

NEWS from the WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

Shortlist is announced for Whitley Awards 2009

Diary dates

Tuesday 12 May (10am – 11.15 approx)

A chance for media representatives, to meet the candidates informally over coffee & pastries. See Notes for details.

Radisson Edwardian Vanderbilt Hotel, SW7 5BT

Wednesday 13 May, 7pm start – please see Notes

HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne) presents grants worth £240,000 and the coveted Whitley Gold Award during ceremony hosted by BBC SPRINGWATCH's Kate Humble

Royal Geographical Society, London, SW7 2AR, UK

The quest to find the next winner of one of the world's most prestigious conservation prizes entered its final stages today (*Monday 27 April*) when The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) announced the shortlist for its Whitley Gold Award 2009.

The list reveals that seven men and women - from **Bulgaria, India, Kenya, Mali, Sri Lanka, Thailand** and **Uganda** – remain in the running for the UK-based charity's top award, which comes with a £60,000 grant and international recognition.

[For names and project details, please see next sheet]

Each finalist now faces an interview with an expert panel of judges in London in May, after which the jurors will select this year's Whitley Gold Award winner, and confer other Whitley Awards worth £30,000 each.

The results will be announced during a gala ceremony, hosted by wildlife tv presenter Kate Humble, at the **Royal Geographical Society**, London SW7 2AR, on **Wednesday 13 May** (7pm start) at which WFN's Patron, **HRH The Princess Royal** (Princess Anne) will present the prizes

WFN Director Georgina Domberger, says: "What makes the Whitley Awards special is that they focus on conservation success stories, where genuine benefits for wildlife and people are being achieved by emerging conservation leaders in parts of the world where extreme disadvantage is part of everyday life. Just being nominated requires inspirational exceptional qualities of leadership, academic excellence and huge determination to achieve positive conservation results, often in very challenging locations and circumstances. They are also a salute to the many ordinary people who are working with our finalists to safeguard species and habitats. Their willingness to be good neighbours to nature, despite life's hardships, is testimony that it is within the power of all of us to find ways for people and wildlife to co-exist."

more follows.....

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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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Shortlisted candidates this year are:

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

Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka (Uganda) is a vet, working in Uganda's remote Bwindi region, to protect mountain gorillas and improve the lives of neighbouring communities, by encouraging health and hygiene measures that will reduce the risk of cross-infections, and enable local people to benefit from gorilla tourism without harm to the apes.

M. D. 'Madhu' Madhusudan (India) is Director of the Nature Conservation Foundation, 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.

Dino Martins (Kenya) is working with the East Africa Natural History Society in the Great Rift Valley and Taita Hills to improve local understanding and awareness of the vital role of insects in pollinating crops and encourage more sustainable methods of agriculture, to create a better future for people, plants and pollinators.

Bourama Niagate (Mali), president of AMEPANE, is striving to protect biodiversity in Bafing - an area ravaged by a giant dam, demand for bushmeat, bushfires and poaching, and which ranks as one of the poorest parts of a country which is itself the fourth poorest in the world.

Jittin Ritthirat (Thailand) is leading efforts in Salakpra (a backdrop for the De Niro film, *The Deer Hunter*) to reduce conflicts between wild elephants and domestic cattle over access to water and grazing, and restore Thailand's oldest nature reserve as a national treasure, tourist magnet and example to others.

Emil Todorov (Bulgaria) is the leader of a Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds initiative seeking to safeguard the many thousands of wild migratory and breeding birds that depend on the river Danube and its wetlands, including by influencing planners and by recruiting local people as guardians.

The Whitley Awards scheme is an annual competition, now in its 16th year. It attracts around 100 entries a year from conservation leaders from around the world. To learn more about the charity and its awards, please see: www.whitleyaward.org.

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Please see over for Notes to Editors

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 (\$30,000). 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. For more information about the judging process and past winners, please see: www.whitleyaward.org

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 invited to bid for Whitley Continuation Funding.

Meet the candidates: Tuesday 12 May – media representatives will be most welcome to meet/ interview the candidates on Tuesday 12 May at the Radisson Edwardian Vanderbilt Hotel, 68-86 Cromwell Road , London SW7 5BT over coffee and pastries (10am start to 11.15am approx). To reserve a place, or to fix interviews at other times, please contact WFN's press officer, Pam Beddard, (t) +44 (0) 117 987 0442 or +44 (0) 7767 621207, or (e) pam.beddard@btinternet.com

Awards ceremony photographs – photographs of winners receiving their Whitley Awards from HRH The Princess Royal will be available from the WFN website – www.whitleyawards.org within 24 hours of the ceremony. For earlier copies, please contact Pam Beddard (contact details above). Places at the awards ceremony on Wednesday 13 May are in high demand and extremely limited. To check availability, please contact Pam Beddard (see above).