We are delighted to welcome you to the 2024 Whitley Awards Ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society. Thank you for joining us as we celebrate this year’s remarkable Whitley Award winners.

Last year marked 30 years since our charity was formed, and tonight we are celebrating our 30th Whitley Awards Ceremony. After three decades, our vision remains steadfast: to create a future where communities and wildlife thrive together on a healthy planet, and we know that it is only together, through the many collaborations and partnerships that make our charity the success that it is, that we can achieve this. This is why the theme for this evening’s Ceremony is #SharedFuture.

As ever, it is our winners who remain our greatest inspiration. It is their tenacity that reinvigorates our work year after year – and it is your generous support that enables us to channel vital funds to their projects so that they can deliver their effective, sustainable and equitable solutions alongside local and indigenous communities in their home countries.

Tonight, we are delighted to welcome six new inspiring Whitley Award winners to our Winner Network of more than 200 conservationists working across 80 countries. These individuals, working in some of the most biodiverse yet vulnerable places on Earth, each demonstrate a commitment to protecting wildlife and habitats through community-led solutions that is beyond admirable, and gives us reason to be optimistic.

Their sense of endurance at this critical moment in the battle to save biodiversity is what drives our own ambition to continue developing the ways that we support their mission. In this context we are delighted to announce that we are increasing the value of each Whitley Award to £50,000.

In addition, this week we are hosting a series of events to celebrate their remarkable achievements for people, wildlife, and climate. We are also providing networking opportunities and communications training to help bolster the success of their Whitley Award win.

Over the following pages, you will see how our Awards are designed to provide maximum leverage. We supply each winner with PR support and training, as well as access to our laddered Continuation Funding grants as their projects progress. Perhaps most importantly, we introduce them to our dedicated network of fellow alumni across the globe – ensuring they no longer feel alone in tackling the challenges our planet faces.

We are also honoured to be commemorating 25 years of support from our Royal Patron. Over this time HRH The Princess Royal has supported us as we transformed the charity from something of a pipe dream to the vibrant and effective team of committed conservationists you see today. The backing Her Royal Highness provides winners is invaluable to their platform and credibility.

Knowing that you too, our fantastic donors, remain at our side truly gives us hope for our continuing work and galvanises us as we take the first step into our next 30 years. Thank you for your committed and generous support of the charity and our winners.

We hope you all enjoy celebrating the new cohort of Whitley Award winners, whose accomplishments we look forward to following over the years to come.

EDWARD WHITLEY, OBE
FOUNDER | WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE
To halt and reverse the loss of Earth’s biodiversity and wild places, working alongside local people to create a future where communities and wildlife thrive together on a healthy planet.

Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) is a fundraising and grant-giving nature conservation charity. Established in 1993, it has channelled £23 million to more than 200 conservation leaders in 80 countries across the Global South, benefitting wildlife, landscapes, and people.

We will achieve our mission by:

1. Providing funding, recognition and training to proven grassroots conservation leaders working across the Global South.
2. Supporting the growth and scale up of impactful conservation solutions backed by science.
3. Raising the profile of conservationists’ work and their ability to effect positive environmental change.
WFN gives three types of grants that enable grassroots conservationists to scale up their work and protect threatened wildlife.

Three decades ago, WFN became a pioneer in the sector as one of the first charities to channel funding to locally-led projects in the Global South. We support courageous changemakers who are partnering with communities in their home countries to conserve wildlife and address climate change at the grassroots.

Our rigorous and renowned application process identifies inspiring individuals with staying power, who combine the latest science with tenacious leadership and a collaborative approach. Through laddered funding, we provide conservationists with a sustainable means of growing their impact.

The charity’s flagship prizes, Whitley Awards are won competitively each year following a worldwide search. Applications are assessed by an expert panel, and winners receive £50,000 in project funding over one year. In addition, the awards provide profile, new connections and training – all tools that winners can use to better protect the natural world.

Continuation Funding is available to Whitley Award alumni. These follow-on grants, worth up to £100,000 over two years enable the expansion of effective projects. They allow winners to strategise over the longer-term, respond to changing needs, and work together with one another to replicate conservation solutions.

Each year, a past Whitley Award winner receives our top prize, the Whitley Gold Award, to recognise their outstanding contribution to conservation. Gold Award winners are international advocates for biodiversity, spearheading large scale, collaborative projects and acting as mentors to new Whitley Award winners. The prize is worth £180,000.

Whitley Award winners receive media training in print, radio and TV, and professional speech coaching. This helps them to effectively communicate their work to an international audience and capitalise on the media spotlight following their win. Winners also report an uptake in media interest within their home countries, often leading to front page coverage in national and regional newspapers.

WFN provides online and in-person training in some of the core skills necessary to the delivery of successful projects including project design, monitoring, and evaluation. In addition to ongoing career development assistance, all winners gain access to pro-bono legal support from the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the opportunity to apply for funding to explore a legal issue, provided by Richard Buxton Solicitors.

We hold events for winners to network with contacts they could partner with in future to cultivate success – including potential funders, collaborators, journalists, their country Ambassadors and members of UK and international conservation NGOs. Whitley Award winners spend the week together with their cohort, forming strong bonds that flourish well beyond the ceremony.

Winning the Whitley Award means knowing that you can carry out the work you dreamed of with the funds in hand.

LIZA GADSBY, 1996 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER
Continuation Funding awards are follow-on grants that allow past Whitley Award winners to scale-up their conservation work and address new challenges.

Recognising that conservation doesn’t happen overnight and requires sustained support, winners tell us that the ability to reapply for further funding provides a vital lifeline.

Our Continuation Funding grants are worth up to £100,000 over two years and are awarded to past Whitley Award winners poised to scale up.

In many cases, this funding is key to the sustainability of successful projects and vital to securing further species protections that help to stabilise fragile populations beyond the borders of initial project sites.

These follow-on grants give winners access to long term layered funding opportunities that enable the expansion of effective projects at a manageable pace, as well as providing crucial financial support, and increased accessibility to collaboration with other conservationists.

There is no limit to the number of times that Whitley Award alumni can apply for these annual awards, with many winners having developed their projects over decades thanks to the support of multiple rounds of Continuation Funding.

In addition to these competitively applied for grants, Whitley Award alumni can also apply for funding to explore legal help from Richard Buxton Solicitors to support them through navigating challenging legal issues relating to the delivery of the projects.

We are so grateful to the donors who directly support our Continuation Funding programme to make these impactful grants possible – thank you!

The Continuation Funding scheme makes WFN unique, as it assures maintenance of long-term conservation initiatives. I can’t imagine a better and more efficient way in which WFN could help us.

Jose Sarasola,
2019 Whitley Award Winner

Being part of the WFN family makes it feel like our conservation goals are supported not only for the golden moment of winning the award but through the continuing support, so that we can actually achieve them!

Ir Budiono,
2012 Whitley Award Winner

CONTINUATION FUNDING IN 2023

To close our 30th anniversary year, WFN awarded £1.4 million in Continuation Funding in 2023 – our largest ever round of funding! Responding to the growing needs of winners, the latest round of Continuation Funding is supporting:

16 past winners of Whitley Awards with a total of £1,400,000 in grants

SUPPORTING LOCALLY-LED PROJECTS IN 20 countries with conservation leaders working across 220,974km² of land and sea

This round of funding will benefit biodiversity across a range of biomes, covering 17 different habitat types

Additionally, five applicants were awarded legal funding provided by Richard Buxton Solicitors worth £19,000

Continuation Fund recipients are making a global impact through ecosystem restoration and population recovery of endangered species, growing their projects nationally to connect habitat fragments, control invasive species and tackle wildlife crime, and internationally to build multi-level partnerships and alliances, secure wider legal protections and improve law enforcement to protect migratory species across air and ocean.

