strategies.

Planned Outputs

Establish 16 locations for permanent acoustic bat monitoring stations in two biosphere reserves in Mexico with contrasting ecosystems: Chamela-Cuixmala Biosphere Reserve (tropical dry forest) and Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (tropical rain forest).

Conduct two cycles of standardized acoustic bat monitoring at each reserve and produce a collection of pre-filtered bat recordings.

Analyze all sound files containing a bat call using a combination of already published software (AVISOFT) and a custom software to identify each recording to the family or sonotype level.

Make the complete database containing the data produced during the first year of monitoring available to the public through CONABIO.

Offer a workshop for two staff members in charge of monitoring programs in each reserve where personnel will be trained on bat identification, acoustic bat monitoring techniques and technology, design and implementation of nation-wide, long-term monitoring programs.

Conduct a six-day long workshop for members of the Bat Conservation Africa (BCA) network to facilitate transfer of knowledge and technology and strengthen the infrastructure of bat conservation programs in Africa.

Planned Outcomes

The aim of this project and its leaders is the incorporation of bat distribution data in the National Forestry Inventory (NFI), and the use of that information by thousands of Mexicans and non-Mexicans, in support of research and conservation decision-making.

This project will generate a validated monitoring protocol that establishes a set of rules and criteria for how acoustic bat surveys, including metadata of environmental conditions, should be conducted on large spatiotemporal scales. This standardization is essential to permit comparison of data taken at different locations or times, and by different workgroups throughout Mexico. Results of nationwide monitoring will crucially enhance the understanding of bat species distribution, diversity, abundance, and activity

patterns in relation to different environmental conditions and threats, contributing to effective species and habitat conservation. An additional outcome will be the use of the tools and techniques pioneered in Mexico by this project by African bat researchers, to foster enhanced bat research and monitoring in sub-Saharan Africa.

Primary Software Platforms

The bat acoustic calls will be analyzed and processed by integrating AVISOFT, an existing bioacoustics software platform, with custom-built software, to automate the classification of bat calls. Data on bat distribution, diversity, and relative abundance will be managed in CONABIO's software for data management, BIOTA.

Results to Date

A major highlight for the project's partners was the agreement in April 2015 among the governments of Mexico, the US, and Canada, to coordinate and collaborate on a continental scale to conserve bat populations. The agreement specifically emphasized the importance of expanding and implementing acoustic monitoring and standardizing protocols. Read more about it *here*.

Identification of 8 sites at which monitoring stations will be deployed.

Importation of the latest bioacoustics technology.

Training for 3 staff on use of equipment, monitoring protocols, and multiple analytical software platforms.

Production of a field manual for deployment of monitoring stations and catalog of anticipated bat species (taxonomic and acoustic).

Lessons Learned

Dr. Medellín and his group patiently awaited the importation of the very latest bioacoustics technology for this project, and are launching the first session of field monitoring. This gear is critical to the project's investment in cutting-edge methods development. Flexibility is a necessity in research, and the group used the time to provide expanded training on the use of bioacoustics equipment and software to more team members than was planned. In mid-2015, the group will head into the field (Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve) to collect acoustic data and train reserve staff on acoustic monitoring protocols.

Related Publications

López-Hoffman, L, R Wiederholt, C Sansone, KJ Bagstad, P Cryan, JE Diffendorfer, J Goldstein, K LaSharr, J Loomis, G McCracken, RA Medellín, A Russell & D Semmens. 2014. Market forces and technological substitutes cause fluctuations in the value of bat pest-control services for cotton. *PLoS One*, 9(2): 7 pages. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0087912 (*link*)

Project Director Biography

Dr. Rodrigo Medellín researches conservation of mammals with emphasis on applied and policy-driven science, as a Senior Professor at the Institute of Ecology UNAM. He is an established leader in the field of mammal conservation, and is President of the Society for Conservation Biology (2013-2015), and Scientific Councilor of the Convention on Migratory Species. The majority of Dr. Medellín's work is dedicated to bats: he founded RELCOM, a network for conservation of bats in Latin America in 2007, and currently co-chairs the IUCN Bat Specialist Group. He has authored more than 170 publications trained more than 40 graduate students, and has projects or students in 16 countries on five continents. He is a Rolex Award Laureate, and 2012 Whitley Gold Award winner.

Notes from JRS

In 2014, JRS called for proposals that feature innovations in biodiversity informatics and Dr. Medellín's proposed large scale bat monitoring is innovative and holds the potential to lower costs, increase scale, and automate biodiversity monitoring activities. With encouragement from JRS, the project team included training and technology transfer to Africa, which we hope might plant the seeds of future collaborations and projects. This award is JRS' third for bats, making bats the mammal with most JRS grants. Today, this project from UNAM and the investment in the work of Dr. Bruce Miller and Dr. Bruce Patterson remain un-linked. We hope that our efforts to make bat call data accessible and better documented will help support global collaboration and knowledge transfer regarding the biodiversity monitoring of this important species.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Patricia Medici
Brazil
2008

The Lowland tapir Conservation Initiative: Expanding from the Atlantic Forest to the Pantanal, Brazil

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by the friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

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Patricia has featured in eleven media articles this past year including two TED videos and a feature in National Geographic. A selection of Patricia's media coverage is below. To view Patricia's WFN profile, follow this link.

Ideas TED
16 November 2015
http://ideas.ted.com/gallery-meet-the-tapir-south-americas-cutest-prehistoric-animal/

IDEAS.TED.COM

Gallery: Meet the tapir, South America's cutest prehistoric animal

Chances are, you don't know much about tapirs. Don't feel bad; neither do scientists. Even though tapirs are the largest land mammals in South America, known as "gardeners of the forest" for their habit of eating (and dispersing) large quantities of fruit and seeds, little is known about these solitary, mostly nocturnal creatures. TED Fellow and conservationist Patricia Medici (TED Talk: The coolest animal you know nothing about … and how we can save it) is on a mission to change that, through her work with a Brazilian non-governmental organization called the Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ) and the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group. Here she shares photos of the lowland tapir, and explains why these elusive creatures provide far more than just your day's "awww, cute!" moment.



The stripy camouflage of the baby tapir

Tapirs have a gestation period of 13 months. After giving birth, mothers hide their offspring for almost a month in thickly forested areas, often using a thorny bush called the caraguatá as a hiding spot. The calves' spotted, stripy coat (which they grow out of) further camouflages them from predators such as jaguars and pumas. Calves won't stay small for long; during their first two years of life, they grow at an astonishing rate, gaining two to three kilograms each week. *Photo: Liana John.*



The mother/baby tapir bond

Tapir calves stay close to their mothers when they're first born, and mothers are fiercely protective of their young. (Tapir dads don't stay in the picture, says Medici.) After about six months, the age of the calf shown here, young tapirs start to explore their surroundings on their own, and at a year and a half, they head off on their own, though exactly where they go after their leave their mothers is still unknown. Finding out where they go — and why — is central to Medici's research, and it may help suggest new ways to protect tapirs. *Photo: Daniel Zupanc.*



Tapirs as living fossils

The first recognizable tapir ancestor roamed the earth nearly 50 million years ago, while the tapir we know today is believed to have appeared some time between 5 and 25 million years ago, earning it another nickname: "the living fossil." Nonetheless, it's been listed as an endangered species since 1970. Today, the animals are threatened by poachers, who hunt them for their meat and skins, habitat fragmentation and the pollution that's rampant in quickly industrializing Brazil. "Tapirs are beautiful animals that have been around for

such a long time," Medici says. "We do not want to be responsible for their extinction." *Photo: Daniel Zupanc.*



At home on land and in the water

Tapirs love to spend time in the water, and they are even known to fall asleep while submerged. Because they can grow to be so large, sometimes reaching weights of nearly 400 kg, and because of the sweltering heat in South and Central America, they use water to keep cool. And while their diets mainly consist of fruit and berries, they do sometimes snack on aquatic plants. *Photo: Daniel Zupanc.*

A probing proboscis

One of the most distinctive features of the tapir is its proboscis, or snout. Highly flexible, it's used to grab food such as leaves, berries and fruit. A tapir with a raised proboscis, like the one pictured here, is either trying to smell something or is showing its teeth as a sign of aggression. *Photo: Daniel Zupanc.*





Blind as a tapir

Tapirs have very poor eyesight, and they often develop cataracts due to excessive exposure to sunlight. What they lack in eyesight they make up for in smell and hearing, both of which are exceptional. "Often we can see them before they see us," Medici says. "But they can smell us before we see them." *Photo: Patricia Medici.*

A keystone species

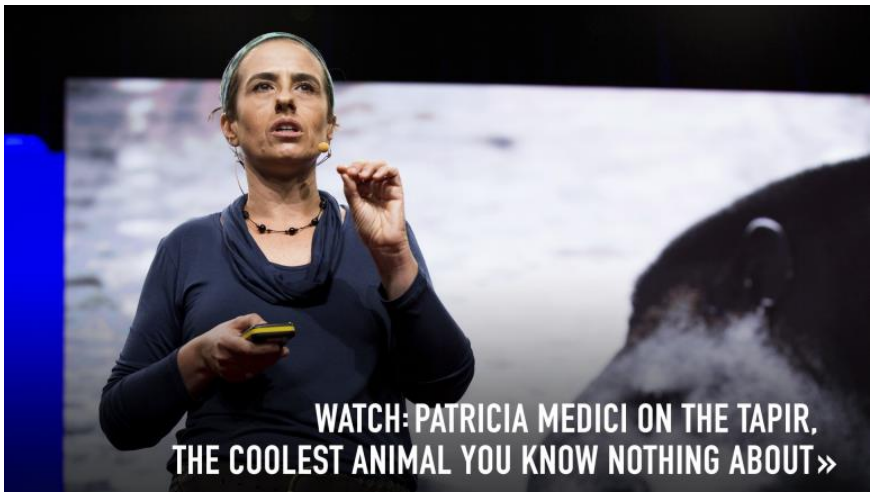


Tapirs help shape and maintain biological diversity in the areas they inhabit, which can include forests, grasslands, floodplains and even high altitude environments. Because of the large amount of fruit and seeds they eat and distribute across vast distances, they contribute significantly to plant life and, as a consequence, play a key role in important ecological processes. "If tapirs go extinct, forests will be very different, less diverse, and, most certainly, less productive," Medici says. *Photo: Jason Woolgar.*



Conservation efforts

Tracking tapirs has always been difficult — they're predominantly nocturnal, and they grow too quickly to use traditional tracking collars without causing them harm. Using new, expandable tracking collars, Medici and her colleagues are gaining a better understanding of the extension of tapirs' home ranges. With this data, they discovered that while tapirs are solitary, their home ranges overlap, meaning they aren't territorial. Tracking data also helps researchers keep an eye on pregnant females and gain a better understanding of threats to tapirs' survival. This, in turn, helps them develop conservation strategies to maintain adequate habitat for them. *Photo: Patricia Medici.*



National Geographic Brazil
25 April 2016
http://viajeaqui.abril.com.br/national-geographic/blog/curiosidade-animal/iniciativa-nacional-para-a-conservacao-da-anta-brasileira-completa-20-anos/

Iniciativa Nacional para a Conservação da Anta Brasileira completa 20 anos



A anta-brasileira (*Tapirus terrestris*) é o maior mamífero terrestre da América do Sul. Considerada a jardineira da floresta por ser uma excelente dispersora de sementes e contribuir para a formação e manutenção da biodiversidade das matas onde vive. O animal da foto está com um rádio-colar que ajuda na obtenção de dados sobre a área de vida e ajuda a localizar cada indivíduo. A espécie é considerada vulnerável pela Lista Vermelha da IUCN (União Internacional para a Conservação da Natureza, na sigla em inglês) – Foto: INCAB/IPÊ

A **Iniciativa Nacional para a Conservação da Anta Brasileira** (**INCAB**), do Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ), celebra 20 anos em 2016. O projeto, coordenado pela

pesquisadora **Patrícia Medici**, preparou diversos eventos comemorativos para celebrar esse marco para a conservação da espécie.

As duas décadas de estudos resultaram no mais completo e detalhado banco de dados do mundo sobre a**anta-brasileira**, também conhecida como **anta-sul-americana**. As informações geradas são fundamentais para planejar ações efetivas para a conservação da espécie nos âmbitos regional e nacional.



Equipe da INCAB coleta dados de uma anta que serão utilizados para ajudar na conservação da espécie (o animal foi liberado após o procedimento) – Foto: INCAB/IPÊ

O status de conservação da anta-brasileira é acompanhado de perto por Patrícia Medici desde 1996. A engenheira florestal iniciou os estudos na região do Pontal do Paranapanema, extremo oeste do estado de São Paulo, com o Programa Anta Mata Atlântica. O projeto foi realizado até 2007 e levantou dados sobre o impacto da fragmentação florestal e da paisagem fragmentada na sobrevivência dos indivíduos e sobre sua ecologia espacial, genética e saúde.

Em 2008 o projeto foi ampliado, mudou o nome para Iniciativa Nacional para a Conservação da Anta Brasileira e ganhou um novo objetivo: mapear as principais ameaças e o status de conservação das antas em todos os biomas em que a espécie ocorre no Brasil. Atualmente o projeto se encontra no Pantanal e no Cerrado. Futuramente, a Amazônia também fará parte dos estudos da INCAB.



Pesquisadores da INCAB rastreiam uma anta que recebeu um rádio-colar – Foto: INCAB/IPÊ

"O nosso grande diferencial é a pesquisa científica de longa duração, que é de extrema importância no processo de gerar informações para alimentar e subsidiar o desenvolvimento de ações de conservação realistas e efetivas. Grande parte das informações que utilizávamos anteriormente para avaliar o risco de extinção das antas na natureza provinha de estudos em cativeiro. Atualmente, depois de trabalhos de pesquisa rigorosos na Mata Atlântica, Pantanal e Cerrado, contamos com um banco de dados consolidado com informações de antas em vida selvagem. Podemos, por exemplo, calcular alguns parâmetros reprodutivos da espécie tais como índices de mortalidade de filhotes, intervalos entre nascimentos, com base em nossos resultados de pesquisa", diz Patrícia, coordenadora da INCAB.



