

# THE WHITLEY LAINING FOUNDATION

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## The 2004 Whitley Awards

**A**fter the near-impossible task of reducing more than 160 applications (double last year's entry) down to a shortlist of eight, our judging panel has finally confirmed who is in the running for this year's Whitley Awards.

From Mexican bats to orangutans in Sumatra to sharks in Costa Rica, this year's candidates demonstrate only too vividly the enormous variety of work being carried out worldwide to protect habitats for both wildlife and indigenous peoples.

The Awards ceremony is on Thursday, April 29, at the Royal Geographical Society, and is being compered by Paula Kahumbu, pictured below, winner of our first PhD grant. This year we are proud to raise our awards to £30,000 each. There will be six of these prizes, including the Friends Award, with the overall Gold Award winner receiving a further £30,000.

### Our short-listed candidates are:

#### **Suherry Aprianto, Sumatra**

Less than 4,000 Sumatran orangutans remain in the wild and at the current rate of decline these could be gone in less than a decade. Orangutans are extraordinarily sensitive to both hunting and forest disturbance which make them an 'umbrella' species for conservation of the rainforest. Suherry Aprianto hopes to expand the work of his Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme to raise awareness of the ape's plight. The campaign will include a new information centre, website, outreach work, talks, educational materials and increased media coverage.

#### **Randall Arauz, Costa Rica**

Industrial longline fishing for sharks and other species is currently one of the major threats to our oceans. In Costa Rica, sharks face extinction if reform does not come soon and marine ecosystems will suffer. Randall Arauz's PRETOMA

organization aims to promote shark conservation within fishery operations as well as raise public awareness and activism among Costa Ricans. With education of local communities and political lobbying, he hopes to ensure that shark fishing practices are improved and that the ban on "shark finning" – catching shark just for their fins – is enforced.

#### **Achilles Byaruhanga, Uganda**

Nabajuzi wetland in Masaka contains many threatened species including the Sitatunga, a swamp antelope, the Shoebill and Papyrus Yellow Warbler. It is the sole source of water for Masaka Town and surrounding communities and is critically threatened due to uncontrolled human activities such as waste disposal and material extraction. Uganda's legislation to protect wetlands is rarely enforced and wetland areas have continued to diminish. Byaruhanga from NatureUganda, a non-governmental organisation, aims to arrest the ongoing degradation of the area by educating communities and boosting their livelihoods through community-led conservation activities such as ecotourism, agro-forestry and beekeeping.

#### **Jargal Jamsranjav, Mongolia**

Mongolia's Gobi Desert is home to many endangered species such as the Houbara Bustard, black vulture, the Argali wild sheep, ibex and snow leopard. Unfortunately, since socialism collapsed in 1990, people have relied more heavily on natural resources and livestock. Now the government plans to place 30% of the land under protection, but the scheme will fail unless local communities are involved



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and educated in conservation. Jargal Jamsranjav's project will provide herders in Little Gobi Strictly Protected Area with effective scientific research skills, will help them introduce important conservation measures and will teach them the core elements of eco-tourism.

## Nashon Macokecha, Tanzania

The Kwakuchinja corridor between Lake Manyara and Tarangire National Parks is crucial to maintaining the Tarangire-Manyara ecosystem, recognized for its globally-significant biodiversity. However unless local people are shown that they can make a living without cultivating rangeland, this vital wildlife habitat will be lost. The government's new 'Wildlife Management Area' (WMA) policy will decentralise wildlife management to village level. Nashon Macokecha aims to help villagers in Burunge WMA in Babati District, one of four pilot areas chosen, to develop alternative sources of income and manage their natural resources in a sustainable way.

## Dr. Rodrigo Medellín, Mexico

Some 20% of all mammals are bats yet, since the 1950s, their numbers have declined alarmingly. Part of Dr Rodrigo Medellín's project involves persuading local

people that bats are an asset rather than menace. Bats are vital for pollination and seed dispersal and also help farmers by controlling insect populations. Dr Medellín's teams currently monitor 26 cave systems in Mexico and he now aims to expand the project to create ten new protected areas for bats and help other countries develop their own bat conservation strategies.

## Alifereti Tawake, Fiji

A project to help a small fishing community boost clam populations is now being replicated through Fiji as an innovative way to effectively manage marine resources. Alifereti Tawake's success in Verata, where clam populations rose six-fold after locals became involved in conservation, has led to the creation of 23 Locally Managed Marine Areas. Now the government plans to return control of its 410 traditional fishing areas to local communities. Alifereti aims to train local communities in these

new areas and influence similar schemes overseas.

## Ka Hsaw Wa, Burma

Courageous Ka Hsaw Wa is a human rights activist who was tortured and forced to flee Burma when he was just 17 years old. In 1995, he co-founded EarthRights International to expose human rights and environmental abuses in Burma, in particular the devastation being caused by the Yadana Gas Pipeline project which traverses the Tenasserim rainforest, home to numerous endangered species such as the tiger, elephant, rhino, and great hornbill. His work has led to a groundbreaking lawsuit against Unocal, marking the first time in US legal history that a corporation has been tried for human rights abuses committed overseas. He aims to document and disseminate more widely the impact of other such projects in Burma.