The proven approaches of the 2023 Continuation Funding recipients focus on a range of solutions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, these include: working with farmers to switch to more sustainable agricultural practices; supporting alternative livelihoods across a range of community driven initiatives; and training horticulturists, forest guardians and rangers. One of the more unusual approaches sees professional dentistry made more accessible to indigenous communities in North Sumatra through an innovative payment system – tree seedlings in exchange for treatment!

Find out more about the 2023 Continuation Funding awardees by scanning the QR code below:
GLOBAL WINNER PROJECTS

Each year, new Whitley Award winners join our international network of influential conservationists leading projects in some of the most biodiverse places on Earth.

WFN is the epitome of the global network, the commitment, and the important works at the local level that unites us all globally.

DAMI BUCHORI, 2021 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

725m+ hectares of WFN-funded project sites
£23m awarded in funding
220 conservationists
80+ countries
WINNER NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

The Programme has three core goals:

1. Build connections to create a supportive and resilient network of winners
2. Strengthen capacity across the Global South, including through peer-to-peer approaches
3. Promote collaboration to increase the scope and impact of winner projects

Winners are connected through regular correspondence, in-person training and exchange visits, where they can share information, experiences, and encouragement to drive collective conservation impact. Funding for collaborative work through Continuation and Gold Award projects, and travel bursaries for training and international conferences strengthen the capacity of conservation leaders on-the-ground, ensuring they have the necessary resources and tools to succeed.

Through a thriving, active and supportive network of Whitley Award alumni, WFN aims to maximise conservation impact by facilitating South-South collaboration.

Following the Awards week, winners join a global community of peers with whom they can share knowledge, experiences, and encouragement to drive collective conservation impact.

WFN’s Winner Network has become one of the charity’s strengths and key areas of focus, rooted in the importance of listening and responding to winners’ needs and supporting collaboration across the peer network – with a vision to bring about long-term, positive conservation outcomes as a group.

The Winner Network Development programme facilitates cooperation, training, and knowledge-exchange across a network of more than 200 Whitley Award alumni spanning 80 Global South countries. The programme facilitates knowledge sharing through regional and thematic groups chaired by Winners themselves. By creating a safe space where alumni can exchange wisdom, share success and learnings between peers, the programme aims to foster an active group of conservationists poised to scale up innovative solutions that are proven to work, and provide much needed support when things aren’t going as planned, thus allowing leaders to pivot amid challenging circumstances.

Regional Winner Training

In 2022, we held our first in-person training at Mpala Research Centre in Kenya, bringing together 14 Africa-based winners for a week of learning exchange, networking and idea sharing based on their stated needs and own experiences.

Last year, our second training week was hosted by IPÊ in Brazil, where 13 winners from across Latin America had the opportunity to meet with other conservation leaders who have faced similar challenges and share an enthusiasm for consolidating their knowledge of best practices. Many of those in attendance represented 20 or more years of experience in their field. We’re excited to take our regional training to winners in Asia & Europe in 2024, before cycling round once more.

These in-person training opportunities are important to connect and inspire alumni, many of whom work in isolated and tough environments. The training covers topics sought after by conservationists including NGO management, measuring impact, and fundraising.

Open sessions also allowed participants to share their experience of challenging topics such as burnout and succession planning. Opportunities to connect and share knowledge, enable conservation solutions to be replicated around the world, increasing the impact of conservation projects, improving biodiversity protection and enhancing the efficacy of those spearheading ethical community-led programmes.

100% of participants in our inaugural regional winner training agreed they were confident in applying what they had learnt to their conservation work.

99% of winners participating in our 2023 Impact Assessment survey said winning a Whitley Award enabled them to expand or scale up their conservation work.

80% of winners participating in the Impact survey said winning a Whitley Award increased access to other conservationists internationally.

75% of winners stated that they gained knowledge, skills, or advice from other members of the Winner Network.

What I’ve learned [from the training] is not only important for me, but for my team and my whole organisation.

YULIANA BEDOLLA, 2023 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

“
Global Media Spotlight

Whitley Award winners are championed through a global PR campaign that helps to accelerate conservation success.

Alongside their project funding, Whitley Award winners are supported with media training and press opportunities to increase awareness and recognition of their work. An international PR campaign, planned and managed by WFN, capitalises on the heightened interest that their award generates. At the heart of this campaign is the Award Ceremony, which is attended by high-profile Ambassadors, including WFN Ambassador, Sir David Attenborough. The ceremony offers a unique opportunity for Press, radio and TV interviews at the ceremony, and also a week of interviews with winners and Ambassadors, maximising Press opportunities to increase awareness and influence development in the region. It also capitalises on the heightened interest that their award generates, which continues to bolster project funding.

Drawing upon our wide-reaching media relations and partnerships, WFN assists winners during awards week by securing press interviews during their stay and offering support with pre-peak briefing and coaching on an interview-by-interview basis. This increased visibility draws attention to environmental issues and builds local pride in projects on-the-ground, increasing community participation. It helps winners to inspire philanthropic support from new sources, kick-starting a snowball effect that continues to bolster project funding.

High profile Ambassadors give credibility to the Whitley Award winners’ stories and help us to gain the attention of the public, potential supporters, and the media. They embody our belief that we can all make a difference.

We are grateful to all our Ambassadors for their amazing support.

Publicity materials are distributed to the UK and overseas media, including professional press releases and talkie media created by Silverback Films® and narrated by WFN Ambassador, Sir David Attenborough. This, alongside endorsement from high profile supporters including WFN’s Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, and our Ambassadors, further raises Winners’ profile and credibility, helping winners to influence environmental policy on a regional, national and international scale.

The WFN team also produces and distributes digital toolkits to a network of media partners, helping to leverage social media support. Winners’ work is amplified across our own digital communications, including our website, e-newsletter and @WhitleyAwards social media platforms which have global reach.

By enabling winners to leverage their success, together we can accelerate a conservationist’s career.

Follow us at: X 1 0 6 @WhitleyAwards

The international recognition can, as it did in my case, uplift the organisation and project recognition to the national level, which may speed up certain processes to achieve our conservation objectives.

IR BUDIONO, 2012 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

100% of winners tell us that winning a Whitley Award increased their profile.

70% of winners felt the Award increased access to in-country media.

84% of winners say the Award increased access to international donors.

79% of winners say they have influenced in-country policy.

—-

Ambassadors

High profile Ambassadors give credibility to the Whitley Award winners’ stories and help us to gain the attention of the public, potential supporters, and the media. They embody our belief that we can all make a difference.

We are grateful to all our Ambassadors for their amazing support.

Sir David Attenborough

Britain’s best-known natural history filmmaker, Sir David Attenborough, has long been an ambassador of WFN, formerly serving as a Trustee between 2005 - 2023. Every year, Sir David narrates short films for each Whitley Award winner, which are broadcast during our Award Ceremony and given to winners to showcase their work in their home countries. Originally a zoologist and geologist by training, Sir David has travelled to some of the world’s most remote regions, and is an enthusiastic advocate of international action to conserve our planet. Sir David says: “We need the work of Whitley Award winners to succeed and to help them to whatever extent possible.”

Tom Heap

Tom Heap compères the Whitley Awards Ceremony, alongside fellow WFN Ambassador, Kate Humble. Tom is an investigative journalist who has been reporting on science and the environment for more than 25 years. He has spotlighted WFN alumni on Radio 4’s Costing the Earth and moderated panel sessions at our events including talks about nature-based solutions to help save the planet. Tom says: “By working with effective conservation leaders around the world, the Whitley Fund for Nature, increases the abundance and variety of plant and animal life on our planet: that’s why I support it.”