Patricia Medici, coordenadora da INCAB, checa uma armadilha fotográfica. O equipamento registra as espécies encontradas em um local – Foto: INCAB/IPÊ

O suporte financeiro e institucional para a realização das atividades da INCAB vem de diversas organizações, incluindo fundos de conservação de zoológicos nos Estados Unidos e Europa, fundações e ONGs conservacionistas internacionais, zoológicos e universidades brasileiros. A INCAB conta também com o suporte de doadores privados no Brasil, Estados Unidos e Europa.

Atualmente, a INCAB conta com uma equipe de sete pessoas incluindo cinco profissionais em tempo integral – Patrícia Medici (Coordenadora), Renata Carolina Fernandes Santos (Veterinária), Caroline Testa José (Veterinária), Gabriel Denipoti (Biólogo) e José Maria de Aragão (Assistente de Campo) – e dois profissionais que atuam através de consultorias – Rafael Ruas Martins (Sistemas de Informações Geográficas) e Gabriela Pinho (Geneticista). A base da INCAB fica em Campo Grande, capital do Mato Grosso do Sul.



Tech Insider
17 September 2016
http://www.techinsider.io/patricia-medicis-hack-to-save-tapirs-2015-9

An animal conservationist came up with a brilliant way to save these obscure, adorable mammals



Photo: Marina Klink

A squat, hoofed creature with the body of a pig and the elongated snout of an anteater appeared in the photo projected on stage at the TED Fellows Retreat in Carmel-By-The-Sea, California. Roughly half the size of a horse, it lazily munches on a bunch of leaves just inches from a woman's face.

"This is one of the most amazing animals on the face of the earth," said conservationist Patricia Medici, the woman in the photo. "This is a tapir."

The tapir, a large, powerful relative of the horse and rhinoceros, is one of the most helpful herbivores in the animal kingdom. As tapirs roam the forests and grasslands of Central and South America, they deposit fruit seeds through their feces — promoting future plant growth and shaping the region's biodiversity.

For this reason, they're known as the "gardeners of the forest."

But the tapirs are in serious trouble. Economic development, deforestation, poaching, and roadkill threaten to wipe this endangered species from the planet. Medici, who's dedicated the last 20 years to animal conservation in her home country of Brazil, took the stage at the TED Fellows Retreat in August to share her revelation: It's time we to get creative in our efforts to save the tapirs, before it's too late.

Soon, Medici and the Tapir Specialist Group, which she chairs, will give tapirs GPS-enabled collars decorated with reflective stickers, so that the animals can cross highways at night more safely. It's a small solution that could pay off in spades.



Rio, a Brazilian tapir, stands with her six-day old baby Thomas, at a wildlife park in Wales.Rebecca Naden/Reuters

In 1996, when a fresh-out-of-college Medici first set out to study lowland tapirs — a South American-based species distinct for its stiff mane — very little was known about the elusive creatures. Tapirs are nocturnal, making them difficult to study.

She knew that in order to save the creatures from the ongoing annihilation of their habitats, conservationists needed more data. Where did the tapirs live? How did they move?

Over the years, Medici and her colleagues at the Lowland Tapir Conservation Initiative got up close and personal with tapirs across Brazil. The team installed motion-sensitive cameras in the woods, in an effort to document tapirs' reproductive and social rituals. They also began capturing tapirs and outfitting them with GPS-enabled collars — a common technique used by conservationists around the world that paints a picture of tapirs' range of movement and preferred areas.

Warning: Graphic image ahead.

Facebook/Patricia Medici

And yet, around every corner, Medici saw evidence that she wasn't doing enough.



Dead tapirs lay on the side of the road, killed by oncoming vehicles. Sugarcane plantations, where tapirs never used to explore, were now covered in tracks because they intersected the animals' migration paths. Children told Medici they knew how tapir meat tasted because their families poached them.

Medici asked herself, **"Am I studying tapirs and contributing to their conservation? Or am I just documenting their extinction?"**

"Despite two decades of work trying to save these animals, we still have so much to do if we are to prevent them from disappearing," Medici told the crowd at the TED retreat. "We've come to a point in the conservation world where we have to think out of the box."

One of the biggest threats facing tapirs is roadkill. At night, the animals cross highways to go from one patch of forest to the next, in search of food and water. But their eyes are small, which means it's difficult for them to see in the dark. Their bodies are also dark, making them nearly invisible to oncoming traffic.



A tapir wears a GPS-enabled collar. Facebook/Patricia Medici

So, Medici and her team came up with a cheap, brilliant hack to prevent them from becoming roadkill: stickers.

The GPS collars that tapirs wear will soon be emblazoned with the same red-and-white reflective stickers used on semi-trailer trucks to increase visibility. Medici buys them at trucking stations.

The stickers will ideally help drivers see tapirs crossing the highway, preventing unnecessary deaths.

"For now, this is a crazy idea," Medici said. "We'll see if this is the kind of stuff that needs to be done."



The GPS-enabled collars will now don these reflective stickers. Facebook/Patricia Medici

Medici plans to dedicate the rest of her life to animal conservation, particularly her beloved tapirs. When she questions her impact, she thinks about Patricia, her namesake, one of the first tapirs that her team captured in Brazil's Atlantic Forest years ago.

"This animal deserves to be cared for," Medici said. "And we human beings deserve to live in a world where we can get out there and see the benefit of tapirs."

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Vivek Menon
India
2001

Monitoring of elephant poaching and ivory trade in India and Asia

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Winner of the Whitley Award sponsored by the Rufford Foundation

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Vivek has featured in three articles this year, two of which appeared in the Guardian. A selection of his media coverage follows below. To view Vivek's WFN profile, follow this link.

World Land Trust
25 February 2016
http://www.worldlandtrust.org/news/2016/02/vivek-menon-describes-natural-fit-between-wildlife-trust-india-world-land-trust



Vivek Menon describes the 'natural fit' between Wildlife Trust of India and World Land Trust



On a recent visit to World Land Trust (WLT) in Halesworth, Vivek Menon spoke of the enduring relationship between his organisation, **Wildlife Trust of India**(WTI) and WLT. Vivek is Chief Executive of WTI, who have been working in partnership with WLT for more than a decade.

"Although conservation is a very old business in India (5,000 years actually), the securement of land is a relatively newer concept," he explained in a video interview recorded at WLT's office in January. WLT, on the other hand, has specialised in the purchase and protection of land of high conservation value since 1989.

"So WLT possessed the global expertise. WTI had the local expertise of conservation but not necessarily purchase of land, and I thought that really meant a good solid basis for a partnership. When I met John and Viv [Burton] I thought that this was an absolutely natural fit."

Elephant corridors

"So WLT possessed the global expertise. WTI had the local expertise of conservation but not necessarily purchase of land, and I thought that really meant a good solid basis for a partnership." ***Vivek Menon, WTI Chief Executive***

In a country of more than a billion people, wildlife conservation in India is challenging and WTI's approach to land purchase has to be very strategic: "When we look at India, it's a very different kind of land purchase, than say the Amazon or Patagonia orChaco, where you have thousands of acres of land to buy in relatively unpopulated land. In India it is densely populated land. The amount of land you need to buy may be 25 acres or 100 acres, smaller parcels of land, but they connect protected areas; they may connect mountain ranges, they may connect across a river, critical movement paths for elephants."

As Vivek explained: "Of our seven 'big ideas' as we call them, one of them is land securement, and the idea is very simple. It is to add 1 per cent of India to its protected network. And we identified those six or seven categories of land that would form part of it. The first one was elephant corridors."

In 2005 Vivek was one of the authors of Rights of Passage: Elephant Corridors of India. This seminal work identified 88 corridors in India in urgent need of protection to minimise human-wildlife conflict and to enable Asian Elephants and people to live in harmony.

By 2014, four of these corridors had been completed, but the overall target had increased to 100. At the inaugural meeting of the Asian Elephant Alliance in June 2015, Vivek called on WLT and other international conservation charities, Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare and IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands to focus their efforts to help protect this network of corridors.

And, as Vivek points out, elephant corridors aren't just for elephants: "We say elephant corridors but they're actually tiger corridors, they are biological corridors, they actually help movement of a host of species that are increasingly confined to these smaller protected areas."

The Guardian – Print and Online News, UK
14 April 2016
1,027,000 readership
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2016/apr/14/prince-william-and-kate-fall-for-baby-rhinos-and-elephants-in-india-in-pictures

Prince William and Kate fall for baby rhinos and elephants in India – in pictures



The 480-square-kilometre (185-square-mile) grassland park is home to the world's largest population of rare, one-horned rhinos as well as other endangered species, including swamp deer and the Hoolock gibbon.
Photograph: Samir Hussein/WireImage

Vivek Menon, chief executive office of the Wildlife Trust of India, who joined the royal couple for the encounter with the animals, said: 'They were absolutely thrilled and loved being with the animals. The duke said if he could he would have spent the whole day there.'

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Josia Razafindramanana
Madagascar
2012

Saving the endangered crowned sifaka and its fragmented habitat

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Winner of the Whitley Award

Josia has featured in one article in Duke Today during this past year. To view Josia's WFN profile, follow this link.

Duke Today – University News
27 January 2016
https://today.duke.edu/2016/01/lemurzoonoses

New Way to Detect Human-Animal Diseases Tested in Lemurs

RNA sequencing could help predict future outbreaks



Editor's Note: *Contact Robin Smith for a copy of this study. Lead author Peter Larsen can be reached at peter.larsen@duke.edu. Duke Lemur Center director Anne Yoder can be reached at anne.yoder@duke.edu.*

A diademed sifaka lemur perches on a tree trunk with her infant in Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, Madagascar. Researchers are using RNA sequencing to identify emerging infectious diseases in lemurs that standard diagnostic tests cannot detect. The technique could pave the way for earlier, more accurate detection of diseases that move between animals and people. Photo credit: David Haring, Duke Lemur Center

DURHAM, NC - Advances in genetic sequencing are uncovering emerging diseases in wildlife that other diagnostic tests can't detect.

In a study led by Duke University, researchers used a technique called whole-transcriptome sequencing to screen for blood-borne diseases in wild lemurs, distant primate cousins to humans.

The animals were found to carry several strains or species of parasites similar to those that cause Lyme disease and other infections in humans.

This is the first time these parasites have been reported in lemurs or in Madagascar, the only place on Earth where lemurs live in the wild outside of zoos and sanctuaries, the researchers report in the Jan. 27 issue of Biology Letters.

The approach could pave the way for earlier, more accurate detection of future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases that move between animals and people. "We can detect pathogens

we might not expect and be better prepared to deal with them," said co-author Anne Yoder, director of the Duke Lemur Center.

In 2012, Duke Lemur Center veterinarian Cathy Williams and colleagues started performing physical exams on lemurs in the rainforests surrounding a mine site in eastern Madagascar to help monitor the impacts of such activities on lemur health.

"Lemur populations are becoming increasingly small and fragmented because of human activities like mining, logging and clearing forests to make way for cattle grazing and rice paddies," Williams said. "If an infectious disease wipes out a lemur population it could be a huge blow to the species." Researchers took small amounts of blood and tested them for evidence of exposure to known viruses and pathogens, but nothing turned up.

The problem is that standard diagnostic tests tend to target known pathogens, Williams said. You can check for antibodies to certain viruses, or look for specific snippets of genetic material in an animal's blood, "but you have to know what you're looking for." The end result is that new or exotic diseases often go undetected. And with hundreds of thousands of viral and bacterial species that lemurs and other mammals harbor still awaiting discovery, "we could be looking for anything," Williams said.

To cast a wider net they tried a new approach. Lead author Peter Larsen, senior research scientist at Duke, analyzed blood samples from six lemurs in two species, the indri and the diademed sifaka, both of which are considered critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

With advances in high-throughput sequencing, the ability to read genetic code rapidly, Larsen was able to look at all the gene readouts, or RNA transcripts, that were present in each animal -- an alphabet soup containing billions of nucleotide bases.

The team found more than just lemur RNA in the animals' blood. Using computer algorithms that compared the genetic material to sequences already catalogued in existing databases, they discovered several new types of parasites that had never been reported in lemurs.

These included a new form of the protozoa responsible for babesiosis, a disease spread by bites from infected ticks, and a new kind of Borrelia closely related to the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. They also found the first known case in Madagascar of a bacterium called Candidatus Neoehrlichia, which can be deadly in humans.

Further analyses revealed that the new types of Babesia and Borrelia they found didn't begin in lemurs, but were likely introduced to Madagascar in infected pets and livestock such as cattle and then spilled over to lemurs.

The researchers don't yet know if the new parasites are actually dangerous to lemurs. But they caution that what is infecting lemurs could potentially infect people, too. Human health officials and veterinarians in Madagascar may want to consider screening their patients to see if any test positive for the same parasites, the researchers say.



An indri lemur lounges in a tree in Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, Madagascar. Thanks to next-generation sequencing methods capable of uncovering emerging diseases in wildlife that other diagnostic tests cannot detect, indri lemurshave been found to carry several new parasites never before reported in lemurs or their native Madagascar.

Photo credit: Cathy Williams, Duke Lemur Center

The majority of emerging infectious diseases that affect humans, including recent outbreaks of SARS, Ebola and bird flu, are zoonotic -- they can spread among wildlife, domestic animals and humans.

