



Press release

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Global conservation heroes honoured with prestigious Whitley Awards

April 2020

UK charity Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) has recognised seven of the world's leading grassroots conservationists for their outstanding dedication to protecting endangered wildlife and threatened habitats.

The highly competitive Whitley Awards – also known as the ‘Green Oscars’ – support grassroots conservationists from the Global South, and are the culmination of an international search to find some of the world's most effective conservation leaders. This year, work to safeguard black lion tamarin monkeys (Brazil), Helmeted Hornbills (Indonesia), rare amphibians (South Africa), chimpanzees (Nigeria), hirola antelope (Kenya), and alpine musk deer (Bhutan) will benefit.

While the Awards are 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. Despite the current situation, this year's winners have each been awarded £40,000 in project funding to allow them to expand their vital work. The Award will boost their profile both in the UK and internationally, presenting opportunities to leverage new connections and gain further investment, and they will be invited to attend a ceremony and related events in London later this year to celebrate their achievements, should circumstances allow.

Since its founding in 1993, WFN has given £17million 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 combatting illegal wildlife trade in Indonesia, to protecting a newly discovered group of chimpanzees in Nigeria, to reforestation efforts to safeguard habitat and fight climate change in Brazil. With the world's biodiversity in steep decline, and the intertwined threat of climate change, the funding

comes at a critical time to support those on the frontlines of the global environmental crisis.

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

This year's Whitley Gold Award, the charity's top prize, honours previous Whitley Award winner and Brazilian conservationist Patrícia Medici, who has been awarded £60,000 in recognition of her outstanding dedication to protecting South America's largest land mammal, the Lowland Tapir.

Patrícia won her Whitley Award in 2008 and received further funding from WFN in 2011 and 2014. She is a world expert in the science of tapir conservation, leading the largest tapir study in the world to shed light on this unusual looking, little-known species. The Whitley Gold Award will enable Patricia and her team to expand their work to the embattled Amazon, which faces unprecedented deforestation rates. Against a backdrop of political and environmental instability in Brazil, Patrícia's project includes mapping routes used by tapirs and using reforestation activities to connect fragmented areas of forest. She also engages communities through environmental education programmes, using tapir as a flagship for largescale habitat preservation.

Charity Patron, HRH The Princess Royal said: "The Whitley Fund for Nature chooses leaders who have a real understanding of the challenges facing local people, which is especially important in these very worrying economic times. Their goal is to enable people to understand why conservation is so important and to empower them to support global efforts to protect the environment."

Edward Whitley, Founder of WFN, said: "We are honoured to be able to recognise and support the vital conservation work of this year's Whitley Award winners. Their commitment to protecting threatened wildlife through programmes that also benefit people gives us real hope for the future of our planet in what has been an unprecedented year. We would like to welcome them to our network of winners and look forward to seeing their projects grow."

Visit 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:

Patrícia Medici – Tapirs as conservation flagships, Brazil

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Press materials available:

- Copyright-cleared photographs of the winners' projects will be available here. Please include image credit information where included in the file name: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/M4UQ6qvrAHxXkG7R6>
- 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 or Becky Jukes e: 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.

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