

NEWS from the WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Princess presents top conservation accolade to Kenya's Dino J. Martins

EMBARGO: Not for publication, please, before 20:30hrs GMT on Wednesday 13 May 2009

LONDON, UK: 13 MAY 2009 - HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne) tonight presented one of the world's top prizes for grassroots nature conservation – a Whitley Award – to Dino J. Martins, of Kenya, for his work to improve local understanding of, and win greater protection for, the pollinators which underpin farming in and around the Great Rift Valley and Taita Hills.

Harvard PhD Fellow, Dino Martins, received his award during a ceremony held at the Royal Geographical Society, London, by The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) – the UK-based charity which administers the international awards programme.

His prize includes a Whitley Award project grant of £30,000 - donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust - an engraved trophy, membership of an influential network of Whitley Award winners and international profile-raising opportunities.

The award to Dino Martins recognises his work with the East Africa Natural History Society (celebrating its centenary this year), to let small-scale farmers know about the vital role insects play in pollinating crops and encourage them to adopt conservation-friendly methods of agriculture.

The event's top prize, the £60,000 Whitley Gold Award, went to another African: Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, of Uganda, for a health and conservation programme in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, which is helping local villagers and their wildlife neighbours - endangered mountain gorillas - by reducing the cross-infection risks that result from people/ape contact and their DNA similarities.

Her Royal Highness also presented four other £30,000 Whitley Awards to conservation leaders from Bulgaria, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. [*Please see the Notes, overleaf, for more details.*]

Commenting on Dino Martins's success, Edward Whitley, who founded the fund and chaired the judging panel, said: "The aim of the Whitley Awards is to find and support conservation scientists whose vision, passion, determination and qualities of leadership mean they are achieving inspirational results in conservation. In Dino's case, the judges were especially impressed by the excellent example this project provides of the interdependence of plants, insect pollinators and people in areas often overlooked for their biodiversity value and which grow important quantities and varieties of fruit, flowers and vegetables for Kenya and many other markets."

International Awards for Outstanding Leaders in Conservation

Patron HRH The Princess Royal **Vice Patron** John Laing **Trustees** Sir David Attenborough Tim Dye Catherine Faulks Edward Whitley **Director** Georgina Domberger

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The ceremony at which Dino Martins received his accolade was co-hosted by BBC wildlife presenter Kate Humble and held in front of a 400-strong audience that included embassy representatives, donors and leading environmentalists.

Another Kenyan, Leonard Akwany, is also being helped by WFN this year. He has been granted a £10,000 Associate Award for a nature conservation project that will also improve livelihoods at the Lake Victoria Wetland.

The Whitley Awards scheme is an annual competition, now in its 16th year. It exists to identify, fund and encourage inspirational conservation leaders and their teams in developing countries. This year, almost 100 applicants competed for a place on the shortlist to win a Whitley Award.

This year's Whitley Award donors include HSBC Private Bank (UK) and WWF-UK, as well as a number of family foundations. To find out more about the charity and its work please see: www.whitleyaward.org

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Awards Ceremony Photographs

Copyright-cleared photographs of HRH The Princess Royal presenting each award will be available from <http://picasaweb.google.com/irving818> from Thursday 14 May or can be emailed direct on request (see contact details above). Project images are available to download already from: http://www.whitleyaward.org/press_releases.php

Other 2009 winners

The following people also won Whitley Awards and £30,000 project grants:

Prithviraj 'Pruthu' Fernando (Sri Lanka), head of the Centre for Conservation and Research, Colombo, who is working to safeguard wild Asian elephants by balancing their need to range outside of 'protected zones' with the needs of paddy farmers whose lives can be devastated by a single crop raid. **Whitley Award donated by The Shears Foundation.**

M. D. 'Madhu' Madhusudan (India), Director of the Nature Conservation Foundation, who is working to reduce conflict between people and wildlife, including tigers, in the Western Ghats, the world's most densely populated biodiversity hotspot, by showing farmers how to reduce crop raids, improve their incomes and avoid park encroachment. **Whitley Award donated by HSBC Private Bank**

Dino Martins (Kenya) who is working in and around the Great Rift Valley and Taita Hills to improve local understanding and awareness of the vital role insects play in crop pollination and encourage more sustainable methods of agriculture. **Whitley Award donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust**

Jittin Ritthirat (Thailand) who is leading efforts to reduce conflicts between people, wild elephants and domestic cattle, especially over access to water and grazing, and restore Salakpra, Thailand's oldest nature reserve. **Whitley award donated by The Friends of The WFN**

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Emil Todorov (Bulgaria) who is leading a Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds initiative to offer greater protection to the many thousands of wild migratory and breeding birds that depend on the lower reaches of the river Danube. **Whitley Award donated by Paula and Mario Frering.**

Notes to Editors

The Whitley Awards are the flagship grants of the Whitley Fund for Nature, (WFN) a UK-based registered charity. WFN's aim is to identify the world's most dynamic conservation leaders and support them in practical work that benefits both wildlife and local communities. The first Whitley Award was given in 1994 when a single winner received £15,000. Since then, the number and value of the prizes has grown so that the awards are now acknowledged internationally as one of most valuable accolades a conservationist can win.

To be considered for a Whitley Award, entrants need to display both a strong track record in science-based conservation work and a viable plan for taking their work further.

A hallmark of the scheme is that WFN seeks to remain in close contact with past winners and facilitates the sharing of best practice, lessons learned, contacts and ideas. In this way, WFN maintains links with more than 100 international conservation leaders from over 50 countries. Past award-winners are also eligible to be invited to apply for Whitley Continuation Funding.

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