"Next-generation sequencing will be an important tool to identify emerging pathogens, particularly vector-borne diseases," said Barbara Qurollo, a research assistant professor at the N.C. State College of Veterinary Medicine who was not affiliated with the study.

"A clinician cannot treat an infection that he or she does not know exists," said veterinarian and infectious diseases researcher Edward Breitschwerdt, also of the N.C. State College of Veterinary Medicine. "The kindest form of therapy is an accurate diagnosis."

Other authors include Corinne Hayes of Duke, Randall Junge of the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Josia Razafindramanana of the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Primates de Madagascar, Vanessa Mass of VMC Environment Inc. and Hajanirina Rakotondrainibe of Ambatovy Minerals S.A.This research was supported by Ambatovy Minerals S.A. and the Duke Lemur Center.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Jon Paul Rodriguez
Venezuela
2004

Threatened Caribbean species and habitats on Margarita Island, Venezuela

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Winner of the Whitley Award

Jon Paul has featured in a five articles this year, and two short videos related to his his candidature of the SSC Chair position within IUCN. A selection of the media coverage is shown below. To view Jon Pauls' WFN profile, follow this link.

Correo del Orinoco
28 September 2015
http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/nacionales/bosques-secos-y-sabanas-se-hallan-peligro-critico-venezuela/

CORREO DEL ORINOCO
La artillería del pensamiento

They have been affected by urban, agricultural and industrial expansion

Dry forests and savannas are critically endangered in Venezuela

The Red List of Ecosystems in whose preparation involved the Venezuelan researcher Jon Paul Rodriguez won the Eureka Prize for Australia. Rodriguez, president of Provita and one of the authors of the Red Book of Terrestrial Ecosystems of Venezuela, said that the monitoring of the various environments should be permanent



La Lista Roja de Ecosistemas -en cuya elaboración participó el investigador venezolano Jon Paul Rodríguez- obtuvo el Premio Eureka de Australia. Rodríguez, presidente de Provita y uno de los autores del Libro Rojo de los Ecosistemas Terrestres de Venezuela, señala que el seguimiento de los distintos ambientes debe ser permanente

No solo los animales y las plantas sufren las consecuencias de la acción humana. También los ecosistemas son vulnerables a la tala de árboles, el acecho contra los ríos, la quema de pastizales, la destrucción de zonas boscosas para sacar el oro dorado en desmedro del oro verde. Por ello, además del Libro Rojo de la Fauna Venezolana y del Libro Rojo de la Flora Venezolana, así como las advertencias de la Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (UICN), el país cuenta con la Lista Roja de Ecosistemas, instrumento internacional cuya elaboración contó con el concurso de un venezolano: el investigador Jon Paul Rodríguez, ecólogo, investigador del IVIC y presidente y miembro fundador de Provita.

La Lista Roja, establecida por la UICN, recibió recientemente un nuevo reconocimiento: el Premio Eureka de Australia en la categoría de Investigación Ambiental. El fin último de aportes como este es fortalecer la mejor toma de decisiones para la conservación del ambiente, señala Rodríguez en conversación con el ***Correo del Orinoco*** en la sede de Provita en Caracas. "Lo que nos interesa es que estén sustentadas en la mejor ciencia disponible", indica, así como en la cuantificación del daño que han experimentado.
El Libro Rojo de los Ecosistemas Terrestres de Venezuela -elaborado por Rodríguez, Franklin Rojas-Suárez y Diego Giraldo Hernández- es una herramienta que permite, a la escala nacional, determinar si los distintos ambientes venezolanos gozan de buena, regular o mala salud. Venezuela, certifica Rodríguez, tiene unos 20 ecosistemas. Dos de ellos son los más golpeados por la actividad humana: los bosques secos y las sabanas, que se hallan -de acuerdo con esta clasificación- en peligro crítico.

LAS PLAYAS TIENEN SIMPATIZANTES

Las científicas y los científicos tienen el compromiso -y así fue con la Lista Roja de los Ecosistemas- de "generar categorías y criterios, y clasificar los ecosistemas según esas categorías y criterios". Les corresponde a las políticas y los políticos, a la sociedad, tomar decisiones con base en la mejor información disponible.

Hay ecosistemas que, por solo estar en Venezuela, probablemente concitarán mayor compromiso de las autoridades (o al menos así debería ser) "porque la responsabilidad de conservarlo es solamente nuestra". Rodríguez refiere que hay áreas más populares que otras entre la población, y por lo tanto hay mayor sensibilidad hacia su preservación: "Por ejemplo, un ecosistema marino-costero como el de Morrocoy a la gente le gusta", por lo que resulta más fácil "promover la conservación de la playa que la de la sabana".
De acuerdo con el investigador y líder de Provita, muchos de los parques nacionales fueron creados en el norte del país para proteger las cuencas de agua. Calcula que entre 80% y 85% del agua de las ciudades "viene de los parques nacionales", lo que se constituye en un argumento muy contundente para invocar su protección.
Plantea, en líneas generales, una primera fase, de evaluación de riesgos, y una segunda fase, de definición de prioridades.



Restablecer corredores verdes y convertir bases militares en zonas protegidas

El investigador Jon Paul Rodríguez cita la Misión Árbol y propone que se identifiquen los "parches" de bosques secos y zonas degradadas, a fin de restablecer los corredores verdes –mediante el programa de reforestación– para "que el paisaje se reconecte y las especies puedan moverse".

Una zona que podría ser tomada para un plan de ese tipo sería un parche de bosque que se encuentra en Hato Piñero (Cojedes), conocido como "el bosque de los caballos", que podría conectarse con zonas cercanas.

Para el científico, las bases militares son "un sitio perfecto para hacer conservación porque no las toca nadie". Expresa que quisiera conversar con el equipo que lidera el Ministerio de la Defensa: "Así como en Fuerte Tiuna descubrieron una vocación urbanística, quizás podamos en otros lugares de Venezuela aprovechar las bases militares de otra manera distinta".

Rodríguez plantea una idea más: que en los estados se creen parques de conservación, que también permitirían a las comunidades organizadas proveer servicios.

NO SON MONTE

Es fundamental, para Venezuela, repetir periódicamente las evaluaciones de los ecosistemas. Los datos usados para el informe son de los años 2008 o 2009, aclara Rodríguez.

Sin embargo, al comparar la información disponible hace seis o siete años con la de los años 70 u 80 el cambio en algunas zonas del país se observa claramente.

Hay "ecosistemas totalmente transformados", que "ya no se reconocen como ecosistemas naturales sino que son zonas urbanas industriales". La expansión de estas áreas urbanas, agrícolas e industriales ha ocurrido en detrimento de los bosques secos y de las sabanas. "Las sabanas abiertas son las más impactadas", asevera.

¿Había forma de evitarlo? El científico replica que sí, que siempre hay cómo detener el daño con medidas como un uso más eficiente de las ya tocadas y la prevención de la expansión a nuevos sectores. Uno de los factores que, en su criterio, impide que esto funcione así es la poca coordinación entre los diferentes niveles de gobierno, como alcaldías y gobernaciones. "Si cada cual hace sus planes propios el impacto ambiental es mucho mayor que si, por ejemplo, dos municipios comparten planes de desarrollo, o un estado con otro estado", expone.

En la naturaleza la pérdida de una especie, de un ecosistema no es un hecho menor. No es que por ser una zona menos popular que una playa la sabana importe menos o su afectación tenga menores consecuencias. El problema que tienen la sabana y los bosques secos, puntualiza Rodríguez, es que son vistos por la población como un monte o un basurero.

"Sabanas y bosques secos son vistos como rastrojos que hay que mejorar, con la actitud de que 'a esa sabana hay que ponerle algo' para que mejore", enuncia.

¿DEL COLAPSO AL RETORNO?

En la Lista Roja de Ecosistemas se emplea el término colapso, explica, porque en teoría puede ser restablecido y repuesto, una vez que se identifiquen las causas del daño y estas sean atacadas.

No obstante, advierte que "hay cosas que se pierden que son muy difíciles de recuperar" y refiere que los bosques secos son buscados en toda la cuenca el Caribe para hacer en

ellos establecimientos humanos. "Son buscados porque los suelos tienden a ser más ricos que los suelos de bosques muy húmedos" donde la lluvia ha lavado los nutrientes.
Son, por otra parte, lugares agradables para vivir, porque en ellos no hay pantanos. "Lo que hemos perdido son, justamente, los nutrientes del suelo, las especies que estaban". Estos bosques eran muy ricos en animales como lapas y venados, que ya no están. Rodríguez asoma que tal vez en algunos sectores el bosque ha regresado, pero no se puede decir lo mismo de la fauna.

Además de las sabanas y los bosques secos, otros ecosistemas serían las siguientes en la fila de las que correrían riesgos: los bosques menos secos y las sabanas arboladas.
-¿En qué situación estarían?
-Los bosques secos y las sabanas abiertas están clasificados en peligro crítico. Los otros están en categorías inferiores, como en peligro o vulnerables, pero vienen en camino. Lo primero que hay que hacer es periódicamente tomar las mismas medidas y ver cómo vamos.
En todo caso, cualquier política pública debe demostrar que funciona, y para ello se cuenta con la medición de cambios: cómo era antes y cómo está después de las acciones.

VASO MEDIO LLENO

Quien trabaje con la naturaleza, con la vida en su máximo esplendor, no puede dejar de ser optimista, y eso es lo que le sucede a Rodríguez. "Hay muchas oportunidades", insiste, y "si uno toma la visión del vaso medio lleno en vez del vaso medio vacío, descubre que 70% de Venezuela todavía son ecosistemas naturales en buen estado". Es decir, "las especies y los procesos ecológicos están funcionando de manera natural".
Cita el caso de Guatopo, cerca de Caracas, donde todavía hay animales que quitarían el aliento de un amante de lo natural, como felinos y aves: "Si vas a ese ecosistema sabes que todas sus partes están en su sitio".
Al sur de Venezuela, subraya, hay áreas poco intervenidas. "Las zonas de minería son de muchísima destrucción, pero muy localizadas", precisa. Otra razón más para actuar antes de que el mal sea mayor.

REVISIONES PERIÓDICAS

Con la metodología ya existente, detalla, se debería ejecutar un seguimiento permanente de los ecosistemas cada 5 o 10 años, "porque el proceso mismo de hacer la evaluación toma un par de años".
Rodríguez considera que esta evaluación de los ecosistemas debería ser, en el caso venezolano, "un esfuerzo dirigido por el Gobierno en el que participan los demás sectores" y con resultados de dominio público. Sobre este punto, resalta que siempre ha ofrecido su apoyo al despacho de ambiente -que ha pasado por varios procesos y ahora se convirtió en el Ministerio de Ecosocialismo y Aguas- y confirma que las puertas de Provita están abiertas para coordinar lo que sea necesario.

"Para nosotros es fundamental tener relaciones buenas con el Gobierno, porque las políticas públicas las hace el Gobierno", manifiesta.

-¿Sobre qué ecosistemas quisiera llamar la atención?

-Los bosques secos, para hacer algún plan de recuperación. El problema que tienen los bosques secos es que, como son los sitios preferidos de establecimiento humano, una muy pequeña proporción están en áreas protegidas (menos de 5%).

Una primera acción "sería evaluar el estatus de estos bosques secos remanentes, cuáles sitios vale la pena proteger" y asumir "planes de reforestación" con mayor ahínco.

El Nacional
31 July 2016
http://www.el-nacional.com/siete_dias/peleamos-especies-extinguen_0_893310882.html

Jon Paul Rodriguez could be the first Latin American to chair a committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature

(Translated from original Spanish text)

"While we fought species become extinct"



Since 1991 when he graduated, biologist Jon Paul Rodriguez gets up every day with the goal of joint efforts and knowledge to keep up the planet's biodiversity. In Venezuela he serves as president of the civil association Provita and a researcher at the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research (IVIC).

On September 9 Jon Paul could become the first Latin American to assume the chair of the commission for the Survival of Species of the world's leading environmental organization, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN. During the World Conservation Congress 2016, to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States, 1,300 union members will decide the vote between Rodriguez and Elizabeth Benett who is based in New York, and is vice president for Species Conservation Society Conservation of Wildlife.
If elected, the commission would start operating from Caracas.

What work is being done from the Species Survival Commission?
The Red List of Threatened Species of the world is produced, but making a list is not conservation, I want it to result in improving the status of threatened species. A key role is to strengthen ties with governments around the world, because after all conservation actions are made regionally and not globally. The other thing is that the leadership of the commission is heavily biased towards Europe and theUnited States and I think there are many voices in other parts of the world, qualified and innovative, to be integrated.

How is the Venezuelan system of species protection and monitoring?
We are far from optimal. There are many motivated people, but there are serious budgetary constraints. I believe the government could rely more on the academy and NGOs. We are underutilized.

What do you think of the presidential decree of Arco Minero (mining)?
'The main problem with the Arco Minero is that we know nothing.Similar experiences in the world are very bad, there is no successful example. It is not known with certainty how many companies are involved, what is the area to be exploited, what minerals will be exploited, time frame, mitigation measures, environmental impact studies are not known, there is no previous information from local communities. This is the worst possible case.

How do you see the disappearance of the Ministry of Environment?
Since I'm in the IVIC, they have changed the director of the National Office of Biological Diversity (ONDB). I wrote a letter expressing my willingness to work together. I had not received a written response, until a few days ago when Edis Solórzano told me that I would be invited to meetings. My mission is to generate valuable information to inform public policy, so I'm optimistic. While we fight, species become extinct and we have to do something about it.

The First *Red Book of Venezuelan Fauna,* **served to legislate on the matter. Do we need to update these laws?**
In 1995 we published the first book, and in 1996 came two decrees in*Official Gazette* -the 1485 and 1486 that declared the official list of endangered species and the list of official

species banned from hunting commercially or for sport. The *Red Book* was the base. But there have been 3 more issues that have updated the information, with the addition of more researchers during the last 20 years. One of my invitations to the director of the ONDB is that we update the official decrees taking into account the information available.