Alastair Fothergill

This year, Alastair Fothergill and his team of world class wildlife filmmakers at Silverback Films Ltd have produced our Winner films that are screened during the Awards Ceremony. Alastair is the producer of landmark BBC series such as Planet Earth, The Blue Planet and recently of Channel One’s Wild Isles – the making of which he gave a headline talk about at our 30th anniversary Summit in 2023. Alastair says: “I am very proud to support WFN. Again this year, what they’ve achieved. The Whitley Awards ceremony is an incredibly uplifting and inspiring evening.”

Kate Humble

Award ceremony compère Kate Humble has supported WFN through hosting various events and media work, including our 25th anniversary Hope Gala. She joins Tom Heap at the Awards ceremony each year to celebrate our new winners. In 2023 she gave a special interview alongside The Princess Royal reflecting on WFN’s 30 years history. Kate says: “Every year I’m blown away by the Whitley Award winners – what they’ve overcome, what they’ve achieved. The Whitley Awards ceremony is an incredibly uplifting and inspiring evening.”

Danielle de Niese

Hailed as “opera’s coolest soprano” by New York Times Magazine, Danielle de Niese is a prolific recording artist, TV and media personality, and has appeared on the world’s most prestigious opera and concert stages. Offstage, she is passionate about music education and inclusivity, and is an advocate for children’s rights, as well as for protecting our planet for the future. She joined the ambassador programme in 2023.

Lord Robin Russell

Robin is an international environmentalist and businessman who has been a leader in the nexus between corporate conservation philanthropy in the UK and environmental organisations. He has worked extensively on conservation issues and was one of the founders of Elephant Family. Over the years, Robin has supported WFN in a multitude of ways particularly around our fundraising campaigns.
2023 WINNERS
IN THE PRESS

Working closely with individual winners, we use our PR expertise to identify key areas of our alumni’s career journeys and project work to pitch exclusive stories to high profile UK and international media, helping them to gain new outreach opportunities. Following the 2023 Whitley Award Ceremony, more than 60 media outlets published stories celebrating the year’s Award and sharing our winner announcements and celebrating the year’s award recipients.

2023 GOLD AWARD WINNER PUBLICITY

One of the most heart-warming experiences for me was when the Whitley Fund for Nature honoured our team with the Whitley Gold Award this year... Standing on stage alongside six of our team members and accepting the award together is a memory that will stay with me forever.

SHIVANI BHALLA, 2023 GOLD AWARD WINNER

Forbes

Restoring Lake Victoria’s ecology to reduce gender-based violence

How Can People Learn To Live With Cameroon’s Rare ‘Indomitable’ Lions?

BBC NEWS

BBC Focus on Africa: Featuring 2023 Whitley Award winners Serge Alexis Kamgang and Shivani Bhalla.

Shivani Bhalla on tracking lions: ‘You get to know them so well’

The Washington Post

Protect the Lions, Help the People, Save the Planet

THE TIMES

How to Save Africa’s Lions? Ask the Men Who Used to Hunt Them

Bloomberg

Protect the Lions, Help the People, Save the Planet

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

Shivani Bhalla on tracking lions: ‘You get to know them so well’

BBC NEWS

Protect the Lions, Help the People, Save the Planet: Shivani Bhalla
Welcome to the
WHITLEY AWARDS
2024

CEREMONY PROGRAMME

6.30PM
RECEPTION

7.30PM
CEREMONY
Tom Heap & Kate Humble, Compères
Edward Whitley, Founder
Finalist speeches, and films narrated by Sir David Attenborough
Presentation of the Awards by HRH The Princess Royal
Announcement of the Whitley Gold Award
HRH The Princess Royal, Patron

8.30PM
CELEBRATION & LIGHT SUPPER

SPEAKERS

PATRON, HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL

The Princess Royal has been Patron of the Whitley Fund for Nature since 1999. During her 25 years as Patron, she has met over 100 Whitley Award winners, and has visited recipient projects in Brazil, Croatia, Colombia, Malaysia, China, and Ghana to see their work first-hand.

COMPÈRE, TOM HEAP

WFN Ambassador Tom Heap is an investigative journalist and well-known television and radio presenter, using his platform to draw attention to the issues facing our planet and to advocate for solutions. He is presenter of Sky News’ The Climate Show With Tom Heap, the principal voice of BBC Radio 4’s Costing the Earth, and he presents his latest show, Rare Earth, with Helen Czerski.

COMPÈRE, KATE HUMBLE

WFN Ambassador Kate Humble is best known for her work on programmes such as Springwatch, Countryfile, Lambing Live and recently, Kate Humble’s Coast of Britain. Kate also runs Humble by Nature, a rural skills school on a working farm in the Wye Valley and published her latest book, Where the Hearth Is: Stories of home in 2023.

WHITLEY GOLD AWARD WINNER, PURNIMA DEVI BARMAN

Purnima Devi Barman is the Senior Project Manager of Aaranyak’s Avifauna Research and Conservation Division in India. With Whitley Award support and WFN Continuation Funding, Purnima has partnered with landowners to safeguard the Greater Adjutant stork and its wetland habitat, and empowered a movement of thousands of ‘stork sister’ women to encourage human-wildlife coexistence. She has been recognised with the Whitley Gold Award as she scales up her work to encompass the bird’s global range.

WITH MANY THANKS TO SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

WFN Ambassador and Narrator of the 2024 Winner Films

Britain’s best-known natural history filmmaker, Sir David Attenborough’s distinguished career in broadcasting spans 70 years. Sir David inspires audiences around the world to preserve our planet, through groundbreaking series such as BBC’s Planet Earth II, Netflix’s Our Planet, and most recently, Wild Isles, which combine stunning footage with sombre truths about humanity’s impact on the environment.

FOUNDER, EDWARD WHITLEY

The Whitley Awards were established by Edward Whitley in 1993. Since then, the Whitley Fund for Nature has grown to become an established charity, funding over 200 grassroots conservationists in 80 countries across the Global South. Edward was awarded an OBE in 2013 in recognition of his services to wildlife conservation.

WITH MANY THANKS
TO SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

WFN Ambassador and Narrator of the 2024 Winner Films

Sir David Attenborough’s distinguished career in broadcasting spans 70 years. Sir David inspires audiences around the world to preserve our planet, through groundbreaking series such as BBC’s Planet Earth II, Netflix’s Our Planet, and most recently, Wild Isles, which combine stunning footage with sombre truths about humanity’s impact on the environment.

19
This year, WFN received 98 Whitley Award applications from 46 countries. We would like to thank our Judging Panel and External Assessors, who kindly offer their expertise voluntarily to decide the final shortlist.

