



Press release

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World leader on penguin conservation wins 2018 Whitley Gold Award

£60,000 prize recognises outstanding work protecting endangered seabirds

An Argentinian marine biologist spearheading a global campaign to protect penguins was presented with the prestigious Whitley Gold Award by HRH The Princess Royal yesterday (Wednesday 25 April).

Pablo (Popi) Garcia Borboroglu, Founder of the Global Penguin Society (GPS), says safeguarding penguins is the “mission of my life.” He was honoured with the Gold Award for his outstanding contribution to nature conservation at a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London.

Penguins are threatened by poor fisheries management, pollution and climate change in the oceans, with the devastating impact shown on the BBC series Blue Planet II, presented by Whitley Fund for Nature trustee, Sir David Attenborough. Penguins also face pressure on land from coastal development, irresponsible tourism and introduced predators.

Over half of the world's 18 species of penguin are threatened with extinction, but Pablo is turning things around.

Using an approach that combines science, management and education, Pablo works to conserve penguins across the Southern Hemisphere and use them as a flagship for wider conservation of the marine environment.

Over the past 29 years, Pablo's work has brought together over 125 organisations and benefitted 1.2 million penguins in six countries.

His knowledge, dedication and advocacy has delivered dramatic conservation successes. Notable achievements include working with government to foster

protection of more than 3.1 million hectares of marine and coastal habitat, benefiting 20 penguin colonies. Pablo was instrumental in UNESCO designating the Blue Patagonia Biosphere Reserve - the largest in Argentina - and covering an area nearly the size of Belgium.

In El Pedral, Patagonia, Pablo discovered a Magellanic penguin colony that had dwindled to six pairs in 2008. Fishers and visitors regularly dumped rubbish at the site, set fire to bushes housing vulnerable nests and allowed their dogs to kill the birds.

However, Pablo helped to introduce a new ecotourism plan to provide jobs for local people and create a wildlife reserve. The penguin colony subsequently rose to nearly 2,000 pairs in less than a decade.

The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) champions grassroots leaders in nature conservation across the developing world. The Whitley Gold Award, the UK charity's leading international prize, is donated by The Friends and Scottish Friends of the WFN and is worth £60,000.

The Whitley Gold Award will enable Pablo to justify ocean protection and underpin management for Magellanic, King and Fiordland penguins in Argentina, Chile and New Zealand - including the creation of new Marine Protected Areas and fisheries policy.

His education programme, which takes children to visit colonies, will be expanded, and an extensive PR campaign will help to raise awareness and mobilise public support.

Finally, a global conservation agenda will be developed by world experts to identify and address emerging threats, which are ever growing in the face of climate change and plastic pollution - an issue that has captured the attention of millions.

Edward Whitley, Founder of the WFN, said: "Pablo's work over three decades has had a huge impact on the conservation of penguins and their habitat across four continents. His tireless efforts alongside colleagues have put marine conservation higher up the political agenda, reached thousands of people in coastal communities and given penguins a voice. We are delighted to recognise Pablo with the Whitley Gold Award in our 25th anniversary year."

Pablo said: "People love penguins, but they do not know about their fragile conservation status. Increasing awareness is crucial to help not only penguins but also the oceans on which we, and they, rely."

Often referred to as the 'Green Oscars', the Whitley Fund for Nature is celebrating its 25th Anniversary in 2018. In addition to The Gold Award, the Ceremony will recognise six new Whitley Award winners who will each receive £40,000 in funding to support their work to conserve some of the planet's most endangered species and spectacular places.

The 2018 Whitley Award winners are:

Dominique Bikaba - DRC

Ensuring the survival of DRC's eastern lowland gorillas

Receiving the Whitley Award donated by Arcus Foundation

Kerstin Forsberg – Peru

Majestic giants: safe passage for manta rays in Peru

Receiving the Whitley Award donated by The Corcoran Foundation

Olivier Nsengimana – Rwanda

Conserving Rwanda's emblematic grey crowned crane

Receiving the Whitley Award donated by The Savitri Waney Charitable Trust

Shahriar Caesar Rahman - Bangladesh

Tortoises in trouble: Community conservation of Asia's largest tortoise

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

Munir Virani – Kenya

Game of poisons: a strategy to save Kenya's threatened vultures

Receiving the Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK

Anjali Chandraraj Watson – Sri Lanka

Leopards as a flagship for wildlife corridors

Receiving the Whitley Award donated by Garfield Weston Foundation

Visit www.whitleyaward.org to find out more.

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Press materials available:

- Copyright-cleared photographs of this project are available here:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/WQjAlTa6z56WgB8B2>
- Video footage of the Awards Ceremony and individual films featuring the award winner narrated by WFN trustee, **Sir David Attenborough** will be available upon arrangement with Liquid: contact Madeline Arnold, t:+44 (0) 121 285 3760, e: madeline@weareliquid.com or Chloe Baker, t:+44 (0) 121 285 3760, e: chloe@weareliquid.com

Notes to Editors:

- The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) is a UK registered charity that champions outstanding grassroots leaders in nature conservation across the Global South. This year the charity is marking its 25th anniversary.
- The Whitley Awards are prestigious international prizes presented to individuals in recognition of their achievements in nature conservation. Each Award winner receives a prize worth £40,000 in project funding over one year. The charity's patron, HRH The Princess Royal, presents the Awards annually at a special ceremony in London.
- The Whitley Gold Award is worth £60,000 and recognises an outstanding past recipient of a Whitley Award who has gone on to make a significant contribution to conservation. Joining the Judging Panel to assist in selection, the Gold winner also acts as a mentor to Whitley Award winners receiving their Awards in the same year.
- Since its beginnings 25 years ago, the Whitley Fund for Nature has given nearly £15 million to conservation and recognised more than 190 conservation leaders in over 80 countries.
- WFN operates a rigorous application process involving expert panel representation from international NGOs including WWF-UK, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). This year, WFN received 136 applications which passed through four stages of assessment, reviewed at every step by expert screeners and panellists who kindly offer their expertise voluntarily.
- The Whitley Awards are open to individuals working on wildlife conservation issues in biodiversity-rich, resource poor countries. Further eligibility criteria are available from Liquid.
- During their trip to London for the Awards week finalists have the opportunity to meet the judges, WFN's trustees including Sir David Attenborough, and patron HRH The Princess Royal. In addition they participate in professional media and speech training, attend networking receptions with leading conservation organisations, meet WFN donors and are interviewed by the media. The associated publicity of winning a Whitley Award puts a spotlight on their important work, boosting profile both in the UK and winner's home countries.
- Whitley Award winners join an international network of Whitley alumni eligible to apply for Continuation Funding grants. These follow-on grants are awarded competitively to winners seeking to scale up their effective conservation results on the ground over multiple years.

WFN is generously supported by: Arcus Foundation; The Balcombe Trust; The William Brake Charitable Trust; The Byford Trust; The Corcoran Foundation; Earlymarket; The G D Charitable Trust; The LJC Fund; Britta & Jeremy Lloyd Family Charitable Trust; Lund Trust, a charitable fund of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing; The Foundation for the Promotion of Wellbeing; The Rufford Foundation; The Schroder Foundation; Fondation Segré; The Shears Foundation; The Constance Travis Charitable Trust; Savitri Waney Charitable Trust; Garfield Weston Foundation; Whitley Animal Protection Trust; WWF-UK; the Friends and Scottish Friends of Whitley Fund for Nature; all our partners and supporters and those donors who have chosen to give anonymously.