What is the challenge to achieve conservation of species in the world?

We have to balance the welfare of humans and the welfare of the species. We forget that we share the planet with tens of millions of other species. I see nothing wrong in that we use natural resources and we benefit from these species, but I do not agree with that they are eliminated and exterminated. The challenge is to achieve peaceful and successful coexistence for all.

Results efforts

Margaritan parakeet is one of the Venezuelan endangered species due to the capture of their young to sell, and habitat destruction by sand mining for the construction industry. In the late 1980s, on the peninsula of Macanao, Margarita, there were barely 650 birds, which led to Jon Paul Rodriguez to launch a rescue project with Franklin Rojas, co-founder of Provita. Today nearly there is nearly triple the population, about 1,700 animals.

Another challenge is to return the siskin to Venezuel. The intentional cross-breeding to produce a red canary has caused the disappearance of the species of birds due to trapping and hybridizing with domestic canaries. The Siskin Rodriguez Initiative wants to bring these birds from the US, with the help of the Smithsonian Institute for Conservation Biology in Washington, and make breeding plans at the Zoo El Pinar de Caracas and Barquisimeto Bararida.

FILE

Jon Paul Rodriguez is a researcher at the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research. He is one of the founders of the Venezuelan civil association dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity Provita and is now its president. He graduated as abiologist from the Central University of Venezuela and studied master's, doctoral and certificate in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and the School of Public and International Woodrow Wilson at Princeton University in the United States. Since 2009 he has been vice president of the Commission for the Survival of Species (SSC) IUCN and leads the working group on the Red List of Ecosystems Ecosystem Management Commission of IUCN.

Planeta Vital
16 September 2016
http://tuplanetavital.org/actualidad-planetaria/jon-paul-rodriguez-orgullo-ecologico-de-venezuela/



Species2016-2020
4 May 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_6puLa3kCc



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Silas Siakor
Liberia
2002

Liberia Forest and Human Rights Campaign

Winner of the Whitley Award by Sting and Trudie Tyler

Silas has featured in a one article this year, to view his WFN profile, follow this link.

Eco-Business
8 July 2016
http://www.eco-business.com/news/climate-conflict-and-commodities-the-calculus-of-peace-on-a-changing-planet/

Climate, conflict, and commodities: The calculus of peace on a changing planet

More than half of all peace agreements fail within five years, often because they ignore the role of natural resources in driving conflict. Ecosystem Marketplace publisher Forest Trends tells how carbon finance can help end that cycle.



Rangers patrol the Ulu Masen forest, Aceh Indonesia. Image: DFID-UK Department for International Development , CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Liberian environmentalist Silas Siakor knows all too well what can happen to a fragile nation when a dictator hijacks its commodity sector, as warlord Charles Taylor did in the 1990s – first by using slave labor and "blood diamonds" to finance a devastating civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone, and then by spreading that war to Guinea and commandeering the presidency of Liberia itself.

Siakor helped expose Taylor's use of "conflict timber" to finance those bloody wars, and he helped make sure farmers, conservationists, and commercial enterprises all had a role in restructuring the forest sector once the sanctions were removed – a process that Art Blundell, who chaired the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia, credits with keeping the country's current peace alive.
He cautions, however, that Liberia's peace is the exception that proves the rule.

"The UN Environment Programme says that natural resources are a factor in about 40 per cent of conflicts since the end of the Cold War, and they are often a driver,"Blundell said at last month's Oslo REDD Exchange in Norway, where he presentedfindings from recent analysis conducted on behalf of Ecosystem Marketplace publisher Forest Trends. "But if you look at peace agreements, only about 15 per cent of them mention natural resources, let alone call for reforms of governance in a way that will minimise the role of resources in causing future conflict."

The result, he said in a recent episode of the Bionic Planet podcast, is tragic: "More than half of peace agreements fail within five years, often because belligerents get money from the exploitation of natural resources, like logging, that they can use to fuel the resumption of civil war."

Natural resources are a factor in about 40 per cent of conflicts since the end of the Cold War, and they are often a driver.
Art Blundell, chair, UN Panel of Experts on Liberia

Liberia has so far avoided slipping back into that cycle, in part because it tore up corrupt concessions and started with a clean slate on forest governance. That peace, however, has a downside of its own: without civil war, the forests are now safe for illegal logging – which is often carried out not by ruthless logging companies, but by desperate farmers looking to feed their families.

As the government steps in to save forests, it risks pitting conservationists against small farmers – something Siakor says has already happened.
"The government has tried to impose [conservation] projects on the people – in protected areas – but people have resisted, and they're very active in this resistance," he said at the Oslo REDD Exchange. "The government had to roll back [its conservation efforts] and grant the community the right to manage that particular forest."

Siakor sees a more workable solution in President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's efforts to tap carbon finance through the United Nations REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of forests, plus other land uses) initiative, which aims to

slow deforestation by funding sustainable agriculture initiatives so that farmers aren't forced to chop trees – a process that aligns the interests of small farmers with those of the forest and also promotes the kind of governance associated with lasting peace.
Such initiatives have proven successful in several Latin American and African countries, and forest-carbon projects are currently being used to conserve forested areas larger than the entire Democratic Republic of Congo, according to the most recent State of Forest Carbon Finance report. Both Siakor and Blundell say that REDD+ can support the peace process in war-torn areas, but only if its implemented in ways that recognize the challenges particular to war-torn regions.

"REDD programs working in the countries have to remember that people have been traumatised," said Blundell, adding that traumatised people are slow to develop trust. "You have to understand the history of the conflict, the legacy of that conflict in the present, and your interaction with it."

This story has been adapated from the Bionic Planet episode "Climate, Conflict, and Commodities: The Calculus of Peace on a Changing Planet" and was published with permission from Ecosystem Marketplace.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Stoycho Stoychev
Bulgaria
2014

The Imperial eagle as a flagship for conserving the wold grasslands of south-eastern Bulgaria

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by Fondation Segré

Stoycho has featured in one EU Reporter article, shown below. To view Stoycho's WFN profile, follow this link.

Eureporter – Print and Online news
14 January 2016
https://www.eureporter.co/environment/2016/01/14/bulgaria-eu-court-condemns-bulgarian-government-for-failing-nature/

#Bulgaria EU Court condemns Bulgarian government for 'failing nature'



According to the European Court of Justice, Bulgaria is failing to protect nature and putting threatened species at risk.

It's because the government hasn't properly safeguarded Natura 2000 sites on cape Kaliakra and adjacent coastal areas, allowing a large number of developments to go ahead.

The region is part of the wintering grounds of the red-breasted goose (*pictured*), a globally threatened species, and it is on the migration route of thousands of birds, such as white storks and great white pelicans.

Projects such as wind turbines, a golf course, spa and hotels have been approved and built in the area by Bulgarian authorities, despite the likelihood it would lead to significant disturbance of these protected species. As a result, the court has today [Thursday 14th January] found Bulgaria to be breaching the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives.

The Bulgarian government has also breached the Directives by failing to fully designate the Kaliakra area as a protected Natura 2000 site. Although the government had designated the coastline, until recently it was not protecting the inland agricultural areas that are important for internationally important bird populations.

Wouter Langhout, EU Nature Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, said: "With this judgment, the European Court of Justice sends a strong message to Bulgaria. Natura 2000 sites shouldn't be bulldozed and turned into golf courses, and windfarms can't threaten major migration routes of birds. Member states need to stop allowing such sites to be destroyed and develop renewable energy in a way which protects nature."
The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB), BirdLife's Partner in Bulgaria, has been fighting the continued degradation and destruction of this amazing wildlife site for more than a decade.

BSPB Conservation Director Stoycho Stoychev said: "The judgement of the European Court of Justice reminds us that the Law should be respected and fully implemented. This judgement creates a loud and clear need for the Bulgarian government to take immediate action to remove impacts on the damaged Natura 2000 sites. It is also important that Natura 2000 sites all over the country are properly protected and the Government should ensure that it does not allow damaging projects in Natura 2000 areas, but instead encourages sustainable development that is profitable both for nature and people."

As a European Commission 'Fitness Check' of the Birds and Habitats Directives continues, this case demonstrates the importance of these laws. The EU should be able to act where national governments are failing.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Emilian Stoynov
Bulgaria
2007

Predators, people and their livestock in peaceful coexistence: Reducing the threat to wolves, bears and vultures from humans and poison, Bulgaria

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Winner of the Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK in memory of Sir Adrian and Lady Holman

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Emilian has featured in five articles over this past year. A selection of Emilian's media coverage is below. To view Emilian's WFN profile, follow this link.

NHBS

14 January 2016

https://blog.nhbs.com/title-information/reintroducing-the-griffon-vulture-in-bulgaria/

A blog by nhbs

the Hoopoe

Everything for wildlife, science & environment



Reintroducing the griffon vulture in Bulgaria: an interview with Emilian Stoynov

Emilian Stoynov and colleagues created theFund for Wild Flora and Fauna (FWFF) in Bulgaria in 2000 to support a project to reintroduce griffon vultures in the country.

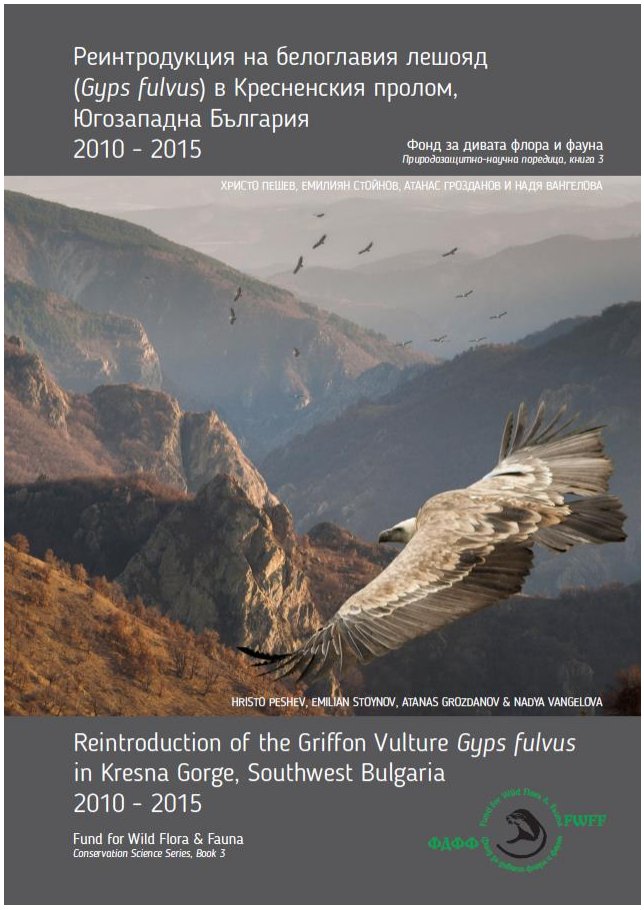
Emilian has been involved with vultures for many years and in 2007 won the Whitley Award for work with reducing the threat to wolves, bears and vultures from humans and poison in Bulgaria.

A book summarising the griffon vulture reintroduction process from 2010 to 2015 has just been published.

How did you become interested in working with vultures, and how did you come to be a part of this reintroduction project?

When I was a child I was interested to explore nature. At that time there was not much literature to find and to learn about nature. First I wanted to work on plants. Just around 1985 the first edition of the Red Data Book of Bulgaria was published and I tried to buy a copy and start studying the species. But when I had enough money from my parents and relatives around New Year's Eve, I did not succeed to find the Volume I of the book- plants. I found after checking a lot of book stores in Sofia the Volume II- animals. It was only one copy of the book and part of it was missing (reptiles and amphibians), but the birds were there. I found that some of the rarest birds were the vultures and they were historically found in the area of my father's birth town – Kotel. Here I started to wish to meet vultures in nature. After some time I became a member of Bulgaria Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) – now BirdLife Bulgaria – which was just established

and was in charge of the conservation of last colony of griffon vultures in the country in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains. I was first a volunteer and later was working for the project for conservation of vultures in this area. Then I started to think about restoring the population in other sites in Bulgaria. I tried to organize feeding sites in other parts of the country where vultures historically were present, but this was not enough to restore the old colonies. Then I saw what was done in Massif Central in France by Michel Terrasse and his colleagues from FIR/LPO– namely reintroduction of griffon vulture through release of captive bred but also rehabilitated birds from Spain. Thus I decided that this should be done also in other parts of Bulgaria. BSPB were not very willing to work on reintroductions, which is why it was necessary to create a new NGO to work on reintroductions – Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna (FWFF) – created in 2000. Then I married Nadya Vangelova- and we went to live in her town – Blagoevgrad. The nearest historical place for vultures was Kresna Gorge (only 25 km away from the town) and it appeared it was still suitable for vultures, but they were gone extinct in the 1960s due to a mass and well organized state level poisoning campaign targeting terrestrial predators. Ten years later after the establishment of FWFF we succeed to implement the reintroduction of the species in Kresna Gorge, which is now presented in the current book.



Tell us about the Kresna Gorge in terms of biodiversity – what sort of place is it, and how do vultures fit into the ecosystem?

The Kresna Gorge is one of the very few places in Bulgaria with Mediterranean climate. This, in combination with steep slopes and rocky outcrops, makes the area very interesting for biodiversity. Some species of Bulgaria's reptiles are found only here. Autochthonous loose forests of *Juniperus excelsa* were declared nature reserve and many southern species of birds are found here. In terms of vultures' suitability, the area still has well preserved extensive livestock breeding and transhumance practice, where the herds are moved in the nearby high mountains Pirin and Rila, home to two of the three national Parks in Bulgaria. So it is the combination between deep valley with mild winters and high mountains with alpine pastures that makes the habitats suitable for vultures. Extensive livestock breeding and

the presence of large carnivores like wolf and bear are additional benefits for the vultures. The last also poses a threat for the vultures, because the conflict between livestock breeders and carnivores some times leads to illegal poison baits use, which is the biggest threat for the vultures. We found that providing the feeding sites for vultures make it safer for them. Also, some people are concerned that it may be unnatural to feed vultures but because we dispose mainly of – although not only – food coming from the nearby villages, this makes the process rather natural.