**JUDGING PANEL**

Edward Whitley, OBE  
Founder and Chair of Trustees, WFN

Kasia Brookes, MSc  
Head of Grants, WFN

Marianne Carter, MSc  
Director, Conservation Capacity and Leadership, FFI

Catherine Faulks  
Trustee, WFN

Damian Fleming, MSc  
Deputy Practice Leader for Forests, WWF International

Luxmy Gopal  
Presenter and reporter, BBC News

Danni Parks, MSc  
Director, WFN

Dr. Andrew Terry  
Director of Conservation and Policy, ZSL

Dr. Paul Barnes  
Programme Manager, EDGE of Existence Programme, ZSL

Dr. Shilani Bhalla  
Founder and Director of Ewaso Lions, 2023 Whitley Gold Award winner

Dr. Simon Lister  
Chair of Conservation, International, UK

Dr. Ximena Velez-Liendo  
Principle Researcher PROMETA; 2017 Whitley Award winner

**EXTERNAL ASSESSORS**

**Application origin**

- Africa 55% (54)
- Asia 23% (22)
- Americas 16% (16)
- Europe 6% (6)

**Application focus**

- Terrestrial 87% (85)
- Marine 8% (8)
- Freshwater 5% (5)

**Gender (applicants identifying as)**

- Male 67% (66)
- Female 33% (32)

**Total applications – 98**

**INTRODUCING THE WINNERS**

1. Leroy Ignacio  
   Guyana
2. Naomi Longa  
   Papua New Guinea
3. Kuenzang Dorji  
   Bhutan
4. Aristide Kama  
   Cameroon
5. Raju Acharya  
   Nepal
6. Fernanda Abra  
   Brazil
7. Purnima Devi Barman  
   India
Through winning the Whitley Award, we want to bring more recognition to Indigenous people who assist international researchers and highlight their ability to lead their own research and conservation initiatives.

The Endangered Red Siskin has become an emblematic species for conservation in Guyana since its scientific discovery in the South Rupununi savannah – a discovery that inspired the founding of one of the country's first indigenous-led conservation NGOs, the South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS). Previously, this brightly coloured bird was only known to exist in limited areas of Venezuela, where it faces extinction due to habitat destruction and illegal trapping. Leroy and his team will continue to protect the local Red Siskin population by using his Whitley Award to:

- Double the size of the Red Siskin Community-Based Conservation Management zone to 150,000 hectares
- Train community members in methods to reduce habitat destruction and improve the monitoring and effectiveness of the conservation zone
- Develop a legal framework for this site, including a co-management agreement between communities and government
- Raise awareness of the Red Siskin at the local, national, and international level through educational and engagement programmes
- Publish a paper on lessons learned from the project, to enable the sharing of information with other communities and stakeholders interested in developing community-based conservation initiatives

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

In 2000, a population of the Endangered Red Siskin was ‘scientifically’ discovered in the South Rupununi savannah, Guyana, by a group of friends from local Indigenous communities accompanied by international scientists. Leroy and his team say that the Red Siskin was ‘scientifically’ discovered in Guyana in 2000, as prior to this, the local communities were already aware of the presence of the bird and had a Wapichan (local language) name for it. The SRCS recognises the importance of a long-term and multi-generational approach to working with local people. Knowledge about the habitat and wildlife is shared between elders and youth, inspiring a feeling of pride and ownership of the Red Siskin and their land.

REIGNITING TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Since work began, illegal trapping of these birds has been eliminated in Guyana and the population has stabilised. However the Red Siskin’s grassland habitat is threatened by fires which are lit at suboptimal times and often end up in an uncontrolled state. If the fires destroy the siskin’s habitat during the nesting season, this negatively impacts their population. The frequency of fire is also now increasing due to climate change, amplifying the need for controlled burning. By holding focus groups to better understand traditional burning habits versus modern day practices, the team will then train rangers from each community to complete prescribed burning throughout the year to protect the Red Siskin’s habitat.

CO-MANAGEMENT

Like many endangered species in Guyana, the range of the Red Siskin occurs across both indigenous-titled land and state land. Whilst an Indigenous community can create rules and protect the species on their own land, they cannot do this on adjacent state land. Where the government does not have the resources to monitor the state land, biodiversity is often negatively impacted. A co-management plan is therefore necessary, which can also invite an opportunity for paid employment for local people (as rangers, or managing ecotourism initiatives), allowing Indigenous communities to receive financial compensation for directly preserving their biodiversity. Successful implementation of the co-management plan for the Red Siskin could allow for replication across the country to benefit other wildlife and communities.
Winning the Whitley Award is an incredible honour and a validation of my work in protecting the globally significant coral reefs of my country.

Located within the western Pacific Ocean’s Coral Triangle, Kimbe Bay is an area of staggering marine biodiversity which contains 76% (605) of the world’s coral reef species and 800 species of fish. The Coral Triangle also provides food and livelihoods for more than 120 million people. This marine region, however, is under threat from overfishing, habitat degradation and climate change. Naomi and her team at The Sea Women of Melanesia work directly with local communities, primarily women, to design and implement Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) to allow reefs to recover. With her Whitley Award, Naomi will:

- Create 4 new LMMAs with the local communities, expanding their coverage around Kimbe Bay
- Engage and train 10 women in 5 local villages to monitor coral reefs
- Establish a local marine conservation committee in each of the communities, with equal representation of men and women
- Reduce destructive fishing practices such as dynamite and overfishing, and drive a transition towards sustainable practices such as no-take zones, selective fishing gear and traditional methods like spear and handlines
- Provide a blueprint for similar women-led initiatives to enable the replication of this work across the Eastern Coral Triangle

Collaboration for Corals
Kimbe Bay provides habitat for four Critically Endangered, 11 Endangered and 173 Vulnerable marine species. Of the 173 Vulnerable species, 159 are scleractinian (stony) corals. Naomi and her team train local women to monitor the reefs using snorkelling gear, with some women also taught to scuba-dive. They collaborate and share their monitoring data with ReefCloud, a digital tool that uses artificial intelligence and advanced analysis to rapidly extract and share data from images of coral reefs around the world. The data is freely available to government, other NGOs working within the area, and the local community.

Customary tenure systems
In Papua New Guinea, 97% of the land and coastal regions fall under traditional and customary tenure systems, which means that Indigenous and local communities play a key role in resource management. However, the increasing challenges of habitat degradation, urbanisation, agricultural run-off, and climate change have driven many communities towards destructive fishing practices and overfishing. Local people are noticing a decline in fish stocks and are asking for help. There are few effective marine protected areas in the Kimbe region and the government and NGOs desperately need to address this by establishing more Locally Managed Marine Areas that recognise the need of combine traditional knowledge with western science.

A wave of women leaders
The Kimbe marine reserve development project is part of Naomi’s vision to extend a female driven marine conservation model around Papua New Guinea and the Eastern Coral Triangle. Melanesia is divided into patrilineal and matrilineal societies and women have specific roles in communities and households. It is important to understand and respect the cultural norm while advocating for gender equality and empowerment of women. Many women in the target communities have limited access to decision making processes though are keen to be involved in conservation work. SeaWomen of Melanesia have created an effective programme that is flexible to accommodate societal norms, while having proven success in marine ecosystem recovery and the sustainable management of marine resources. By providing continuous mentorship and skills development to empower women to take leadership roles within their communities, they hope to start a wave which will encourage other women to drive positive change.
Happiness should extend beyond human wellbeing to encompass harmony among all living beings, including animals coexisting with local communities.

KUENZANG DORJI

KUENZANG DORJI

As a Himalayan nation, Bhutan is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Species with restricted or confined distributions are especially vulnerable to these changes. Climate variability is forcing animals into increasingly confined ecological niches, altering the cropping patterns of local communities, and affecting the seasonal cycles of trees, which serve as a vital food source for langurs. Consequently, langurs have adapted their feeding behaviour, increasingly relying on crops and adjusting to agroecosystems, thereby intensifying interactions and conflict between people and primates.

