

Whitley Gold Award goes to conservationist who is battling the illegal trade in night monkeys

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A UK-trained scientist who is trying to end the illegal trade in Amazon night monkeys for biomedical research is the latest winner of one of the world's top accolades for grassroots conservation: The Whitley Gold Award.

Dr Angela Maldonado, a graduate of Oxford Brookes University and the University of St Andrew's, Scotland, received her award in London tonight (Wednesday 12 May) from HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne), Patron of The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN), the UK charity behind the international awards scheme.

The prize recognises her work with rainforest communities around the Colombia-Peru border to stop the removal of an estimated 4,000 wild night monkeys a year for use in biomedical experiments – a trade outlawed by international agreements.

Laboratories are alleged to spend around US\$100,000 annually on acquiring night monkeys for drug trials. The market relies on local hunters but they see only a small fraction of the profits. Dr Maldonado's project includes developing new ways for local people to earn a sustainable living from rainforest resources as well as finding out more about night monkeys – the world's only truly nocturnal monkeys.

As The Whitley Gold Award 2010 winner, Dr Maldonado, the Project Director of the Fundacion Entropika, Colombia, receives a project grant of £30,000 - donated by HSBC Private Bank - plus £30,000 in additional project funding; an engraved trophy; membership of the influential network of past Whitley Award winners, and leadership development training.

The ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, also saw HRH The Princess Royal present £30,000 Whitley Awards to another Colombian scientist, Dr Diego Amorocho, and to six other conservationists from Argentina, Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Uganda and Uruguay. [Please see Notes for more details].

Congratulating the winners, WFN Director Georgina Domberger said: "The aim of the Whitley Awards is to identify and fund leading grassroots conservationists from

around the world who are using their scientific expertise and local knowledge to inspire real and positive change for people and wildlife and the habitats they share.”

She added: “In the case of Angela Maldonado, the judges were particularly impressed by her brave stand against the illegal trade in night monkeys for biomedical research, which is said to be responsible for the loss of 4,000 wild monkeys a year, and for her efforts to reduce the pressure on rainforest communities to hunt for primates by helping them to develop alternative and sustainable ways to benefit from rainforest resources, such as by collecting forest fruits to dry and sell.”

The awards ceremony was co-hosted by BBC Wildlife presenter Kate Humble and witnessed by a 350-strong audience made up of embassy representatives, Whitley Fund for Nature donors, including HSBC, and WWF-UK, and leading environmentalists. In all, grants worth £270,000 were presented, bringing the total amount distributed by the Whitley Awards since their inception to £6m across 55 countries.

The Whitley Awards scheme is an annual competition, now in its 17th year. It exists to identify, fund and encourage inspirational local conservation leaders and their teams in developing countries. 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 winners receiving their Whitley Awards from HRH The Princess Royal will be available from http://whitleyaward.org/awards_ceremony.php shortly after the ceremony, alongside project photos and portraits. Video footage may also be available (see contact details above).

Notes to Editors

The Whitley Awards are the flagship grants of the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN), a UK-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 GBP. 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. For more information, please see www.whitleyaward.org.

The full list of £30,000 Whitley Awards winners this year is:

Mathew Akon (Papua New Guinea) who is enlisting one of the world's most endangered marsupials - the little-known tenkile or Scott's tree kangaroo - to inspire villagers in Papua New Guinea's remote and wildlife-rich Torricelli Mountains to agree hunting limits and support habitat protection. **Whitley Award donated by WWF-UK.**

Diego Amorocho (Colombia) who is teaching Pacific coastal fishing communities how to reduce the accidental by-catch of sea turtles, become turtle first aiders and earn money as conservation supporters and from beach care. **Whitley Award donated by The Friends of The WFN.**

Pablo Borboroglu (Argentina) who is establishing the world's first coalition to use penguins as ambassadors for global ocean conservation, highlighting the need to mitigate threats to marine wildlife and habitats from over-fishing, oil pollution and climate change. **Whitley Award donated by Natasha and George Duffield.**

Susana Gonzalez (Uruguay) who is combining scientific research with public outreach to safeguard Uruguay's two remaining Pampas Deer populations and reverse the trend which has seen the country's grasslands dwindle to 1% of the area covered in 1900. **Whitley Award donated by The Garfield Weston Foundation.**

Vadim Kirilyuk (Russia) who is working on the vast steppe grasslands at the Russian-Mongolian frontier to win better protection for the Mongolian gazelle and its migration routes, including through the opening up of international border fences and greater community understanding and support. **Whitley Award donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust.**

Angela Maldonado (Colombia) who is exploring community-backed alternative ways for the impoverished people of the Colombian Amazon to earn a living, to end the illegal capture of night monkeys for biomedical research and raising awareness of the violation of international wildlife trade laws. **Whitley Award donated by HSBC Private Bank + extra £30,000 as Whitley Gold Award winner.**

Jimmy Muheebwa (Uganda) who is inspiring communities in Lake Victoria's catchment zone to use the wetlands sustainably, to improve livelihoods and save the region's local wildlife, including Uganda's national bird, the grey-crowned crane. **Whitley Award donated by The Shears Foundation.**

Louis Nkembi (Cameroon) who is introducing community-based landscape and biodiversity management to the Lebialem Highlands – a refuge for many rare plants, birds and other animals, including chimpanzees and Africa's most endangered great ape, the cross river gorilla. **Whitley Award donated by WildInvest.**

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