Why was there a need to embark on a reintroduction process – how did the griffon vulture lose its place?

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the situation of the vultures of the Balkans and Europe became worse and worse based on extensive livestock breeding decline but mainly on direct persecution and non-deliberate poisoning. Not least the habitats changed especially in Bulgaria, where vast areas were reforested and thus the vultures no longer were able to search for and find food. In the 1960s nearly every available carcass for the vultures was poisoned and they went extinct from the entire country. In 1970 all large European vultures were considered extinct from the country. Only a small colony of less than 30 birds and 2-3 breeding pairs survived in Eastern Rhodope Mountains on the border with Greece. Although the conservation measures helped this colony to increase from 2-3 pairs to about 80 nowadays, the range of the species did not extend and still is only in Arda River Valley in Eastern Rhodopes. In the 1970s the large vultures were still surviving in Greece, but with time the bearded and griffon vultures have gone extinct from the mainland. The only black vulture colony in the Balkans is found in Dadia National Park in Greece close to the Bulgarian border. So we saw there is now suitable source of vultures where from they may recover naturally and that is why we decided to establish 5 new colonies – 4 to the north along the Balkan Mountain chain where we work in close cooperation with other NGOs such as Green Balkans and Bird of Prey Protection Society, and to the south west, Kresna Gorge. The last is also close to the small and declining population of the griffon vulture in FYR of Macedonia. But with the newly established colonies, it seems the situation gets a bit stabilized now. The summering, wintering and migrating birds on Balkans now have some more safe areas – read the book for theReintroduction in Kresna Gorge to find how it works.

In short – if we want to have forests, wolves, but also vultures we have to reintroduce and organize feeding sites for them in our modern world dominated by man.

I. Резюме

Реинтродукцията на белоглав лешояд (*Gyps fulvus*) в Кресненския пролом през 2012 продължи с нови пускания на птици, особено след намалелия им брой през 2011. Лешоядът M60-X, който беше пуснат през октомври 2011 и по-късно наблюдаван бедстващ от глад край езерото Керкини в Гърция, беше подхранен от служителите на НП Керкини и така- успешно възстановен. Съвсем сам, лешоядът се върна на площадката за подхранване в Кресненския пролом през май 2011 и успя да формира ново ядро от новопуснати и чужди птици в района. Стабилната група от 11 белоглави лешояда в Кресненския пролом се задържа, като ускори привличането на още чужди птици. Въпреки че всички бяха достатъчно млади, за да очакваме успешно размножаване през 2013, тенденцията към трайно установяване в района беше обнадеждаваща. През 2012 имаше рекорден брой от 16 наблюдавани птици едновременно на подхранване, а 31 различни лешояда бяха идентифицирани през различните периоди и в рамките на годината. Редовното присъствие на белоглави лешояди на площадката за подхранване, привлече видове като египетски лешояд (*Neophron percnopterus*) и червена каня (*Milvus milvus*). През 2012 стартира петгодишен проект на ФДФФ с името „Опазване на хищните птици в Кресненския пролом, България" или накратко „Живот за Кресненския пролом", финансиран от Програма Лайф+ на Европейския съюз, Биопарк Де Доуе - Франция и Приятели на Виенския Зоопарк- Австрия.

I. Summary

After the decrease of free individuals in late 2011, the Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) re-introduction project in Kresna Gorge continued in 2012 with the release of new birds. The Griffon Vulture M60-X released in October 2011 and later observed suffering from starvation near the Kerkini Lake in Greece, was fed on place by the National park authorities and successfully recovered. In May 2011 it returned on its own to the place release and the feeding site in Kresna Gorge and became the founder of a new nucleus of released and exogenous Griffon Vultures in the area. After the new releases and the following attraction of exogenous birds, the group of Griffon Vultures in Kresna Gorge consisted of 11 permanently present individuals. They were all young to be involved in breeding in 2013, but the positive tendency was, that they seemed strongly attached to the area. This year we had a record of 16 Griffon Vultures observed together at the feeding site and 31 different individuals present for different periods throughout the year. Also the presence of the Griffon Vultures and the feeding site attracted rare and/or endangered species like the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and the Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*).
In 2012 FWFF started a new 5 years project called "Conservation of birds of prey in Kresna Gorge, Bulgaria" supported by LIFE+ financial instrument of European Commission and co-funded by private donors as Friends of Vienna Zoo, Austria and Zoo de Doue, France.

Photo 42: Hristo Peshev



Reintroductions are quite a hot topic at the moment. One of the main concerns is finding accord between conservationists, landowners and the public regarding the benefits of such actions. Was this a problem for you in Bulgaria?

This is manageable. Especially with friendly species like the vultures it is a small concern for the local people in the very beginning and then they just appreciate the lovely and gorgeous birds flying high in the sky. The proper communication and involvement with local people is crucial for the success of any such initiative.

What are some of the major challenges the team faced during the years of the project?

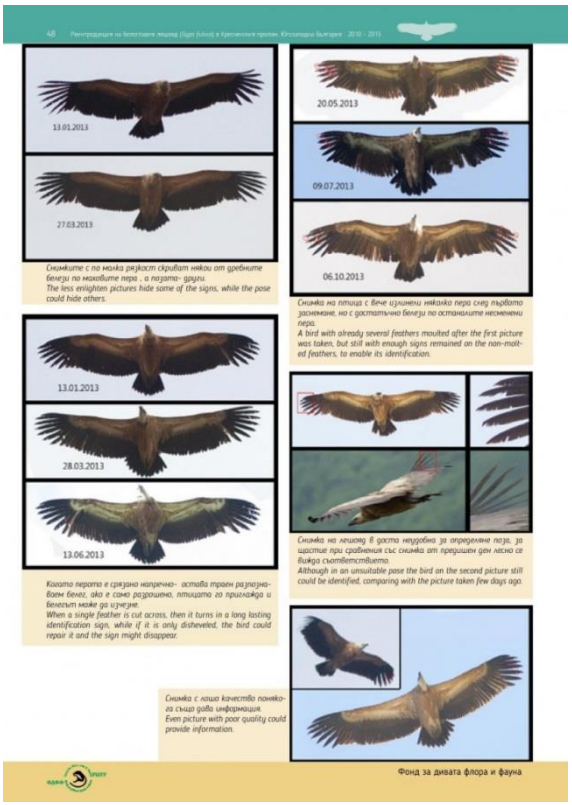
The development of the network for receiving in-time information about livestock carcasses was very important and it took quite some time. Establishment of the first nucleus of griffon vultures also was a challenge. We did it twice until we found what the most important thing is. It was the food that should be provided not only in large quantity, but also at the best place for the vultures, and in summer to be provided frequently in small amounts so as not to decompose. We hardly learned that decomposed carcass is not an appreciated food source for vultures. They prefer fresh carcasses. Or at least not rotten meat. When we found that and made an effort to overcome it we saw the success.

Would you say that the process has been a success, then?

Yes, this is a success story. Of course we would like to see some more achievements in successful breeding and increase of the number of the breeding pairs of griffon vultures, as well as the return of the black and Egyptian vultures as breeders in the area. And one day also the return of the bearded vulture too.

Are there any lessons learned from this project that might have application for reintroduction practice in general?

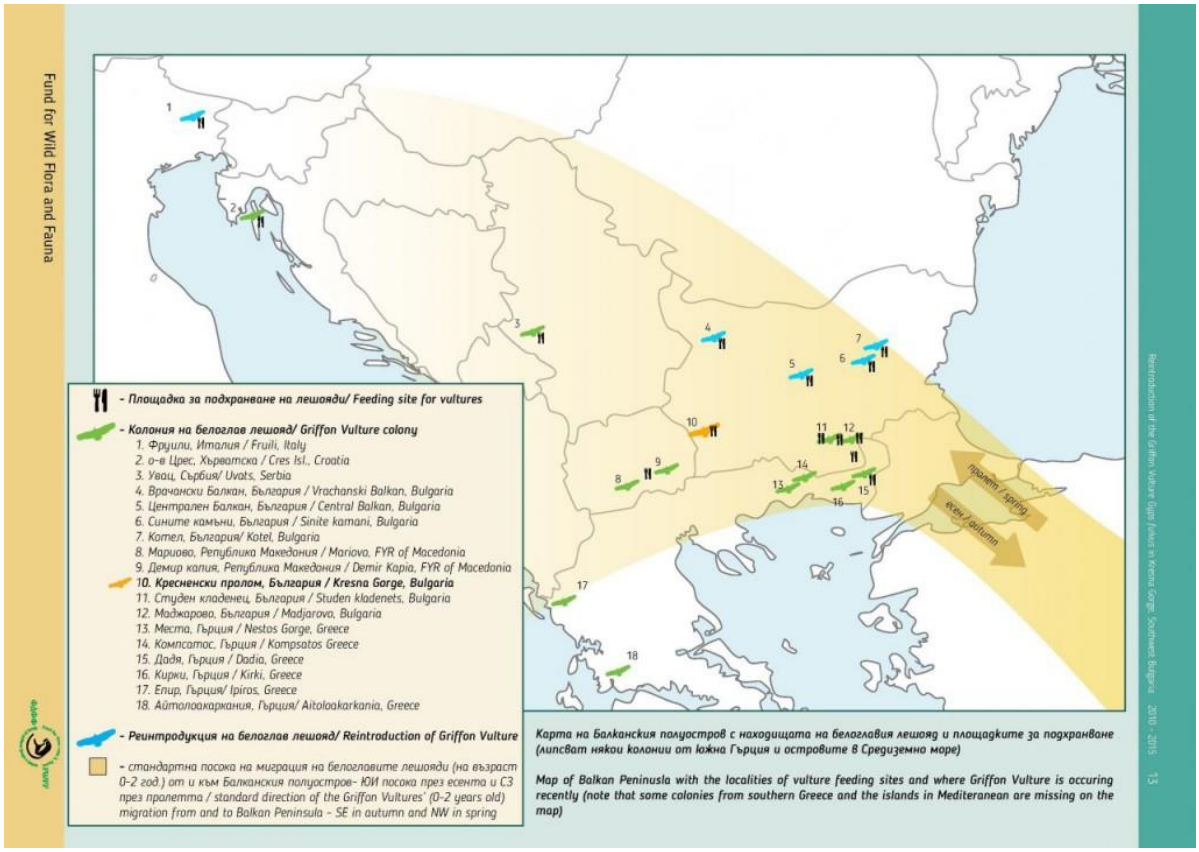
There are two things: the vultures will not survive in the modern world without managing the carcass disposal. We could not have forests and wolves and also to have vultures just on their own. The last should be supported through feeding sites, at which the carcasses from the local villages and farms would be disposed and made accessible to vultures.



We developed a good method for individual identification of the vultures through so-called visual marking. We use cameras with long lenses and take pictures of every bird seen in flight. Then we compare the characteristics of

the plumage. This way, even birds not marked with rings or wing-tags could be distinguished. The method is well described in the book.

If you could make one change to policy in Bulgaria, or beyond, that would be of benefit for vulture conservation, what would it be?



In the vultures' range (either historical or current), where suitable habitats are still found, every natural or national park authority should be involved in maintenance of feeding site(s) for vultures. This should be one of the basic management practices for all protected areas that have an administration body. This way a large network (e.g Natura 2000 sites) of vulture safe areas will be established and the coherence of the habitat and space restored.

Some adaptations of the legislation concerning poisoning of wildlife and domestic cats and dogs should be done especially in Bulgaria. The use of poison baits in natural environment should be treated as an act of hunting. Nowadays the Bulgarian legislation does not treat the poison bait setting for dogs and cats. Only if a game species and/or protected species is affected the law could be applied.

How are the vultures doing today, and what are the next steps, for the project, and your own work with the Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna?

The vultures are preparing for the new breeding season. They are now making the very attractive simultaneous flights as breeding displays and seem very much enthusiastic especially in warm and windy days.

The next step is the reintroduction of the Eurasian black vulture, within the frame of the new Bright Future for Black Vulture in Bulgaria project LIFE14 NAT/BG/649, in cooperation with Green Balkans, Vulture Conservation Foundation, EuroNatur and the regional Government of Extremadura. I hope in future a similar story and a book will be issued for the black vulture in Kresna Gorge and Balkan Mountain in Bulgaria, where the species is now extinct for more than half a century.

I would like to mention here my colleagues and friends that work hard for all this to happen – Hristo Peshev, Lachezar Bonchev, Atanas Grozdanov, Nadya Vangelova and Yavor Iliev.

Buy the book here

Green Balkans
25 August 2016
http://www.greenbalkans.org/en/For_the_first_time_in_60_years_Griffon_Vulture_has_returned_to_the_Balkan_Mountains_of_Bulgaria_Kresna_and_the_Pirin_Mountains_as_a_result_of_a_long_term_restoration_programme-p6050





For the first time in 60 years – Griffon Vulture has returned to the Balkan Mountains of Bulgaria, Kresna and the Pirin Mountains, as a result of a long-term restoration programme

Today, in a press-conference held in the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency we announced the start of a large-scale campaign for celebrating a huge success – the return of Griffon Vulture to the Balkan Mountains of Bulgaria, Kresna and the Pirin Mountains. This international nature conservation success is a result of over 15 years of joint efforts of Green Balkans, the Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna (FWFF) and the Birds of Prey Protection Society (BPPS).