LANGURS AND LIVELIHOODS

Most subsistence farmers sharing the landscapes with the Gee’s Golden Langur live below the national poverty index, and so are particularly impacted by raids on crops. Traditionally, langurs were venerated by farmers as they were seen as a good omen. Increasing contact, however, has driven farmers to resort to lethal measures to control them. Langur’s growing reliance on crops has impacted both agricultural livelihoods and the wellbeing of women and children, who guard the farms. The protection of crops using deterrents such as sound-emitting tiger models is already yielding results: helping to boost income by protecting as much as 80% of farmer crops while freeing women and children from standing guard over the land.

FUTURE PRIMATOLOGISTS

Representing the Royal Society for Protection of Nature, Kuenzang will work with field foresters from the Department of Forests and Park Services to redefine the role of local people in conservation efforts in Bhutan. Much of the data on golden langur sightings come from citizen scientists using smart phones and Epicollect5, a free mobile data-gathering platform. The help of local people is invaluable, particularly in some of the areas of Bhutan that remain inaccessible due to their remoteness and rugged terrain. The project will also train 30 locals and foresters in primate survey and social research, and provide fellowships to five local students who are keen to pursue research in primatology.
Imagine if our collective existence mirrored the peaceful grace of manatees — a world bathed in harmony and compassion.

ARISTIDE KAMLA

Cameroon’s Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve is recognised as a hotspot for the African manatee, which is listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Around 17,000 people live around Lake Ossa with the majority depending on its resources to survive, including over 300 fishers. In 2016, an invasive plant species known as giant salvinia began to spread rapidly in the lake, covering more than half of its surface in five years. The outbreak is linked to increased nutrient enrichment in the water caused by human activities, while escalating deforestation in the area surrounding the lake has exacerbated its degradation, impacting on the African manatee and local fishing activities.

Using his Whitley Award, Aristide and his team will:

> Reduce salvinia coverage in Lake Ossa, allowing manatees to surface to breathe, and their food plants to grow
> Identify the main sources of nutrient enrichment in Lake Ossa through three additional water quality monitoring campaigns across the Sanaga River watershed
> Deploy an acoustic sensor system to detect and deter artisanal logging activities within riparian forest to reduce nutrient run-off into the lake
> Support fishers to develop fish farming and ecotourism initiatives to reduce their impact on this freshwater ecosystem and decrease accidental capture of manatees by fisheries

WORKING TOGETHER

The African manatee in Lake Ossa is better known than any other African manatee population across their distribution, thanks largely to the work of Aristide. Between 2008 and 2010, he conducted the first observation and traditional ecological knowledge study of manatees in Lake Ossa and the adjacent Sanaga River, relying heavily on the knowledge of local fishermen. The manatees had been a cause of conflict with the fishermen, sometimes becoming entangled in their nets and depleting their catch — but were also targeted by poachers who prized them for their meat, skin, and other body parts. Aristide’s NGO, African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization (AMMCO) has since trained a network of fishermen who voluntarily report sightings of marine mammals through their mobile application, SIREN. Since 2015, AMMCO’s SIREN network has documented over 20,000 sightings of marine wildlife along the coast.

NATURAL SOLUTIONS

The shoreline of Lake Ossa is now dominated by the invasive giant salvinia (Salvinia molesta). This new menace emerged in 2021, covering over 50% of the lake’s surface. Nutrient pollution, likely originating from the Sanaga River, fuelled its proliferation. This environmental disruption led to the displacement of manatees from the lake, a decline in fishing activity, and increased deforestation as fishermen turned to crop farming. To combat giant salvinia, Aristide and his team initiated a biological control approach using a natural and specific predator of the plant (the salvinia weevil), which has successfully reduced its coverage in the lake by 70%. However, due to limited resources, they are still facing challenges in dispersing the weevils in the lake’s more inaccessible areas.

UPSTREAM IMPACTS

Aristide wants to showcase how poor management of the watershed upstream affects aquatic ecosystems and livelihoods downstream. His team has launched a study within the Sanaga River watershed to understand the primary sources of nutrient enrichment and use the data to advocate for integrated water resources management. At the same time, their goal is to improve the livelihoods of the local people by supporting community-managed fish farming and developing opportunities for ecotourism. Cultural festivals such as the Street Manatee will also gather various stakeholders including government representatives, traditional leaders, fishers, universities, researchers, donors and the private sector to address freshwater ecosystem management.

ARISTIDE KAMLA

The African manatee inhabits the coastal and inland waters of 21 countries along Africa’s Atlantic coast.

Since 1970, the world has lost 30% of freshwater ecosystems and has seen an 83% collapse in the populations of freshwater species.
The appreciation from local people and colleagues serves as constant inspiration for me to continue my work.

RAJU ACHARYA

RAJU ACHARYA

Central Nepal comprises forest, farmland, glaciers, and grassland, providing habitat for 19 species of owl. Recognising they are a low conservation priority in the country, Raju Acharya led on the development of the ‘Owl Conservation Action Plan for Nepal’ in 2020. The Action Plan identifies the major threats to owls as hunting, illegal trade, habitat loss and degradation. Using his Whitley Award to help address these threats, Raju and his team at Friends of Nature, Nepal will:

- Conduct 11 training events to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies, policy makers, and local owl envoys to reduce the rate of hunting and trade
- Raise awareness among students and the public with 100 conservation camps to change negative perceptions of owls
- Create five designated catapult free zones, which will safeguard owls across 250km²
- Restore and rehabilitate 1,200 hectares of owl habitat by protecting old trees and installing artificial nests

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Raju’s project area, covering 11 districts of Central Nepal, is inhabited by ten major ethnic groups, each with distinct socio-cultural norms that often cast owls in a bad light. Some groups associate their calls and presence with the occurrence of death, leading to negative perceptions, and as a result they are chased away or hunted with catapults. Conversely, in other areas, owl feathers are regarded as sacred, capable of warding off evil from homes. The goal of the project is to collaborate with all of these ethnic groups to foster broader acceptance and understanding. Since 2012, Raju has been organising the Nepal Owl Festival, which attracts around 5,000 annual visitors and has become one of the country’s largest conservation events.

HOLISTIC CONSERVATION

Nepal has become a hub for the illicit owl trade, with approximately 1,500 owls hunted or traded annually. Drivers include low stakeholder awareness, inadequate law enforcement, illegal hunting for meat and profit, and prevailing myths or traditional beliefs. The 19 species of owl which can be found in the project area include barn owl, rock eagle owl, spot-bellied eagle owl, brown fish owl, mountain scops owl, Eurasian eagle owl, little owl, jungle owlet and brown hawk owl. While all species are currently listed as being of Least Concern by the IUCN, some are Data-Deficient or under threat within Nepal. Raju recognises the danger of focusing conservation efforts solely on highly threatened flagship species and the need to be proactive when other species are also at risk. A holistic approach that targets resources towards less prominent species is necessary for maintaining biodiversity.

PROTECTING OLD TREES

Indiscriminate felling of old trees and the absence of nesting locations in semi-urban areas further exacerbate the risks to owls. Cavities in mature or old trees can serve as natural nesting, breeding, roosting and hibernation sites. The abundance of birds significantly increases in those areas with a larger number of mature trees. To address this, the project will train ‘owl envoys’ to protect 500 old trees and install 100 artificial nests, allowing owls space to thrive.

RAJU ACHARYA

Raju is known throughout Nepal as ‘Owl Sir’, the country’s leading owl expert.

Owls can rotate their head up to 270 degrees in one direction and fly with complete silence at night.

Owls are often associated with ‘laziness’ in Nepal.

