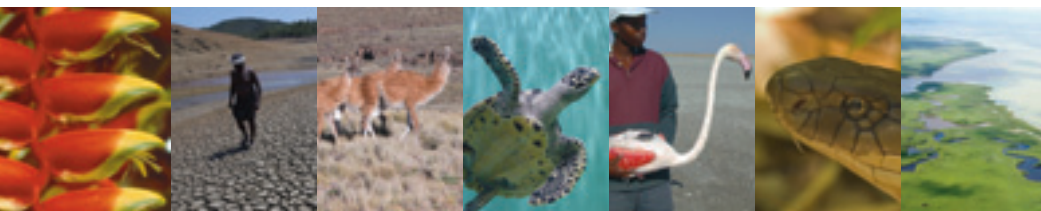


Shortlist for the 2005 Whitley Awards

The WFN Trustees and Judging Panel have worked through this year's Whitley Award applications over the last four months and have arrived at a shortlist of ten.

These finalists will come to London in April and those selected as Whitley Award winners will receive their trophies from HRH The Princess Royal at the Awards Ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society on April 20th at 7pm.



Nicole Auil – Strengthening the recovery of the Antillean Manatee, Belize.

Local conservation biologist Nicole is using local education and biological research to conserve the threatened Antillean manatee.

Hem Sagar Baral – Participatory conservation of endemic birds, Nepal.

Hem is demonstrating how Nepal's rare Phulchowki mountain forest, which supports a rich endemic bird community, can provide sustainable incomes through ecotourism.

Ananda Bose – Conservation of the Sasthamcotta lake ecosystem, India.

The heavily polluted Sasthamcotta Lake provides drinking water to over half a million people. Ananda is bringing together locals to develop an innovative action plan that will end destructive lake activities.

Didiher Chacón-Chaverri – A Sea Turtle conservation program for the South Caribbean, Costa Rica.

Marine biologist Didiher is working to protect these long-lived reptiles from the illegal trade and habitat degradation which threatens their survival.

Alberto Gómez-Mejía – Saving the endangered and useful native plants of Colombia.

Colombia's biodiverse forests are being destroyed by 600,000 ha a year. Colombian lawyer Alberto is leading an ambitious initiative to implement a national endangered plant conservation programme.

To read more about the Finalist's projects please visit our recently re-launched website

www.whitleyaward.org

Gonzalo Merediz-Alonso – Sustainable community development in Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, Mexico.

Gonzalo is working with Mexican NGO ASK to promote biodiversity conservation for the dual benefit of wildlife and the Mayan people living in the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

Graham McCulloch – Conservation of the Makgadikgadi wetland ecosystem, Botswana.

Wetland ecologist Graham is working to initiate the long-term conservation of Makgadikgadi salt pan, one of Africa's largest ephemeral wetlands and an important flamingo breeding site.

Charudutt Mishra – People & Snow Leopards: wildlife conservation in the Himalayan high altitudes, India.

Charudutt is working to secure a future for Himalayan wildlife such as the endangered snow leopard by integrating indigenous communities with conservation efforts.

Andres Novaro – A Mega-Landscape for conservation of the threatened wildlife of Patagonia, Argentina.

Andrés is working with government agencies, locals and oil companies to fight poaching and establish a critical network of wildlife corridors to enable Patagonia's many unique species to survive.

Romulus Whitaker – The king cobra as a flagship for vanishing rainforests of the Western Ghats, India.

Herpetologist Romulus is launching an important project to create the Western Ghat's first rainforest research station and the world's first king cobra sanctuary.

news in brief:

New Trustees join WFN

In January, WFN were honoured to welcome

Sir David Attenborough and **Catherine Faulks** as new Trustees of the charity.

Catherine has supported WFN for the past 5 years and was instrumental in developing the Friends of the WFN, of which she is Chair.

Sir David is Britain's best-known natural history film-maker and an enthusiastic advocate of international action to conserve wildlife.

We are delighted Sir David has kindly agreed to comper the Whitley Awards Ceremony at the RGS this April.

HSBC is new supporter for WFN

We are proud to announce that HSBC is supporting WFN this year. HSBC, the world's local bank, is looking to WFN to find local conservation leaders around the world. Building on its ongoing path to sustainability, in addition to sponsoring a Whitley Award this year, HSBC aims to support other conservationists who are part of the WFN network with a major increase in funding for those starting out on new projects, as well as previous Whitley Award winners in need of Continuation Funding.