We would like to remind you that after in 2015 we witnessed the first Griffon Vulture chick successfully fledged in the Balkan Mountains for the past 69 years, in 2016 we can already announce 5 successfully raised chicks in the Eastern Balkan Mountains (Sliven/Kotel), 4 in Vrachanski Balkan and 2 in the Kresna Gorge/Pirin. With these fascinating results we consider the species as successfully restored in the Balkan Mountains and Pirin. The total number of breeding pairs in these areas is about 25 pairs, which, added to the ones from the natural population in the Eastern Rhodopes, accounts for over 100 pairs, increasing the breeding habitat of the specie with some 200 %. The Bulgarian conservationalists will celebrate the event with an international campaign, naming the newly fledged vultures after experts from 8 European countries and awarding the ambassadors of 4 countries with honour certificates.

At the press-conference **Ivelin Ivanov of Green Balkans** shared the difficult way the three organizations had to follow and the countless efforts they had to invest to reach this amazing results.

Emiliyan Stoynov of FWFF reminded of the unique role of vultures "There are only two incinerators currently operating in the country. The carcasses of cattle have to be transported there for destructions, which costs the economy and the livestock owners millions of leva. Vultures deliver this service for free, saving human time and effort and at no carbon footprint". **Hristo Peshev of FWFF** introduced the success achieved in the Pirin Mountains and the Kresna Gorge.

Georgi Stoyanov of BPPS shared the results of the efforts of BPPS and their joint work with the Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park Directorate.

"Conserving vultures and working for the restoration of their habitats and extensive livestock breeding, we work for economically undeveloped regions of the country. This is how biodiversity conservation, sustainable regional development and the production of healthy food go hand in hand." said Elena Stoeva, manager of the Vultures Back to LIFE project of Green Balkans and FWFF.

At the press-conference **the experts awarded Mr. Nikolay Nenchev, Director of the Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park with an honour certificate for his own personal contribution to the restoration of Griffon Vulture** in that part if the Balkan Mountains. One of the chicks hatched this year was named Niki in his honour. Mr. Nenchev congratulated the experts and expressed his willingness to continue to support their nature conservation mission.

Who are the Godfathers of the Bulgarian vulture babies?
We chose 11 honoured nature-lovers from 8 different countries to become Godfathers of the young vultures hatched in the Kresna Gorge/Pirin, Vrachanski Balkan and the Eastern Balkan Mountains (Sliven/Kotel). All of them have significantly contributed to the preservation of vultures in Bulgaria. Among them are:

- Michel Terrasse – Vulture Conservation Foundation, France
- Wolfgang Fremuth – Frankfurt Zoological Society, Germany
- Juan Jose Sanchez Artes - Vulture Conservation Foundation, Spain
- Evelyn Tewes - Vulture Conservation Foundation, Austria
- Jose Tavares - Vulture Conservation Foundation, Portugal
- Jovan Andevski - Vulture Conservation Foundation, Macedonia
- Alvaro Camina - Vulture Conservation Foundation, Spain
- Nikolay Nenchev – Vrachanski Balkan NP, Bulgaria
- Pierre Gay – BioPark Zoo De Doue, France
- Ernesto Alvares – GREFA Foundation, Spain
- Margarete Roithmair – Friends of Zoo of Vienna, Austria

- Brunhilde Rach – European Commission, Belgium
- Simon Goss – European Commission, Belgium

All Godfathers will receive honor certificates as a recognition for their contribution to the restoration of the species in Bulgaria and on the Balkans. Honour certificates will also be awarded to the ambassadors of Spain, Austria, Germany and the European Union, for the contribution of their respected states to the restoration of the species in Bulgaria.

Additional information about Griffon Vulture

There are only some 1000 pairs of Griffon Vultures breeding in isolated areas outside the Iberian Peninsula, whereas in many European countries it has gone extinct. Vultures have got a unique ecosystem role, providing sanitary service, which was the reason for some countries as France and Italy to recover their population that had gone extinct. The Balkan Vulture Action Plan has gathered many parties from various countries in coordinated efforts for vulture conservation.

Until mid-XX century Griffon Vulture was considered as common species in Bulgaria, bred all over the country and occupied all available cliffs, nesting even on the Kaliakra cliffs. Due to mass poisoning the population gradually decreased until 1971, when the species was labeled as "extinct". Surprisingly, a small group of natural self-recovered colony of Griffon Vultures was found in the Eastern Rhodopes of Bulgaria in 1978. It was estimated at 28 birds and some 1-2 breeding pairs. Thanks to the efforts of nature consevationalists and experts Griffon Vulture population was recovered to 75 breeding pairs in 2015. But at the end of 2010 it was still only present in the Eastern Rhodopes, along the Arda river valley.

Reintroduction projects for Griffon Vultures in the Balkan Mountains and Kresna Gorge/Pirin have lasted for more than 10 years, but intensified in 2010 with the support of the Frankfurt Zoological Society, DBU, the LIFE+ Program, Friends of Vienna Zoo, Biopark De Doue (France), the Black Vulture Conservation Foundation, the Vulture Conservation Foundation, GREFA Foundation (Spain) and the governments of Extramadura, Andalusia, Castile and Leon in Spain.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

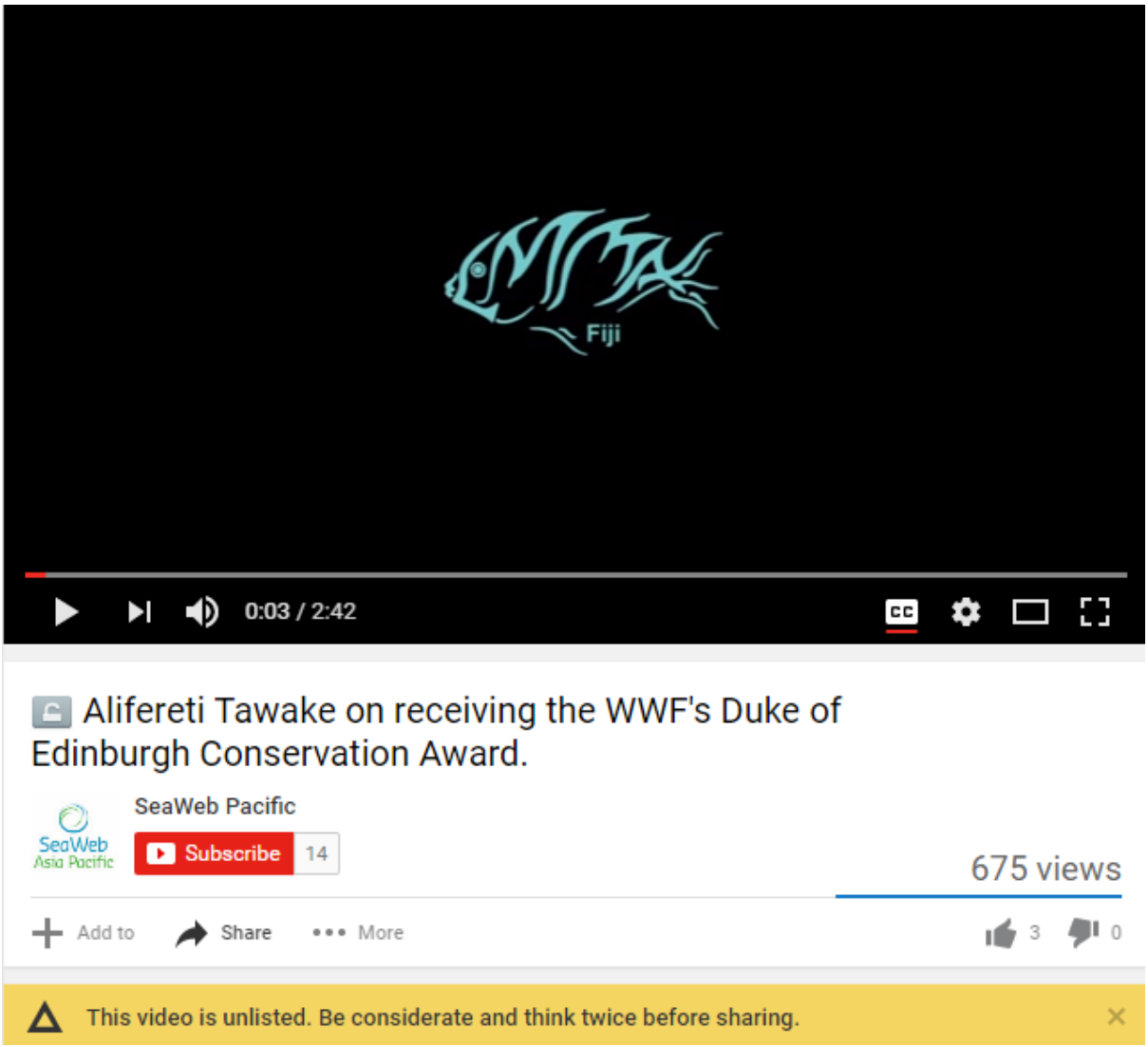
Alifereti Tawake
Fiji, Asia
2004

Everlasting marine resources for the people of Fiji

Winner of the Whitley Award sponsored by WWF-UK

Alifereti was featured in a SeaWeb Pacific interview in late 2015. Follow this link to view Alifereti's WFN profile.

SeaWeb Pacific
23 November 2016
Receiving WWF's Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Award
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxoXzMLt3m8&feature=youtu.be



WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Amanda Vincent
Philippines
1994

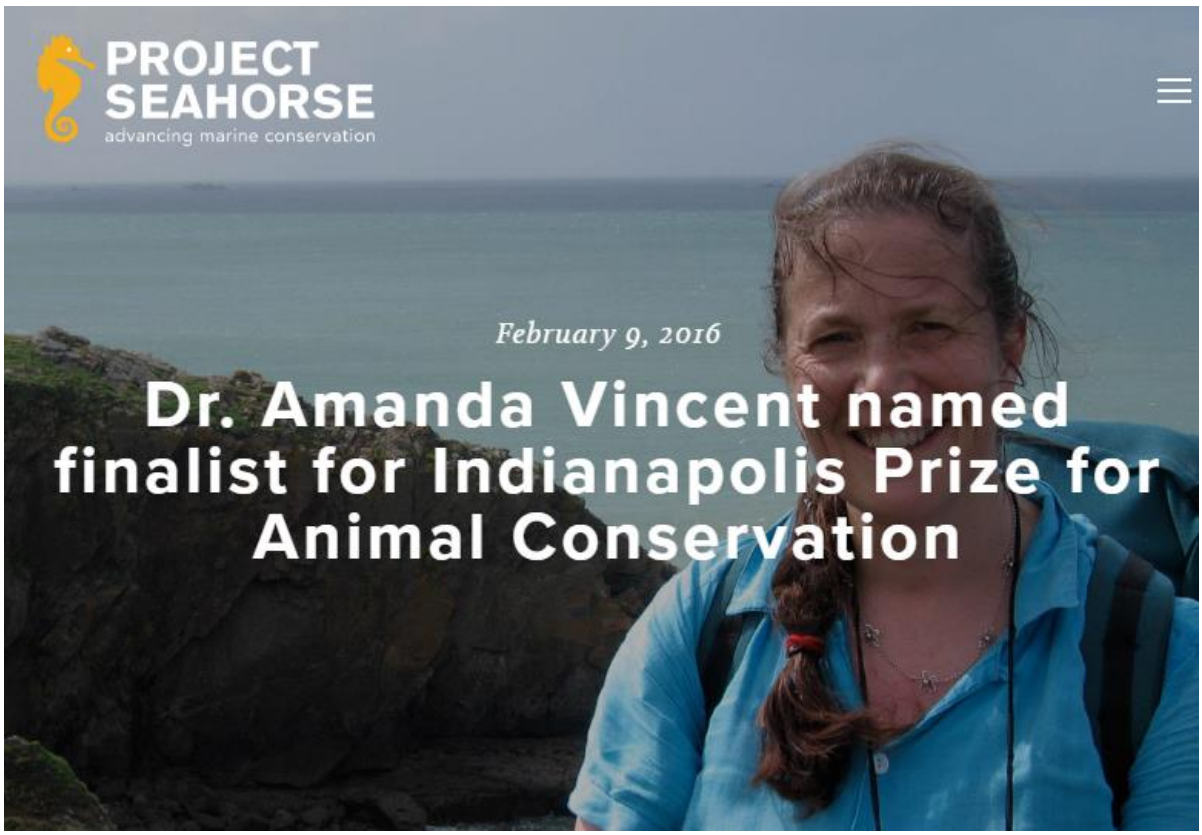
Project Seahorse, Philippines

Winner of the Whitley Award

Amanda was featured in three articles during the past year, as elsction of which is below. To view Amanda's WFN profile, follow this link.

Indianopolis Prize
9 February 2016
http://indianapolisprize.org/sites/prize/the-heroes/2016?utm_source=FB&utm_medium=ORG&utm_content=SOC&utm_campaign=PRIZE





http://www.projectseahorse.org/news/2016/2/5/amanda-vincent-named-finalist-for-indianapolis-prize

INDIANAPOLIS – Indianapolis Prize officials announced today the six Finalists for the world's leading award for animal conservation. In recognition of her successes in the conservation of at-risk species, Dr. Amanda Vincent joins fellow Finalists Dr. Joel Berger, Dr. Dee Boersma, Dr. Rodney Jackson, Dr. Carl Jones and Dr. Carl Safina.

"Amanda and the Finalists for the Indianapolis Prize are heroes in many senses of the word," said Michael Crowther, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoological Society, which administers the Indianapolis Prize as part of its core mission. "They've sacrificed their own self-interests to help others, and they've overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Our world is unquestionably better off because of Dr. Amanda Vincent, and we hope others will not only take notice of, but also join in her noble work to save wild things and wild places."

