



## **Press release**

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### **Whitley Fund for Nature celebrates silver anniversary of “Green Oscars”**

**April 2018**

Seven inspirational conservationists were last night (Wednesday 25 April) recognised for their outstanding efforts to protect some of the world’s most endangered animals and their habitat.

Charity patron HRH The Princess Royal presented the prestigious Whitley Awards for nature at the Royal Geographic Society in London, marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the charity’s work promoting global species conservation.

Endangered populations of gorillas, leopards, tortoises, manta rays, cranes and vultures – dubbed the “Ugly Betty” of the conservation world – will benefit from the 2018 awards. A special Gold Award was also presented to an outstanding previous Whitley Award winner, who was invited back to London to receive his prize as a world leader in penguin and marine conservation.

Almost £15 million has been awarded to over 190 project leaders in 80 countries since the Whitley Awards - the “Green Oscars” of the conservation world - were launched in 1993.

This year’s winning projects range from saving critically endangered apes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to conserving giant manta rays in Peru. The dramatic decline in the number of vultures in Kenya will be addressed by combatting the poisoning of Mother Nature’s “clean-up crew.”

Each project has demonstrated dedication and a deep understanding of complex situations, including human-wildlife conflict, deforestation and countries blighted by civil unrest and violence.

This year's awards also honour Pablo (Popi) Borboroglu, who received the Whitley Gold Award, including a £60,000 project prize. Pablo is committed to safeguarding endangered penguins and describes his project as the "mission" of his life. The Gold Award recognises his outstanding contribution to global conservation and is WFN's top prize.

HRH The Princess Royal said: "Whitley Award winners hail from all over the world and come from a range of backgrounds, but they all have in common a fierce commitment and determination to make a real difference to local people and wildlife in their home countries."

Edward Whitley, Founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: "Over the last 25 years it has been wonderful to celebrate and help to magnify the success of our winners. Their work is rooted in local communities, but the ramifications of their success spread far and wide. It is so inspiring for us and our donors to be involved with these leaders who are dynamic and visionary."

The six Whitley Award winners from the Whitley Fund for Nature share a prize fund of £240,000 – or £40,000 per project – to put a spotlight on their conservation work.

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](http://www.whitleyaward.org) to find out more.

#### **Press materials available:**

- Copyright-cleared photographs of this project are available here:  
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/jOoL4EccE89mNsuk1>
- 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](mailto:madeline@weareliquid.com) or Chloe Baker, t:+44 (0) 121 285 3760, e: [chloe@weareliquid.com](mailto: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 25<sup>th</sup> 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, finalists have the opportunity to meet the judges, WFN's trustees including Sir David Attenborough, and patron HRH The Princess Royal. 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.