AN ACTION PLAN TO SAFEGUARD CENTRAL NEPAL’S OWLS

AN ACTION PLAN TO SAFEGUARD CENTRAL NEPAL’S OWLS

+ Conduct 11 training events to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies, policy makers, and local owl envoys to reduce the rate of hunting and trade
+ Raise awareness among students and the public with 100 conservation camps to change negative perceptions of owls
+ Create five designated catapult free zones, which will safeguard owls across 250km²
+ Restore and rehabilitate 1,200 hectares of owl habitat by protecting old trees and installing artificial nests

@fonnepal2024
@friendsofnaturenepal
Since 1997, the Waimiri-Atroari people have been collecting data on wildlife roadkill along the 125km stretch of BR-174 that cuts through their territory. This database is the largest citizen science project involving Indigenous communities on the planet.

Brazil is the fourth-largest road network in the world, which President Lula plans to expand: last year he unveiled a 1 trillion reais (£156 billion) spending programme to boost infrastructure, including the construction of new highways.

The construction of highways through Brazil’s forests is destroying habitat connectivity, with the associated effects being one of the main causes of declining primate populations. Despite 40% of the country’s primates facing extinction, new infrastructure projects are failing to mitigate impacts such as road mortality and loss of connectivity. One such highway, BR-174, cuts through Amazon forest including the indigenous territory of Waimiri-Atroari people. Fernanda collaborates with this community and the Federal Transportation Agency to install artificial canopy bridges that allow primates to safely cross highways from above. Using her Whitley Award, Fernanda will:

- Maintain and monitor 30 existing canopy crossings on the BR-174 highway
- Install five new canopy bridges on the road-network in Alta Floresta, Mato Grosso state
- Reduce the road mortality of tree climbing species by 25% within 500m either side of the BR-174 highway and Alta Floresta road-network canopy bridges
- Train 200 people from Federal and State transport and environmental agencies across nine Amazonian states to enable the building of more sustainable and wildlife friendly infrastructure
- Map priority roads in the Amazon to expand the ‘Reconecta’ project

The Amazon is one of the most important biomes on Earth, containing at least 10% of the planet’s biodiversity as well as vital ecosystem services and cultural heritage. However, it is threatened by a rapidly expanding road network, leading to habitat fragmentation, wildlife mortality, and secondary threats such as poaching. Even more so than terrestrial fauna, roads threaten the safety of strictly arboreal (tree dwelling) and some scansorial (climbing) mammal species. With the loss of canopy connectivity, animals either come down from the trees and try to cross roads, risking vehicle collision, or stay at the canopy level and suffer from population isolation, which can lead to declines in genetic diversity and resilience, known as the ‘barrier effect’.

Different types of bridge support the locomotion of different species. Endangered target species for this project include: Guiana Spider Monkey, Black Spider Monkey, Groves’ Titi, Schneider’s Marmoset, Spix’s Red-handed Howler Monkey, and Purús Red Howler Monkey. Fernanda, an Associate Researcher at IPÊ and Postdoctoral Fellow from Smithsonian, oversees the Reconecta Project which aims to test effectiveness of canopy bridges for different primate and arboreal mammal species, and drive a culture of sustainable infrastructure for the road network in the Amazon. In the past year, the team have recorded more than 500 crossings from 8 different species.

Since 2020, Fernanda has worked to gain the trust of the Waimiri-Atroari Indigenous Community, self-determined as the ‘Kinja’ people. The construction of Highway BR-174 in the 1970s directly impacted this community and their territory. Violence inflicted by the military regime resulted in the deaths of over 3,000 community members. This conflict is considered one of the most severe cases of indigenous genocide in Brazil. The impacts of the road on wildlife have also deeply affected the culture of the Waimiri-Atroari community. Acknowledging the damage done, the government allowed the community to restrict nighttime traffic on the highway. This measure provided greater safety for them and reduced roadkill, however they also recognised the need for reconnecting the canopy at optimal points along the road. This community has now not only approved the Reconecta Project, but is actively collaborating in its delivery. With deep insight and understanding of the local habitat and wildlife, they are participating in the selection of canopy bridge installation sites and their construction to allow wildlife to cross the road safely.

projeto_reconecta.com
@fernanda_abra
@fernanda_abra
Each year a past Whitley Award winner is selected to receive the Whitley Gold Award – worth £100,000 of project funding – in recognition of their outstanding contribution to conservation. Donated by the Friends of WFN.

Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist from Assam, India, won a Whitley Award in 2017 for her work to protect the Greater Adjutant Stork and its wetland habitat with her team at Aaranyak. Before her intervention, the stork – or ‘hargila’ in the local language – were thought of as smelly, dirty, and unwanted vermin and their numbers had dwindled to an estimated 450 birds in the state. Changing attitudes and galvanising local people, primarily women, to safeguard nests, their numbers have now quadrupled to more than 1,800. Looking ahead, Purnima now wants to double the global population of the bird to 5,000 by 2030. Working across the stork’s range in India and Cambodia, Purnima and team at Aaranyak will use her Gold Award to:

> Establish a collaborative network of WFN alumni, students, scientists, and polymakers. This will involve providing conservation education to more than 20,000 Assamese students and a knowledge exchange programme between university students in Bihar university and University of Assam.

> Grow community-driven conservation initiatives to bolster the number of Greater Adjutant breeding pairs by 20% within two years by safeguarding the four nesting colonies in Assam.

> Expand support of local women to grow the ‘Hargila Army’ of stork advocates from 10,000 to 20,000 participants.

> Scale up conservation efforts to the state of Bihar in East India and into Cambodia to encompass the global geographic range of the stork – and increase the population to 5,000 birds by 2030.

> Join forces with the Ethical Conservation Alliance – pioneered by fellow WFN alumni – to share experiences, and support conservation practitioners around the world to build respectful partnerships with local and indigenous communities.

---

**INTERNATIONAL SCALE-UP: DOUBLING THE NUMBERS OF GREATER ADJUTANT STORKS ACROSS THEIR GLOBAL RANGE**

Purnima Devi Barman, the ‘Hargila Army’ of stork advocates, now leads communities and empowering others. In the ‘Hargila Army’ we have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause.

**PARTNERSHIP EXPECTATIONS**

Toward this end, the storks build nests that are expanded to as large as 1.2 metres wide as the chicks grow.

**ECONOMIC VALUE**

The Greater Adjutant can be seen on the coat of arms for the city of Calcutta, where the bird was once found in large numbers and revered for keeping the city clean and clear of snakes. Sadly, they are now believed to be extinct there. A shift in image owing to the bird’s preference for scavenging carrion, scraps, and refuse, often from landfills, saw them reviled by local people and villagers who came to view them as unsanitary and would cut nesting trees to rid themselves of the birds. Formally found across southern Asia and mainland southeast Asia, the Greater Adjutant population has slumped to just 1% of historic numbers.

**ECOLOGICAL VALUE**

The Greater Adjutant brings value to the landscapes that it inhabits, including through its penchant for consuming decaying organic matter. Far from negatively impacting the hygiene of its environment, the bird plays a vital role in nutrient recycling and maintaining ecosystem health. The storks are an essential ecological pillar in Assam’s wetlands which comprise more than 15% of the state. Wetlands are facing the most rapid decline of all ecosystems around the world and are disappearing three times faster than forests, according to the United Nations. An important habitat for migratory birds and wildlife species, they also protect from heavy monsoon flooding which is more unpredictable amid climate change.

