

## **‘Hope Gala’ with Sir David Attenborough raises £800,000 and counting in battle to save endangered wildlife**

**15 November 2018**

The Whitley Fund for Nature held a ‘Wild & Wonderful’ gala dinner at the Natural History Museum last night (14 November) as part of their 25th Anniversary goal to raise £1million in vital funds to support global conservation heroes.

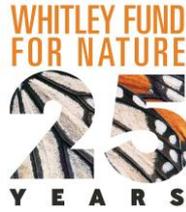
The evening, celebrating the charity’s 25 years, highlighted the achievements of award-winning conservation leaders from Africa, Asia and South America. WFN Trustee, Sir David Attenborough, gave an interview with WFN Ambassador and television presenter Kate Humble on stage, where he praised the Whitley Award winners for having “huge energy, huge passion, and huge knowledge...every single one of the winners that I've seen over these past 25 years (does), and they're very remarkable people!...”

“What these individuals have done is much more than a single footstep, they've already advanced well along the road, so I believe that these individuals who have been supported by the Whitley Fund for Nature will become centres from which to spread the message, and the knowledge, and the zest, and the enthusiasm, (to create positive change) all over their community. So (they are)...seeds, and Whitley has seen possibility in them. WFN has done marvellous things....and I know will do much more.”

Since 1993, the charity’s flagship scheme, which is often referred to as the “Green Oscars” has provided recognition, training and grants to support grassroots conservationists across the globe.

The event, compered by Kate Humble, opened with a unique collaboration between WFN and [Fashion for Conservation](#) to highlight that decisions made by us all on the high street impact wildlife, habitats and the work being done by conservationists around the world. With fashion ranking as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most polluting industry in the world, WFN and FFC set out to recognise trailblazing designers leading the revolution to transform the industry.

Central to the evening was the task to fundraise £1m to support award-winning conservationists beyond their first grant, or ‘Whitley Award’. WFN’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund was set up to increase



the charity's potential to fund winners beyond their Whitley Award, enabling conservation heroes to deliver landscape-scale, long-term solutions for both wildlife and the people living closest to them. From saving orangutans in Indonesian's fast disappearing rainforests, being felled for palm oil, to protecting our most remote and productive seas from long-lining and creating safe places for marine wildlife off the Galapagos and Cocos Island, the projects that stand to benefit from the Fund are some of the most high impact and important of our time.

Last night's gala took the Fund to a total of £800,000 with L.A.- based Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation making the first pledge. Justin Winters, Executive Director of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, said at the event, "The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and the Whitley Fund for Nature both support work that is impactful, urgent, and in great need of funding... As we work together – across nations and industries – we can support the change that is so essential to ensuring a future where humanity and nature can coexist and thrive."

WFN supports the work of conservationists across the globe, helping to protect endangered wildlife and their habitats. They were joined by 13 past Whitley Award winners at the gala last night, who have all pioneered ground-breaking conservation initiatives in their home countries and beyond with the support of local communities.

Edward Whitley, founder of the Whitley Fund for Nature, said: "The absolute root of this charity – the founding idea – is that successful conservation has to come from local leaders. It cannot be exported around the world by well-meaning outsiders. It has to come from within. Our winners are inspirational leaders in their countries and they're making enormous and lasting impact."

To contribute to the WFN's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary fund, visit: <https://whitleyaward.org/2018/08/07/25th-anniversary-fund/>. Follow the Whitley Fund for Nature on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @WhitleyAwards.

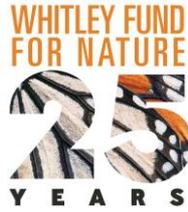
**Ends**

For more information about the WFN, the Gala or the conservationists supported, please contact:

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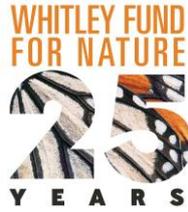


Use this link to download photos from the Gala:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/MnaRX9mFJPfZw8FM8>

#### **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 £15 million to conservation and recognised 200 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.

- Whitley Award winners who attended the gala include: Randall Arauz (Sharks, Costa Rica), Farwiza Farhan (Sumatran orangutans, Indonesia), Rodrigo Medellin (Bats, Latin America), Shivani Bhalla (Lions, Kenya), Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka (Mountain gorillas, Uganda), Charudutt Mishra (Snow Leopards, Indian Himalayas), Patricia Majluf (Fisheries, Peru), Aparajita Datta (Hornbills, India), Pedro Vaz Pinto (Giant Sable, Angola), Rachel Graham (Sharks & rays, Central America & the Caribbean), Ximena Velez-Liendo (Andean Bears, Bolivia), Claudio Sillero (Ethiopian Wolf, Ethiopia) and Pablo Borboroglu (Penguins, Southern Hemisphere). Top sponsors for the event include Steppes Travel, Soneva, and Jupiter. More information about all these winners at [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org)
- **Sir David Attenborough is a trustee of the Whitley Fund for Nature and is attending WFN's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hope Gala as a supporter of the charity and the grassroots conservation leaders it funds. Editors should note Sir David Attenborough's attendance at this event is not confirmation of his support of the Fashion Industry, or WFN's fashion partners at the Gala.**

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