

NEWS from the WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE

## Princess presents conservation 'gold' to Uganda's Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

**EMBARGO:** Not for publication, please, before 20:30hrs GMT on Wednesday 13 May 2009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 – the £60,000 Whitley Gold Award – to wildlife vet Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, for her work with people and mountain gorillas in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest.

The award recognises the work being carried out by Dr Kalema-Zikusoka and the Kampala-based charity, Conservation Through Public Health, which she co-founded, to change local attitudes to conservation and improve healthcare.

Dr Kalema-Zikusoka received her award during a ceremony held at the Royal Geographical Society, London, and hosted by The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) – the UK-based charity which administers the international awards programme.

WFN founder and judging panel chairman, Edward Whitley, said: "The DNA of people and gorillas is so similar that it is possible for diseases to cross between them. With her work, Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is not only reducing the risk of gorillas falling prey to human ailments but also improving the lives of local people, by offering them better healthcare, greater knowledge of their gorilla neighbours and more opportunities to benefit from gorilla tourism without harm to the apes."

The prize comprises a £30,000 Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK; the Whitley Gold Award, providing second year funding worth a further £30,000; a trophy; membership of the influential network of past Whitley Award winners and international profile-raising opportunities.

Edward Whitley added: "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. Dr Kalema-Zikusoka's project demonstrates all this and more. As judges, we were especially impressed by what this project is doing, in International Year of the Gorilla, to protect a species that has become a symbol of what conservation means, offers its human neighbours access to useful tourism income yet which is vulnerable to human diseases because we share 98% of DNA."

### 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 Dr Kalema-Zikusoka received her 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.

During it, Her Royal Highness also presented Whitley Awards each worth £30,000 to five other conservation leaders from Bulgaria, India, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and other prizes, bringing to the total amount given to more than £250,000.

*[For more details of Whitley Award winners 2009, please see below ].*

The Whitley Awards scheme is an annual competition, now in its 16<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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.whitley-award.org/press\\_releases.php](http://www.whitley-award.org/press_releases.php)

**Other 2009 winners**

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

**Prithiviraj '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**

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**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**

**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.**

**Change to shortlist** – unfortunately, a seventh finalist, Dr Bourama Niagate, of Mali, had to withdraw from this year's competition after unforeseen travel difficulties prevented him from getting to London for the final stage of judging.

### 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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