**HARGILA ARMY SUCCESS**

Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”

**HARGILA ARMY VALUE**

As the storks build nests, the women in the Hargila Army have more than 10,000 women and they are all united for a cause. Purnima’s advocacy for the stork quickly garnered support from local women, who were keen to participate in the Hargila Army and join her in protecting the nesting trees, which are mainly located in private property. Membership has now become a badge of honour. Purnima hopes to expand the Hargila Army – or ‘stork sisters’ – to 20,000 members. Their contribution “extends beyond merely safeguarding the bird,” according to Purnima, as it “empowers thousands of women, enhancing their livelihoods and catalysing social change within villages as women emerge as conservation leaders.”
ROYAL SUPPORT

Celebrating 25 years of HRH the Princess Royal as Patron.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal joined as a Patron of the Whitley Fund for Nature in 1999 and has never missed a ceremony since. Her Royal Highness presents winners with their Whitley Award trophies on stage, which gives them greater credibility and plays a key role in generating press coverage – often making it onto the front page of local and regional newspapers in winners’ home countries.

Her Royal Highness had an immediate impact on the charity and Award winners. “You can’t quantify it” Founder Edward Whitley told the Telegraph Magazine in November when The Princess kindly agreed to an interview about the Whitley Fund for Nature to mark the charity’s 30th anniversary.

Pictured right: HRH presents Lindy Rodwell with her Whitley Award in 1999.

Her Royal Highness has visited numerous winners in their home countries, from Brazil, where HRH saw Colliebus monkeys, and Colombia, where she was taken to see pink river dolphins, to Uganda, Croatia and Sri Lanka. Her knowledge of conservation runs deep which makes her popular with conservationists. The Princess told the Telegraph: “Being told you have to save this, that and the other is all very well but have you been there? Have you ever tried living in that environment to find out what that means to them? Because the fundamental point is that unless the conservation comes from the local area, it won’t be sustained. No one is going to save an animal just because they’re told to. “You’ve got to work out how the animals are going to survive with the people who live there, who will be the ones who make sure that it works.”

Pictured left: Her Royal Highness visited Suzana Padua at IPP (Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas) in Brazil.

During WFN’s 30th anniversary celebrations, Edward Whitley said in a speech addressed to Her Royal Highness that she has “helped to transform the charity from something of a pipe dream now to encompass the vibrant and effective team of committed leaders… and all the winners you have met and galvanised.”

For the Award winners, the impact is clearly visible. The photo of Her Royal Highness presenting them with their trophy at the ceremony in London usually makes the front page of their national newspapers. Winners say this confers legitimacy in their home countries.

Scan the QR code to read the full interview with HRH in the Telegraph.

Pictured here: 2021 Whitley Award winner Iroko Tanshi receives her Award from Her Royal Highness on stage at the 2022 Whitley Award Ceremony.
As we look ahead at the challenges our planet continues to face in our #SharedFuture, we know that it is only together that we can build solutions. This October, we will be holding our second biodiversity Summit, this time exploring the future of conservation through focusing on agency and tangible solutions communicated with optimism and positive storytelling during a year of global political change.

Please stay tuned to @WhitleyAwards and sign up for our e-letter for updates as plans develop. Visit: whitleyaward.org/newsletter

WFN’s impact has grown substantially over the past 30 years, with £23m channelled to 225 conservationists in 80 countries. Demand from the Winner Network for Continuation Funding continues to grow as pressure to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and mitigate climate impact intensifies. Each year new Whitley Award winning conservationists join our network, and we want to increase what we offer in support to WFN alumni – through project funding and Winner Network Development programme.

Through building a network of young people passionate about conservation, WFN aims to empower the next generation to enact positive change and support the work of Whitley Award winners across the Global South.

WFN NextGen represents an engaged and supportive community of students and young professionals who care about the conservation of our planet and want to contribute to effective, proven solutions. Our NextGen programme provides members access to networking opportunities, annual events with Whitley Award winners, and the chance to support the work of grassroots conservationists by raising funds for WFN’s Continuation Funding programme.

One million species are threatened by extinction, yet only 4% of UK philanthropic giving is directed to the environment. By leveraging the passion and dedication of our network, NextGen collectively fundraises to help close this wildlife conservation funding gap. The programme encourages support of conservation in a way which does not centre around personal capacity for giving, but instead around fundraising in a creative and accessible way. Whether it’s a cycle ride, a pub quiz with a purpose, swapping birthday gifts for donations, or a concert for conservation, NextGen can provide steer and support, channeling the funds where they are needed most.

Every year, funds raised by the NextGen network are distributed to a Continuation Funding winner whose work aligns with the purpose and vision of the programme. The first recipient of this support is 2023 Continuation Funding winner Kini Roesler, who is bringing the rare Hoisted Grebe back from the brink and empowering the next generation of Argentinian environmentalists. Building from his Whitley Award project, Kini will strengthen his training programme for early-career conservationists and equip them with specific knowledge and skills to protect the Patagonian Steppe and the unique species that thrive there. Thank you to the NextGen network for making this important work possible!

To find out more about the programme and register your interest, please email WFN’s Fundraising Officer, Lily Himmelman at lily@whitleyaward.org.

Thank you to the NextGen partners: Urban Greens, Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards.

As we look ahead at the challenges our planet continues to face in our #SharedFuture, we know that it is only together that we can build solutions. This October, we will be holding our second biodiversity Summit, this time exploring the future of conservation through focusing on agency and tangible solutions communicated with optimism and positive storytelling during a year of global political change. Please stay tuned to @WhitleyAwards and sign up for our e-letter for updates as plans develop. Visit: whitleyaward.org/newsletter

WFN is a charity completely reliant on donations, with no capital endowment. The more we raise, the more support we can channel to wildlife conservationists. Together, we can protect and restore nature, securing its future.

Please scan to donate:

Olivier Nsengimana, 2018 Whitley Award Winner

OLIVIER NSENGIMANA, 2018 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

OLIVIER NSENGIMANA, 2018 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

Oliver Nsengimana, 2018 Whitley Award Winner

The more we develop our work, the more we see the key for long term change lies within the community and we believe this model of community conservation is the future of conservation globally.

Olivier Nsengimana, 2018 Whitley Award Winner

Through building a network of young people passionate about conservation, WFN aims to empower the next generation to enact positive change and support the work of Whitley Award winners across the Global South.

WFN NextGen represents an engaged and supportive community of students and young professionals who care about the conservation of our planet and want to contribute to effective, proven solutions. Our NextGen programme provides members access to networking opportunities, annual events with Whitley Award winners, and the chance to support the work of grassroots conservationists by raising funds for WFN’s Continuation Funding programme.

One million species are threatened by extinction, yet only 4% of UK philanthropic giving is directed to the environment. By leveraging the passion and dedication of our network, NextGen collectively fundraises to help close this wildlife conservation funding gap. The programme encourages support of conservation in a way which does not centre around personal capacity for giving, but instead around fundraising in a creative and accessible way. Whether it’s a cycle ride, a pub quiz with a purpose, swapping birthday gifts for donations, or a concert for conservation, NextGen can provide steer and support, channeling the funds where they are needed most.

Every year, funds raised by the NextGen network are distributed to a Continuation Funding winner whose work aligns with the purpose and vision of the programme. The first recipient of this support is 2023 Continuation Funding winner Kini Roesler, who is bringing the rare Hoisted Grebe back from the brink and empowering the next generation of Argentinian environmentalists. Building from his Whitley Award project, Kini will strengthen his training programme for early-career conservationists and equip them with specific knowledge and skills to protect the Patagonian Steppe and the unique species that thrive there. Thank you to the NextGen network for making this important work possible!

To find out more about the programme and register your interest, please email WFN’s Fundraising Officer, Lily Himmelman at lily@whitleyaward.org.

Thank you to the NextGen partners: Urban Greens, Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards.