Amanda Vincent

Dr. Amanda Vincent largely put seahorse conservation on the map. Not only did she take her studies under the water and into their world, she identified a conservation concern for these tiny fish and mounted a campaign to secure their future.

In 1996, she co-founded the first seahorse conservation program, Project Seahorse, which she still directs. She has since led work ranging from behavioral research to global policy. Her team has established 35 no-take marine protected areas in the Philippines and guided groups that use seahorses for traditional medicines or aquarium display to obtain seahorses carefully.

In 2002, Dr. Vincent had one of her most notable gains, persuading the then 169, and now 181, member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to control seahorse exports to ensure sustainability. This was the first global trade regulation for any marine fishes and set precedent for many other species.

Thanks to Vincent's blend of research and action, seahorses are now widely considered a flagship species – meaning their conservation ensures the survival and protection of other marine life. For her tireless work to advance seahorse conservation, Vincent has advanced as a Finalist for the 2016 Indianapolis Prize.

"Amanda connects research and action effectively, and acts on the best available knowledge for the maximum conservation impact," said Dr. Heather Koldewey, head of global conservation programmes for the Zoological Society of London. "Above all, she seeks solutions, using drive and creativity to find novel approaches to conservation – many of which have far-reaching impact beyond seahorses."

Dr. Vincent is a Professor at the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries (formerly the Fisheries Centre). She holds a doctorate from the University of Cambridge, UK, and an undergraduate degree from the University of Western Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Vincent joins a highly-accomplished roster of 2016 Indianapolis Prize Finalists, which includes:

Joel Berger, Ph.D.: (Wildlife Conservation Society, Colorado State University)

While the Arctic may be known for its polar bears, Dr. Berger strives to save another flagship species at home on the tundra – the muskox. Beyond studying migration paths for large mammals, Dr. Berger's actionable conservation models help researchers

understand populations as modern metaphors for climate change. Dr. Berger was also a Finalist for the 2014 Indianapolis Prize.

Dee Boersma, Ph.D.: (University of Washington Department of Biology)
Penguins, as sentinels of our oceans, have no greater champion than Dr. Boersma. For more than three decades, she has followed the lives of Argentina's Magellanic penguins to help strengthen protections and conservation efforts for colonies, while studying the seabirds as indicators of environmental change.

Rodney Jackson, Ph.D.: (Snow Leopard Conservancy)
One of the world's foremost experts on the elusive, endangered snow leopard, Dr. Jackson endures harsh winters and dangerous terrain to track these "ghosts of the mountain" and teach locals how to coexist peacefully with them. Dr. Jackson was also a Finalist for the 2008, 2010 and 2012 Indianapolis Prize.

Carl Jones, Ph.D.: (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation)
Understanding the importance of every small part of an ecosystem, Dr. Jones has brought a dozen species back from the brink of extinction, including the Mauritius kestrel and echo parakeet. His revolutionary techniques have helped shape conservation work being done on the remote island of Mauritius, including the establishment of its first national park. Dr. Jones was also a Finalist for the 2012 and 2014 Indianapolis Prize.

Carl Safina, Ph.D.: (The Safina Center at Stony Brook University)
A crusader for the ocean and its creatures, Dr. Safina works to effectively connect humans with marine species. He has pioneered innovative approaches to studying species ranging from reef coral to whales, and established a sustainable seafood program, bringing science-based criteria to consumers. Dr. Safina was also a Finalist for the 2010 and 2014 Indianapolis Prize.

Renowned professional conservationists and designated representatives make up the Indianapolis Prize Jury, tasked with naming the 2016 Winner, who will be announced in late spring and honored at the Indianapolis Prize Gala presented by Cummins Inc., to be held Oct. 15, 2016.
The Winner of the Prize will receive an unrestricted $250,000 cash award while the five Finalists will each receive $10,000. In addition to the monetary award, the Winner will receive the prestigious Lilly Medal, a cast bronze medal showcasing the relationship between humans and the natural world.
"Winning the Indianapolis Prize stands out as one of the highlights of my career," said Dr. Patricia Wright, who in 2014 became the first woman to receive the Indianapolis Prize for her commitment to protecting Madagascar's lemurs. "It is truly the 'Nobel

Prize' of animal conservation and the 2016 Finalists represent some of the best and brightest minds in conservation."

A History of Indianapolis Prize Winners

The Indianapolis Prize was first awarded in 2006 to George Archibald, Ph.D., the co-founder of the International Crane Foundation. The 2008 Winner was George Schaller, Ph.D., known as one of the founding fathers of modern wildlife conservation, and both a senior conservationist for the Wildlife Conservation Society and vice president for Panthera. In 2010, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Ph.D., founder of Save the Elephants, received the Prize for his pioneering research in elephant social behavior and for leading the way in the fight against the poaching of African elephants. Steven Amstrup, Ph.D., chief scientist for Polar Bears International, received the 2012 Prize for his work promoting the cause of the world's largest land carnivore. In 2014, Patricia C. Wright, Ph.D., founder of Centre ValBio, became the first woman awarded the Indianapolis Prize for her dedication to protecting Madagascar's flemurs.

ABOUT THE INDIANAPOLIS PRIZE

The Indianapolis Prize was initiated by the Indianapolis Zooas a significant component of its mission to empower people and communities, both locally and globally, to advance animal conservation. This biennial award brings the world's attention to the cause of animal conservation and the brave, talented and dedicated men and women who spend their lives saving the Earth's endangered animal species. The Indianapolis Prize has received support from the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation since its inception in 2004.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Kanchana Weerakoon
Sri Lanka
2002

Conservation of the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary and the Spot Billed Pelican in Sri Lanka

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Winner of the Whitley Award

Kanchana has featured in a Conservation Leadership Programme article this past year. To view Kanchana's WFN profile, follow this link.

Conservation Leadership Programme
8 February 2016
http://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/news/colombo-collaboration-helps-to-put-neglected-otters-back-on-the-map/

Colombo collaboration helps to put neglected otters back on the map



One of the most valuable experiences afforded by the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) is the opportunity for alumni to pass on their skills and increase their own knowledge base through peer-to-peer learning. Support from the Fondation Segré Conservation Fund at Fauna & Flora International (FFI) enables individuals and teams within the CLP network to participate in the

Learning Exchange Programme, a mentoring scheme that benefits everyone involved.

In November 2015, Atul Borker and Hanna Krupa spent two weeks in Colombo sharing their knowledge of otter conservation with an enthusiastic Sri Lankan team.

Kanchana Weerakoon is the founder of ECO-V, a Sri Lankan NGO that is engaged in a variety of conservation projects, and which aims to develop a long-term, island-wide otter research programme. It is almost two decades since any meaningful research on otters in Sri Lanka was published. A lack of funding and local expertise has led to otter conservation being badly neglected.

One of the principal objectives of the exchange was to equip Kanchana and her team with the requisite skills to address this deficiency and spearhead a series of new otter-focused initiatives. As a seasoned member of the IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group and an expert in otter survey and monitoring techniques, Atul has accumulated a wealth of knowledge that was highly relevant to the needs of Sri Lanka's would-be researchers.



For his part, Atul was hoping that Kanchana would pass on a few pearls of wisdom based on her 15 years of experience at the helm of ECO-V. Having recently founded his own Indian NGO, Wild Otters, Atul was aware that he had a great deal to learn about managing an organisation.

The two-week trip proved to be a resounding success for both parties.

From Kanchana's perspective, the hands-on training in project planning, field survey techniques, use of scientific equipment such as GPS and camera traps, and data

interpretation has empowered her team at ECO-V to carry out more effective research, offering renewed hope for otter conservation in Sri Lanka.



The learning exchange opportunity arose out of a very brief conversation during a CLP training course, and came at an ideal time for Kanchana: "Atul and I met on a leadership training programme. It was great that he chose me as his partner for a learning exchange. It's really remarkable how short meetings can lead to long-term connections. I was waiting to start another scientific research programme and am so glad it is now on otters in Sri Lanka. With the help of Atul and Hanna from the Wild Otter team in India, I now have a trained team in Sri Lanka who will be able to get field data and handle scientific equipment for gathering data on our own wild otters. It is a nice feeling that we have a partnership in two countries to save the same species."



"Training people from another country was a very enriching experience," Atul revealed. Equally importantly, the learning exchange has provided his own organisation with a vital springboard from which to launch a wider work programme: "There are very few researchers across the globe working actively on otters. Wild Otters looks forward to changing that in the years to come. The work in Sri Lanka marks the start of our international work. It has boosted our confidence, and we now have the basic experience necessary for future international engagements."

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Romulus Whitaker
India
2005

Utilising the king cobra as a flagship species for India's vanishing rainforests

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Winner of the Whitley Award sponsored by the friends of WFN

Romulus was featured in The Hindu News this year. To view Rom's WFN profile, follow this link.

The Hindu – Print and Online News
9 July 2016
1,518,082 circulation
http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/into-the-wild-with-romulus-whitaker/article8828765.ece

THE HINDU

Into the wild with Whitaker

As Madras Crocodile Bank Trust turns 40, Romulus Whitaker tells RAVEENA JOSEPH about his inherent love for reptiles and his future plans

"My mother got a picture of me from when I was four years old, holding a snake," chuckles 73-year-old Romulus Whitaker, who has led a wildly exciting life. The man, who set up the Snake Park and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, may have had an inherent love affair with those in the reptilian family, but he was not always sure of his path.

Born in New York, Whitaker moved to Mumbai when he was seven, where his step-father set up India's first colour motion processing laboratory. Whitaker grew up close to Bollywood, watching Vyjayanthimala and Dev Anand waltzing in and out of the lab. He was a naturalised Indian, but, with an American passport, which he eventually gave up to travel to the Andaman and Nicobar islands to study cobras.

His conservation work started in the 1970s, when the field itself was just coming to the fore in India. "I came out with *Common Indian Snakes: A Field Guide* to let people know that we have so many great snakes here. But, of course, people did think I was crazy and didn't shy away from saying so," chuckles Whitaker.

With a slew of awards and accolades in his kitty, Whitaker has travelled the world looking for snakes and worked on crocodile farming projects in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Ethiopia and other places.

As the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust turns 40, Whitaker looks back at how it all came together and what lies ahead. Excerpts from an interview:

You travelled the world as a seaman and served in the US Aarmy when you were younger before you did your groundbreaking conservation work in India. What was your plan when you started out?

I had absolutely no plan — I still don't have a plan. Things dropped into my lap and I just went with it. But honestly, it feels like I've been prodded by something — from inside, or maybe, out — and I've pursued all these interests with a great deal of passion.

I was a merchant seaman because I needed to earn a living when I was 20. I had just returned to the US, and I was basically an Indian boy who didn't even know how to use a soda machine. I tried college for a year and couldn't do it. Once I gave up on it, I was naturally grabbed by the US Army because the Vietnam War was going on and anyone who wasn't in college was fair game. Maybe it's because they figured I wasn't the kind who'd have shot anybody that they made me a medical lab technician and sent me to Japan, which was entirely out of the war zone.

When did snakes slither into your life?

After the war, I had the opportunity to work with Bill Haast of the Miami Serpentarium Laboratories, which was the largest venom production centre in the world. I've always been fascinated with venomous snakes… the whole idea of an animal with toxic venom (grins excitedly).

Working with him gave me a work ethic that stuck with me: keep going doggedly at whatever I wanted to do. But it also gave me a model for something to do in India, which was to set up a snake park, which I came back and did in 1970.

And then, six years later, the Crocodile Bank came to be.

The snake park was popular; within a few years, we had a million people a year visiting. At that time, we got two crocs: one from the Madras aquarium and one from the marine biology department of Portonova. We put them together and they started breeding. We thought, with more space, we could breed them in captivity and release babies back into the wild. I wasn't making this up myself; I was in touch with people in Africa and America who were doing similar stuff way before we began doing it.

Now that it's 40 years later, how are you marking the occasion?

In the 70s, I had done surveys around the country and found that gharials, salt water crocodiles and mugger crocodiles were on the verge of extinction. Now, we have a surplus of 1,000 crocodiles, and we are willing to give them free to anyone who wants to set up another bank somewhere else in the country.

We also have an international gene bank — 2,100 animals of 17 different species, including crocodiles, turtles, tortoises, snakes and lizards.

We still want to revamp the place to make it a world-class destination. We are looking to host more underwater exhibits, painted murals on the wall, gushing water and other exciting things for people to see.

What are you fonder of — crocodiles or snakes?

My interest in reptiles began with snakes, and even now I am working on sensitising people on how to deal with snake bites. Snakes are dangerous and admittedly beautiful — other than butterflies, there are very few creatures that have as many colours and patterns as these creatures. They move in a wonderful and mysterious way, and people don't know too much about them.

But, crocodiles are fascinating animals as well. They are so intelligent that you can communicate with them, train them and even relate to them.

What's keeping you busy these days?

My work takes me pretty far these days. I have a king cobra project in Kalimantan, Indonesia, and a crocodile project in the Sundarbans. There are also the field stations we set up in the Andaman islands, Agumbe in the Western Ghats and one on the Chambal river in UP, which are for studying gharial. So, in a way, I still have a finger in all these pies and a deep interest in all of it, of course.

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40 years of Croc Bank

Madras Crocodile Bank Trust marks their 40th anniversary on August 28 with a celebratory lunch at Radisson Blu. Meet and greet Romulus Whitaker as he talks about the past and reveals plans for the future of the Bank.

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Previous winner

Jean Wiener
Haiti
2006 and 2014

Conserving Haiti's coastal ecosystems and securing its first marine protected areas

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Winner of the Whitley Gold Award donated by Friends and Scottish friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature

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Jean has featured in three articles this past year, a selection of which is below. To view Jean's WFN profile follow this link.