Tsunami relief work in Sri Lanka

Previous winner Kanchana Weerakoon has been carrying out pragmatic relief work on the south coast of Sri Lanka. WFN has raised almost £50,000 to do this and we look forward to reporting on the work in our next newsletter.

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2004 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER UPDATE: Costa Rican Fisheries Law Passed

Randall Arauz won the Whitley Gold Award in 2004 for his work to conserve sharks in Costa Rica. Since then he has worked tirelessly in his campaign to have the existing laws against shark finning enforced more effectively. On 10th February 2005, Randall was delighted to inform us that Costa Rican senators unanimously approved a new national fisheries law that prohibits shark finning and creates fines and jail terms for those involved in landing shark fins at Costa Rican ports. The new law also introduced stiff penalties for anyone who harms endangered sea turtles and a new requirement for shrimp fishermen to use special devices called TEDs to allow sea turtles to escape from shrimp nets.

The passing of the new law marks a major achievement for Randall and his organisation PRETOMA, and also comes hot on the heels

of another victory that saw the closure of private Costa Rican docks to shark finners in November last year. The Costa Rican Customs Department decided to halt landings of fishery products by international flag vessels at the private docks of Puntarenas, until they comply with domestic laws.

However, despite these successes, PRETOMA, along with many senators, opposes parts of the new Fisheries law that promote overexploitation of Costa Rica's ocean resources, including free permits for foreign vessels to fish tuna in Costa Rica's national waters and increased sport fishing. Randall believes the new law falls short of doing what is needed to adequately protect Costa Rican marine life.

"The last thing Costa Rican fishermen and ocean species need are more vessels fishing in our waters and the region," he said. "If we truly want commercial and endangered



species to recover, we need to limit fleets, especially large, advanced foreign fleets. And we need a moratorium on long-lining in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific."

Large foreign long-line fleets are responsible for the deaths of many leatherback sea turtles, which come to the area to nest on the Pacific coast of Central America. Since the 1980s, the number of nesting turtles has declined by 97% and many national fishermen are struggling because commercial species have been depleted. Randall now intends to focus his attentions on promoting the development of a regional approach to marine conservation and the banning of long-lining in the international waters of the Eastern Pacific.

Read more about Randall's work on the WFN website, or visit www.tortugamarina.org

2002 WHITLEY AWARD WINNER UPDATE:

Despite exile, Silas continues work to end illegal Liberian logging

In 2002, Silas Siakor received the Whitley Award for Human Rights & the Environment, sponsored by Sting & Trudie Styler, for his work documenting evidence of destructive logging practices and associated human rights abuses in Liberia. Since then he has suffered great hardship and was even forced into exile. Despite this he has continued to campaign against illegal logging in Liberia's last rainforests. Liberia hosts the last two significant blocks of closed canopy tropical rainforest in West Africa, now only 12.7% of its original size and still being destroyed for valuable timber.

When we last reported on Silas' work (WFN Newsletter, January 2003), his organisation Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU) had just published *'PLUNDER: the silent destruction of Liberia's rainforest'*, criticizing the government and logging companies for mismanagement of the forest and its inhabitants. As a result, in 2003 the United Nations placed a ban on the import of Liberian timber into member countries.

It was following this ban that Silas was forced into exile, but he continued his work from neighbouring Sierra Leone. With a coalition of other Liberian NGOs, he succeeded in putting a proposal to the UN Security Council requesting a moratorium on natural resource extraction and trade in Liberia whilst the country was still at war. As a result, in December 2003, wide ranging reforms in the Liberian timber industry were mandated. Eager to build on this success, Silas put a new proposal to the Government of Liberia suggesting ways to improve forest law enforcement and calling for an

independent investigation into the conduct of logging companies during the Liberian conflict. The Government responded favourably and in July 2004 constituted an independent commission to conduct the investigation, naming Silas as one of two civil society representatives.

Silas and his team have come a long way in just three years. Although the concession review is still in progress, the government has introduced a three '3C' policy that seeks to balance conservation, commercial and community interests. Silas now works closely with the Sustainable Development Institute independently monitoring forestry activities across the entire chain of operation, from concession acquisition to the export of timber. With official recognition of their role, Silas' team are now contributing to the re-establishment of the rule of law in Liberia's forest sector and are helping to safeguard the country's rich biological heritage.

Visit SAMFU's website at www.samfu.org



WFN NEWSLETTER IS GOING ELECTRONIC! Please email us at info@whitleyaward.org with the word 'Newsletter' in the title to ensure you don't miss out on hearing our latest news.