



## Press release

**Strict embargo: Not for publication or broadcast until 11:00  
GMT on Wednesday 29 April 2020**

### **The tale of the tamarin: female conservationist wins Whitley Award**

Brazilian conservationist Gabriela Rezende has won a prestigious Whitley Award, also known as a 'Green Oscar', for her work to protect the black lion tamarin monkey of São Paulo.

Gabriela is the coordinator for the Black Lion Tamarin Conservation Programme, that falls under IPÊ – the Institute for Ecological Research - one of the largest NGOs in Brazil.

The Whitley Awards are given annually to individuals from the Global South by UK-based conservation charity the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) and are each worth £40,000 in project funding. Gabriela is one of six conservationists to be recognised this year for their achievements in nature conservation.

Nine years ago, Gabriela inherited the programme from primatologist Claudio Padua, Founder of IPÊ and the first Brazilian to win a Whitley Award, in 1999. Based in the westernmost tip of São Paulo state, the project's primary base is the Pontal do Paranapanema region, which holds the largest forest remnant of interior Atlantic Forest – one of the last global biodiversity hotspots, and home to the endemic black lion tamarin.

Once spanning over 1.3million km<sup>2</sup>, only 14% of the Atlantic Forest now remains due to land conversion for vast sugar cane plantations and cattle ranches. With just 1,600 black lion tamarins left in the wild, their remaining habitat is now highly fragmented, with populations split among forest patches.

Gabriela and her team work to connect these scattered black lion tamarin populations by partnering communities to restore forest corridors that connect the fragmented patches of habitat. Through tree planting with saplings grown in community-run nurseries, Gabriela's approach provides jobs for some of Brazil's most marginalised communities. Together they have already restored Brazil's largest tree corridor for wildlife.

Whitley Award funding will allow Gabriela to replant more corridors and relocate black lion tamarins to suitable forest fragments as part of a plan to prevent genetic inbreeding and ensure these small primates have the space they need to thrive. Installing artificial sleeping sites using nest boxes in the corridors will encourage movement between forest patches, and technologies such as camera traps and GPS collars will help Gabriela and her team to track populations and inform conservation actions.

Initially, the black lion tamarin was not well known in the region, but education efforts have helped instil pride for the species. With her Whitley Award, this awareness raising will continue through education and field experiences.

IPÊ's efforts are more important than ever as Brazil's government continues to undermine environmental policies. With a goal to establish 45,000 ha of continuous forest, Gabriela and IPÊ are directly combating climate change using nature-based solutions in a country where deforestation and largescale development are occurring at unprecedented rates.

Gabriela recalls the first time she saw a black lion tamarin in the wild: "I was filming with the BBC for one of Sir David Attenborough's documentaries. When I watched the interview footage back there was sparkle in my eye when the black lion tamarin appeared in the distance.

"They are the only primate species endemic to São Paulo so, as residents of this state, we have a responsibility to conserve their existence. I am extremely thankful that the Whitley Award will help us to continue to do just that."

Edward Whitley, Founder of WFN, said: "We are proud to have supported and partnered with IPÊ for the last two decades. The spectacular black lion tamarin is now better protected thanks to the flagship project started by Claudio Padua, which continues to prosper under Gabriela's direction. We are thrilled to continue supporting efforts to protect this species and restore Brazil's Atlantic Forest."

Gabriela is among six conservationists to receive 2020 Whitley Awards to support their work to conserve some of the planet's most endangered species. While normally presented to winners by charity Patron HRH The Princess Royal at an annual Ceremony in London, the 2020 Whitley Awards Ceremony was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the winners will receive their funding now, they will be invited to attend a ceremony and related events in London later this year to celebrate their achievements, should circumstances allow.

This year's Whitley Gold Award honours Brazilian conservationist Patrícia Medici, also of IPÊ, for her outstanding dedication to protecting South America's largest land mammal, the lowland tapir, using it as a flagship for largescale habitat preservation. Patrícia is a world expert in the science of tapir conservation and has dedicated her life to shedding light on this unusual looking, yet little-known species. Against a backdrop of political and environmental instability in Brazil, her work is more important than ever. The Whitley Gold Award enables the expansion of her work to the embattled Amazon.

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

#### **The 2020 Whitley Award winners are:**

- **Abdullahi Hussein Ali** – A landscape-level approach to conserve the hirola antelope, Kenya
- **Gabriela Rezende** – Connecting populations of black lion tamarins in the Atlantic Forest, Brazil
- **Jeanne Tarrant** – A country-wide strategy for South African amphibians
- **Phuntsho Thinley** – Stepping up patrols to preserve the endangered alpine musk deer, Bhutan
- **Rachel Ashebofe Ikemeh** – Advancing participatory conservation action for rare chimpanzees, Nigeria
- **YokYok (Yoki) Hadiprakarsa** – Saving the last stronghold of the Helmeted Hornbill, Indonesia

**The 2020 Whitley Gold Award winner is:**

- **Patricia Medici** – Tapirs as conservation flagships, Brazil

**ENDS**

**Press materials available:**

- Copyright-cleared photographs of this project, including crediting information where needed, will be available here:  
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/wusgM3rp1Xm1DMxC9>
- Tailor-made films featuring the winner narrated by WFN Trustee, Sir David Attenborough, will be released later this year. Contact Chloe Baker e: [chloe@weareliquid.com](mailto:chloe@weareliquid.com) or Becky Jukes e: [becky@weareliquid.com](mailto:becky@weareliquid.com) for more information.

**Notes to Editors:**

- The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) is a UK registered charity that provides funding, profile and training to grassroots conservation leaders across the Global South.
- 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.
- Whitley Awards are normally presented to winners by charity Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, at an annual Ceremony in London. In 2020, the Ceremony has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be instead held in December, if the situation allows.
- 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 27 years ago, the Whitley Fund for Nature has given £17million to more than 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), the Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). This year, WFN received 112 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.
- Whitley Award winners receive professional media and communications training, network 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.
- The 2020 Whitley Awards week events are generously sponsored by Earlymarket LLP, Whitley Awards Partner.
- 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: Anne Reece; Arcus Foundation; The Frank Brake Charitable Trust; The William Brake Charitable Trust; The Badenoch Fund; The Corcoran Foundation; Earlymarket LLP; The Evolution Education Trust; Global Wildlife Conservation; The Britta & Jeremy Lloyd Family Charitable Trust; Lund Trust, a charitable fund of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing; MAVA Foundation; Charles and Ruth Plowden; The Foundation for the Promotion of Wellbeing; The Rabelais Trust; The Reed Foundation; The Rufford Foundation; The Schroder Foundation; Fondation Segré; The Shears Foundation; The Constance Travis Charitable Trust; The Waterloo Foundation; Matthew and Lucinda Webber; Garfield Weston Foundation; Whitley Animal Protection Trust; the Friends and Scottish Friends of Whitley Fund for Nature; all our partners and supporters and those donors who have chosen to give anonymously.