Synchronicity Earth – Environmental NGO
2016
http://www.synchronicityearth.org/projects/regeneration/the-foundation-for-the-protection-of-marine-biodiversity

The Foundation for the Protection of Marine Biodiversity (FoProBiM)



Photo: Mangrove nursery. Credit: FoProBim

Jean Wiener was born in Haiti and from a young age has been concerned about the severe environmental problems facing his country – one of the poorest and most degraded in the world. Having experienced the vicious cycle of increasing poverty and environmental destruction first-hand, he decided that the best way of addressing it was to

create an organisation that could increase environmental protection while providing much-needed alternatives in the form of sustainable livelihoods.

The Foundation for the Protection of Marine Biodiversity (FoProBiM) was established in 1992 and has six full-time staff. Its activities range from education to restoration and advocacy. All of its work is informed by scientific research and consultation with local communities. It recently completed Haiti's first detailed nationwide mangrove survey, identifying key priorities for protection and restoration.

Through his work, Jean has realised that alleviating poverty in Haiti is key to inspiring people to protect their environment, which includes important areas of seagrasses, mangroves and corals. Recognised internationally for his outstanding work, Jean has won two Whitley Awards for Conservation including its prestigious Gold Award in 2014; he also received a Condé Nast Traveler Environmental Award in 2014; Haiti's first ever environmental award; and in 2015 he won the Goldman Environmental Prize for Islands and Island Nations.

Marine pollution

Haitian plastics wash up on beaches across the Caribbean. To address this, FoProBiM gathers local plastic waste, using it to plant mangrove and other plant seedlings. To date, FoProBiM has set up five mangrove nurseries and two coral gardens to help rehabilitate these sensitive ecosystems using discarded plastics and locally-made biodegradable bamboo baskets.

Mangrove restoration

FoProBiM has identified key project sites within the new Three Bays National Park in northeast Haiti. Its aim is to remove plastic and other debris from these sites; to restore natural conditions such as hydrological flows; and then to carry out reforestation and rehabilitation activities.

As well as regenerating mangroves, reforestation efforts will include planting some community fruit trees, and local people will be employed to care for the mangrove nurseries (making planting baskets, collecting seeds, watering, replanting, and education).

Coral restoration

FoProBiM aims to set up a coral gardens project within the National Park where it will be possible both to grow and transplant coral fragments.

It is developing a method of planting fragments directly onto the reef. This could provide a more efficient mechanism than that currently used to restore the world's corals; learning will be shared with coral reef communities globally.

As with their other projects, local community members will be employed to care for the coral gardens (boat captain, helpers, making anchors, installing anchors, maintenance, education).

WFN WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Critical Ecosystem
22 April 2016
http://www.cepf.net/news/top_stories/Pages/Taking-a-stand-to-bring-back-Haitis-trees.aspx

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

Taking A Stand To Bring Back Haiti's Trees



Children help FoProBiM with replanting in Haitian mangrove nursery. © Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversite Marine/photo by Jean Wiener

Earth Day 2016's theme is Trees for the Earth. People everywhere are looking to the trees to protect not only the global climate, but also local ecosystems. Trees give us oxygen, store excess carbon from our atmosphere and provide food and shelter for forest inhabitants ranging from the unassuming eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) to the mighty western gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*, Critically Endangered).

For everything that trees give to us, we often undervalue them. We cut masses of trees down for fuel, timber and to make room for future development, undercutting forest ecosystems and the services those ecosystems provide.



A rare Juniper tree, Juniperus eckmanii, grows in Haiti's Forêt des Pin. The National Botanical Conservatory of Brest participates in conservation efforts for the rare tree. © CBNB/photo by Fanch Le Hir

Nowhere is this more true than in Haiti. Today, only 2 percent of the country's original forest cover remains. This mass deforestation has caused soil degradation, erosion, flooding, degraded water quality, increased pressure on wildlife, and increasing reliance on unsustainable resource gathering by local communities who are struggling to survive. There is, however, hope for Haiti's forests. Several local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are working to bring back the trees.

In 1992, Jean Wiener started Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine (FoProBiM), the only local NGO dedicated to protecting Haiti's coastal and marine ecosystems. With help from a CEPF grant, FoProBiM started a program to revitalize Haiti's dwindling mangrove forests. In partnership with more than 400 local individuals, adults and children, FoProBiM has established two nurseries where an initial 10,000 red mangrove trees (*Rhizophora mangle*) were grown. As the mangroves matured, they were replanted in natural coastal areas. FoProBiM aims to protect 800 hectares of mangroves through a combination of replanting, implementing new laws and educating communities on the benefits of the mangroves. Coastal mangrove stands are important for Haiti because they provide a nursery for young fish and serve as a barrier between the land and the open sea, shielding the coast from large waves. They are important on the global scale because mangroves sequester 50 times more carbon than the equivalent area in tropical forests. Losing our mangrove forests around the world means losing a powerful ally in the fight against global climate change.

Another Haitian NGO doing its part to fight the country's rampant deforestation is Organisation des Paysans pour le Développement de l'Unité II de la Forêt des Pins (OPDFM). OPDFM operates within Haiti's Unit 2 Pine Forest Natural National Park, one of the last minimally fragmented forests in the country. Using a grant from CEPF, 227 hectares of the forest were reforested with native species, including 100 hectares of Endangered Hispaniolan pine (*Pinus occidentalis*). OPDFM protected an additional 247 hectares of existing broadleaf forest by halting destructive practices within the forest, and

worked with French NGO Arche aux Plantes (AAP) to protect a species of juniper known as*Juniperus eckmanii*, which is found only in Haiti. This species is so rare that only seven trees are known to exist. Together, OPDFM and AAP have given special protection to the sites of the surviving *eckmanii* specimens, the locations of which are a closely guarded secret, and they have started a propagation program in France in the hope that one day the forest dwellers of Haiti will find shelter and sustenance in the shade of *Juniperus eckmanii* once again.



Children help FoProBiM team members with a project to create sustainable livelihoods through mangrove nursery and replanting in Haiti. © Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversite Marine/photo by Jean Wiener

Previous winners

Combined News

Dung Nguyen, Education for Nature–Vietnam (ENV)
Sergei Bereznuk, Phoenix Fund
Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa

Winners of the Whitley Award

National Geographic Voices
29 July 2016
http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2016/07/29/international-tiger-day-45-ngos-call-for-end-to-tiger-farming/

45 NGOs are raising the alarm of increasing tiger poaching and call for ending all tiger farming and tiger trade



Global Tiger Day (#TigerDay) was founded in 2010 by the International Tiger Conservation Forum, a meeting of the world's tiger-range countries in St. Petersburg, Russia. As part of the 12-year Global Tiger Recovery Program adopted at the meeting, July 29 is celebrated annually as a way to build tiger conservation awareness. (Download a PDF of the Global Tiger Recovery Program and a PDF of the St Petersburg Declaration.)

On Global Tiger Day this year, midway through the Global Tiger Recovery Program, 45 NGOs released this joint statement raising the alarm of increasing tiger poaching and call for ending all tiger farming and tiger trade:

Today on International Tiger Day we the undersigned 45 non-governmental organisations are urging countries with tiger farms to adopt urgent action to end tiger breeding for commercial purposes and phase out tiger farms.
The global wild tiger population is estimated to be less than 4,000. These last remaining wild tigers are each threatened by trade for nearly all of their body parts – from skins and bones to teeth and claws – traded by criminals for huge profit. These products are consumed largely as exotic luxury products for demonstrating social status, such as tiger skin rugs for luxury home décor or expensive tiger bone wine.
Tiger bone is also consumed as traditional medicine. The main market for tiger products are consumers in China and Vietnam, followed by smaller consumer markets in Myanmar and Laos.
There are currently two primary sources for trade in tiger parts and products: wild tigers in ten range countries that are home to the last remaining wild tigers, and captive tigers largely found in four tiger farming countries - China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

Tiger farming and trade in captive tiger body parts from and through these countries

undermines tiger conservation efforts across Asia. Indeed trade in captive tiger parts and products stimulates demand for tiger products – be it from wild or captive tigers – and undermines enforcement efforts by making it difficult to know whether seized tiger products come from wild or captive tigers.

Tiger farms have expanded rapidly over the last few decades. In the four tiger farming countries alone there are approximately 7,000 – 8,000 captive tigers in large tiger farms, zoos and smaller facilities that keep or breed tigers.

The wild tiger population has declined by over 95 percent over the last 100 years. 2016 has also marked a significant upsurge in tiger poaching and trade where in India more tigers were killed in the first five months of 2016 that in the whole of 2015.

The tiger range countries where tiger populations are beginning to show signs of recovery have high levels of political commitment, strong laws and enforcement – and no tiger farms. Where tiger farms are present they only serve as an obstacle to recovery. In recent years China and Thailand have both delivered important new tiger conservation efforts on the ground. Despite this investment, the effects of tiger farms limit the potential gains from such work, as well as damaging those countries' reputation in the area of species conservation.

We commend the recent bold enforcement efforts of Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), which in June 2016 seized 137 live tigers thousands of tiger skin amulets, 70 preserved cubs and other tiger parts from the "Tiger Temple" in Kanchanaburi Province. The DNP has announced that it will investigate other captive tiger facilities implicated in tiger trade. This represents a significant opportunity for Thailand to end all tiger farming within its borders and to play a leadership role in the phase-out of tiger farms in the region.

Other countries should also take action to ensure that they are not implicated in the trade in captive tiger parts and products. For example, there appears to be a growing trade in tigers and their parts and products from South Africa. The United States also has a large number of captive tigers which may too become vulnerable to exploitation for illegal trade.

The world needs to wake up to the alarm bells ringing across the tiger's range. It is clear that tiger farming and trade in captive tiger parts have done nothing to end the pressure on and trade in wild tigers. In September this year, world governments will come together in South Africa to participate in the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CITES conference offers a significant opportunity for governments to adopt and call for urgent implementation of concrete measures to phase out tiger farms.

If wild tiger populations are to be recovered and secured, the international community must provide support to end tiger farming and all trade in tiger parts and products from wild and captive tigers. We the undersigned, including those with technical expertise in

managing captive tigers, stand ready to provide assistance to achieve the goals of Zero Demand for tiger parts and products and Zero Poaching of tigers.

1. Esther Conway, Manager, 21ST CENTURY TIGER
2. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar , Ph.D., Secretary General and CEO, AARANYAK
3. Toby Zhang, Executive Secretary-General, AITA FOUNDATION
4. Jo Cook, ALTA Coordinator, AMUR LEOPARD AND TIGER ALLIANCE (ALTA)
5. Jill Robinson MBE , Dr. med vet hc , Hon LLD , Founder & CEO, ANIMALS ASIA FOUNDATION
6. Susan Millward , Executive Director, ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE
7. Rhishja Cota-Larson , President, ANNAMITICUS
8. Kris Vehrs , Interim President and CEO, ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS
9. Dr. R.S. Chundawat , President, BAAVAN - BAGH AAP AUR VAN
10. Carole Baskin, CEO and Founder, BIG CAT RESCUE
11. Will Travers OBE , President & CEO, BORN FREE FOUNDATION
12. Adam Roberts, CEO, BORN FREE USA
13. Sybelle Foxcroft , Director, CEE4LIFE
14. Sally Case, CEO, DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
15. *Dung Nguyen, Vice Director, EDUCATION FOR NATURE – VIETNAM (ENV)
16. Feng Yongfeng , Founder & CEO, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST FUND
17. Debbie Banks, Campaign Leader, Tiger and Wildlife Crime, ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (EIA)
18. Ioana Dungler , Director of Wild Animals, FOUR PAWS INTERNATIONAL
19. Sulma Warne , Deputy Director, FREELAND FOUNDATION
20. Teresa M. Telecky , Ph.D., Director, Wildlife Department, HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
21. Nicole Paquette, Vice President, Wildlife, HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
22. Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia Regional Director, INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE (IFAW)
23. Kumi Togawa , President, JAPAN TIGER AND ELEPHANT FUND
24. Prof. Nishikant Kale, President, NATURE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
25. Christoph Schmidt, Ph.D., Chair of the Board, PRO WILDLIFE
26. *Sergei Bereznuk , Director, PHOENIX FUND
27. Adam Grogan, Head of Wildlife, ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (RSPCA)
28. Bittu Sahgal , Founder – Editor, SANCTUARY ASIA
29. Simon Clinton, Founder & CEO, SAVE WILD TIGERS
30. Kedar Gore, Director, THE CORBETT FOUNDATION

31. Brian K. Weirum , Chairman, THE FUND FOR THE TIGER
32. Phil Davis, Founder, TIGER AWARENESS
33. Vicky Flynn, Manager, TIGERTIME CAMPAIGN
34. Julian Matthews, Chairman, TOFTIGERS
35. Mr. Prasanna Yonzon , CEO, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NEPAL
36. Edwin Wiek , Founder and Director, WILDLIFE FRIENDS FOUNDATION THAILAND (WFFT)
37. Belinda Wright, OBE , Executive Director, WILDLIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF INDIA (WPSI)
38. *Biswajit Mohanty , Ph.D., Secretary, WILDLIFE SOCIETY OF ORISSA
39. Kartick Satyanarayan , Co-founder and Chairman, WILDLIFE SOS
40. Dr. Md . Anwarul Islam, CEO, WILDTEAM
41. Jack Kinross , Coordinator, WILDTIGER CONSERVATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
42. Georgina Allen, Director, WILD WELFARE
43. Lena Aahlby , Interim Global Director of Programmes , WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION
44. Michael Baltzer , Leader, WWF TIGERS ALIVE INITIATIVE
45. Jonathan Baillie , Director of Conservation Programmes , ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON (ZSL)

*Highlighted names indicate Whitley Award winners.

-ENDS-

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