As we look ahead at the challenges our planet continues to face in our #SharedFuture, we know that it is only together that we can build solutions. This October, we will be holding our second biodiversity Summit, this time exploring the future of conservation through focusing on agency and tangible solutions communicated with optimism and positive storytelling during a year of global political change. Please stay tuned to @WhitleyAwards and sign up for our e-letter for updates as plans develop. Visit: whitleyaward.org/newsletter

WFN is a charity completely reliant on donations, with no capital endowment. The more we raise, the more support we can channel to wildlife conservationists. Together, we can protect and restore nature, securing its future.

Please scan to donate:

Olivier Nsengimana, 2018 Whitley Award Winner

OLIVIER NSENGIMANA, 2018 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER

The more we develop our work, the more we see the key for long term change lies within the community and we believe this model of community conservation is the future of conservation globally.

Olivier Nsengimana, 2018 Whitley Award Winner

Through building a network of young people passionate about conservation, WFN aims to empower the next generation to enact positive change and support the work of Whitley Award winners across the Global South.

WFN NextGen represents an engaged and supportive community of students and young professionals who care about the conservation of our planet and want to contribute to effective, proven solutions. Our NextGen programme provides members access to networking opportunities, annual events with Whitley Award winners, and the chance to support the work of grassroots conservationists by raising funds for WFN’s Continuation Funding programme.

One million species are threatened by extinction, yet only 4% of UK philanthropic giving is directed to the environment. By leveraging the passion and dedication of our network, NextGen collectively fundraises to help close this wildlife conservation funding gap. The programme encourages support of conservation in a way which does not centre around personal capacity for giving, but instead around fundraising in a creative and accessible way. Whether it’s a cycle ride, a pub quiz with a purpose, swapping birthday gifts for donations, or a concert for conservation, NextGen can provide steer and support, channeling the funds where they are needed most.

Every year, funds raised by the NextGen network are distributed to a Continuation Funding winner whose work aligns with the purpose and vision of the programme. The first recipient of this support is 2023 Continuation Funding winner Kini Roesler, who is bringing the rare Hoisted Grebe back from the brink and empowering the next generation of Argentinian environmentalists. Building from his Whitley Award project, Kini will strengthen his training programme for early-career conservationists and equip them with specific knowledge and skills to protect the Patagonian Steppe and the unique species that thrive there. Thank you to the NextGen network for making this important work possible!

To find out more about the programme and register your interest, please email WFN’s Fundraising Officer, Lily Himmelman at lily@whitleyaward.org.

Thank you to the NextGen partners: Urban Greens, Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards.
Income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2023 FUNDS</th>
<th>2022 FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restricted</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME FROM:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>1,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>1,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENDITURE ON:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants awarded</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other charitable activities</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and governance</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net income/(expenditure)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2023 FUNDS</th>
<th>2022 FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restricted</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds brought forward</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>2,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds carried forward</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>2,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balance sheet at 30 June 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2023 FUNDS</th>
<th>2022 FUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restricted</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and deposits</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>3,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed assets</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creditors due within one year</td>
<td>(113)</td>
<td>(447)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net current assets</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>2,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net assets (Total Funds)</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>2,720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ambitions for growth

- **Charitable activities**: 88%
  - Funds & NGOs £818,761
  - Friends £694,476
  - Family Foundations & Trusts £663,500
  - Corporates £96,000

- **Support and governance**: 7%
- **Fundraising**: 5%

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023

WHERE YOUR MONEY WENT

- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
- £2.3M DONATED IN 2023
THANK YOU

We are so grateful for the generous support of our donors, sponsors and partners, including those who choose to remain anonymous.

WHITLEY AWARD DONORS

The Corcoran Foundation
Anne Reece
The William Brooke Foundation
The Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature
INIGO
RICHARD BUXTON
Richard & Annemarie Revell
Charles and Ruth Powden
Matthew and Lucinda Webber
Eugenie White

MAJOR DONORS

The Foundation for the Promotion of Wellbeing
The Britta and Jeremy Lloyd Charitable Trust
The Sarah and Patrick Wills Foundation
The Constance Travis Charitable Trust

RICHARD BUXTON
BigGive
Garfield Weston Foundation
Siegfried Rausing Trust

MAJOR DONORS

The Shears Foundation
TROY
THE FUND
Rufford
Lisbet Raising and Peter Baldwin

SPONSORS & PARTNERS

interconnect/it
Boffin Media
ecoflix
Optimism
Semar
Urban Greens
The Comedy Wildlife
ShoNet
Evidence
Silverback
Liquid

Mandy Duncan-Smith
Olha Malyus

FRIENDS’ DONATIONS

The donations we receive from our Friends are the lifeblood of the charity and this year are supporting our Gold Award. Funds raised additionally to this are vital to the charity as general funds and for bolstering WFN’s Continuation Funding programme.

£10,000 - £19,999

Clare Barnes
Ellie Corr
Antoine and Isabelle Decire

£5,000 - £9,999

Edward and Sally Barthell
The Percy and Elizabeth Brooks Foundation
Lady Catherine and Lord Edward Faulks Glibenbert Trust

£1,000 - £4,999

David Allen
Maria Brown
Sophie and Paul Brand
Stuart and Diane Bridges
Sir Francis and The Hon Lady Brooke
Jack Byam Shaw
Tracey and Frank Camilleri
Lida Cepuch and Ian Richmond
Cotswold Wildlife Conservation Trust
Fiona and Chris Fleming-Brown
Stephen and Elena Georgiadis
The James Gibson Charitable Trust
Veronique and Diego Da Grog
Edward Harvey Charitable Fund
Knepp Stone Wildlife Charitable Trust
Mark and Susanna Laing
Pete and Annabel Lio
Simon and Penelope Linnett
Sebastian and Flora Lyon
Mackayart Third Fund
David and Deborah Marston
Juliana Martins
The Ronald Miller Foundation
Ben and Kate Mingay

£300 - £999

Kim Van Baars-Wassenaer
Samuel and Rosie Benwick
Clare Brook
Philo and Tanya Cauford
Chris and Laura Caulin
Will and Tiffany Chamer
Guy and Kate Christie
Hannah Marie Davies and Robert Winter
Gernina and Daniel Domberger
Katharine Evans
Alison Clark and Tim Forrow
Sebastian and Veronica Faulks
Alastair and Melinda Fothergill
Sarah Lander and Simon Griffin
Melissa and Martin Hall
Sarah Havens and Gregg Sando
Tom and Tammy Raye

Susanna Spencer and Edward Halogson
Edward and Teleri Hffe
Jonathan Milburn and Kara Ilard
Eve and Hoo Japahan
Vanessa Kastner
William and Miranda Kendall
Dana and Christopher Kidner
Edward Levy and Karen Goldman
Bridget Lubbock
Anne-Marie and James MacKay
Maeve Mayers
Paul McKenna and Jolanta Plisko
Annabel and Russell Sander
Richard and Juliet Miller
Daniel and Osawa Muller
O’Hara Charitable Trust
Leanne Pearson

Johnathon Point
Louise Rettie
David and Sarah Rosier
Amanda and Terry Scott
Chantal and Mario Spanos
Adam and Leslie Sturdy
Jessica and Adam Sworden
David Taylor and Clare Caderly Taylor
Clare and Nick Teit
Clare Timms
Susan and Bernard Wallenda
Elia Whitley and James Duncall
Henry and Madeline Wolcharm
Shane and Nigel Wynn
John and Linda Wotton
A special thanks to all those who supported us through the Green Match Fund.
Whitley Award winners combine knowing how to respond to crises yet also bring communities and wider audiences with them.

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH, WFN AMBASSADOR