



## **Press release**

### **Strict embargo:**

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## **Global conservation champions honoured by Whitley Fund for Nature**

### **May 2019**

Seven inspiring conservation leaders were tonight (Wednesday 1 May) recognised for their outstanding work in protecting some of the world’s most endangered wildlife and their habitats, with the support of local communities.

Charity Patron HRH The Princess Royal presented the prestigious Whitley Awards – also known as “Green Oscars” - to the winners during a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society in London in front of 450 guests, where films narrated by charity Trustee and national treasure, Sir David Attenborough, premiered.

The Awards are the culmination of an international search to identify some of the world’s most effective conservation leaders. Work to safeguard Bornean orangutans (Indonesia), hammerhead sharks (Costa Rica), Chaco eagles (Argentina), whistling frogs (Ghana), rare waterbirds (Bulgaria) and sustainable fisheries (Madagascar) will benefit thanks to the 2019 Whitley Awards, each worth £40,000 in project funding. The prize is accompanied by a significant boost in profile, helping winners to leverage new connections and further funding.

Since its launch in 1993, the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) has given nearly £16million to support the work of over 200 conservation leaders benefiting wildlife and local communities in more than 80 countries.

This year's winning projects range from sustainable livelihood schemes to prevent deforestation and protect orangutan habitat in Indonesian Borneo, to saving a rare Ghanaian amphibian that was once thought to be extinct.

Each initiative has demonstrated real conservation gains based on the latest available science, and is poised for scale up. These projects are rooted in local community involvement, and seek solutions for both people and wildlife. Environmental education initiatives, working with governments to affect policy change, sustainable livelihood development, and mainstreaming conservation into economic development initiatives are just a few of the strategies used to deliver positive results.

The charity's top prize - the Whitley Gold Award -- was presented to previous Whitley Award winner and Venezuelan conservationist Prof Jon Paul Rodríguez, who was invited to accept the £60,000 accolade in recognition of his work with the charismatic yellow-shouldered parrot.

After receiving his Whitley Award in 2003, today the parrot is on the road to recovery in Jon Paul's project site – with record numbers of parrots flying the nest in 2018. Elsewhere however, populations continue to plummet due to heavy poaching of this pretty polly for the pet trade. With his Whitley Gold Award, Jon Paul will ramp up his work to develop a multi-country strategy to protect the yellow-shouldered parrot across its entire range, working in collaboration with other Whitley Award winners. Jon Paul is Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, an internationally influential role which makes him uniquely positioned to deliver this conservation project and affect change for wildlife.

2019 marks 20 years of Patronage for the charity by HRH The Princess Royal who 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 WFN, said: "We are thrilled to welcome six new inspiring leaders to our growing network of winners – their commitment to working with local communities to protect wildlife and habitats in their home countries is truly admirable, and gives us reason to be optimistic about our shared future. Once they have joined WFN's Winner Network, we look forward to staying in touch with them, supporting

their work in future years with further Continuation Funding and to seeing them collectively help each other to conserve wildlife with local communities.”

WFN Trustee Sir David Attenborough said: ““Threatened species need not sympathetic words but practical help. It is wonderfully encouraging – and inspiring – to see the Whitley Awards recognise this and support people who provide it with such distinction and dedication.”

**The 2019 Whitley Award winners are:**

- **Caleb Ofori-Boateng** – Critical refuge for the Togo slippery frog, Ghana
- **Nikolai Petkov** – Wetlands on the brink: conserving the red-breasted goose, Bulgaria
- **Vatsoa Rakotondrazafy** – MIHARI: a civil society movement to safeguard marine resources, Madagascar
- **José Sarasola** – The Chaco eagle: a flagship for semiarid wildlife conservation, Argentina
- **Wendi Tamariska** – Protecting orangutans and rainforests through sustainable livelihoods, Indonesia (Borneo)
- **Ilena Zanella** – Strengthened sanctuary for the scalloped hammerhead shark, Costa Rica

**The 2019 Whitley Gold Award winner is:**

- **Jon Paul Rodríguez** – A range-wide plan for the yellow-shouldered parrot

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

**ENDS**

**Press materials available:**

- Photographs from the Awards Ceremony will be available after the event using the following link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/tS2RT3EHRFE92pZP9>
- 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.
- The Whitley Awards – also known as Green Oscars - 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 the charity's top prize. Worth £60,000 it recognises a past Whitley Award Winner who has gone on to make an outstanding 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 founding in 1993, the Whitley Fund for Nature has given nearly £16 million to support the work of over 200 conservation leaders benefiting wildlife and communities in over 80 countries.
- WFN operates a rigorous application process involving expert panel representation from international NGOs including WWF-UK and Fauna and Flora International (FFI). This year, WFN received 110 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. 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 winners' 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 Badenoch Fund, The Balcombe Trust; The Frank Brake Charitable Trust; The William Brake Charitable Trust in memory of William Brake; The Constance Travis Charitable Trust; The Corcoran Foundation; Earlymarket; Fondation Segré; 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; Charles and Ruth Plowden; The Rabelais Trust; The Reece Foundation; 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.