**This year's judging panel comprises:** Francis Sullivan (Director of Conservation WWF-UK), Adrian Darby OBE (former Chairman of RSPB and Planta Europa), Simon Lyster (former Director General of Wildlife Trusts and a member of the Darwin Committee), Charles Clover (Environment Editor of The Daily Telegraph), John Laing, Edward Whitley and Louise Rettie. **Our paper screeners were:** Professor Morris Gosling (Chair in Animal Behaviour at Newcastle University) and Professor Bryn Green (Emeritus Professor of Countryside Management, University of London).

## Grant gratitude

As well as receiving reports and feedback on how funded projects are progressing, the Foundation also receives countless letters that simply express excitement and gratitude. The impact which a Whitley award or grant makes can rarely be overestimated. Here are a couple of examples from last year's correspondence...

"Yesterday I was so happy that after I fell asleep I woke up at 3am thinking of all the things I will now have the opportunity to do. It's great to wake up thinking these things."

Layla Osman

"Thank you very much for the wonderful news. I just jumped to the roof and hurt myself on the ceiling." **Vu Thi Quyen**

# Living Elephants

**The Living Elephants, the latest book by 2003 Whitley Friends and Gold Award winner Professor Raman Sukumar, is being hailed as one of the most comprehensive works ever written on the African and Asian elephant.**

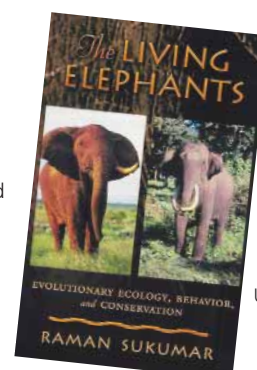
The 496-page tome takes the reader from the ancient origins of elephants to its present-day fight for survival. Sukumar's work touches on every aspect of the elephant's 60 million year evolutionary history and will, according to publishers Oxford University Press, "bring understanding of elephants to a new level."

Sukumar, who has been studying elephants for more than 25 years, won £50,000 at last year's Whitley Awards which he has been using to carry out detailed surveys of the land in the Nilgiri hills of Southern India. This has included setting up a pioneering "early-warning system" to help avoid conflict between wild elephants and nearby farmers.

The elephants are being fitted with satellite radio links and if they come too close to areas of human habitation, guides rush

out to steer them away from the tempting crops of local villagers.

There are now around 28,000 Asian elephants left in the wild, 8,000 of which live in the Nilgiri hills, the largest single population. Sukumar believes this population holds the key to the species' long-term survival.



"The Living Elephants, Evolutionary Ecology, Behaviour, and Conservation" by Raman Sukumar, Oxford University Press Inc, USA, 2003. ISBN 0195107780

# “Poaching could end” Says Zambia Conservationist

Since winning a Whitley Award last year, Dale Lewis' project to convert poachers in Zambia to farming has achieved quite stunning results.

Dale's community-based project in the Luangwa Valley, called Community Markets for Conservation and Rural Livelihoods, relies on a deceptively simple premise. If people have enough food, almost 80% of the reasons why people poach can be removed. And if the 7% of the region that is good farmland can be made more productive, then that leaves the other 93% free for wildlife.

Research shows that, until the project started, up to 60% of households suffered chronic food shortages so villagers used snares to catch wild animals which they could then barter for maize or sorghum.

Now more than 6,000 households who participate in the programme have surrendered over 20,000 snares and 214 firearms in return for agriculture training, farm inputs and improved prices for the farm products they produce. The number of farmers using snares to compensate for food shortages has fallen from over half in 2000 to just 7% now.

Over the last year, Dale has expanded the programme to create two new farmer depots and involve thousands more households. To join the scheme, villagers must subscribe to a set of by-laws that prohibit the use of snares or wasteful burning or clearing of forest resources. They must also undergo training to improve their farming skills and, in return, are linked through the farmer depots to a regional trading centre which markets their produce and guarantees them a fair price.

As food security needs have reduced, the programme is now concentrating on finding legal market alternatives to the other 20% of the people who poach to earn extra income, most of whom have an annual income of below \$150. Dale and his team are doing this with a large-scale effort to teach alternative livelihood skills and to coordinate improved trade opportunities in legal markets that replace illegal game meat trafficking. To date, 48 known poachers, many of whom once poached elephants, have completely abandoned poaching, have surrendered



their firearms and now engage in new and more profitable ways to earn a living by selling cash crops, poultry, honey and dry season vegetables and fruits from small-scale irrigation schemes, or offering their services as tourist guides.

Dale said: "With the transformation of each poacher who once killed an average of 35 animals a year and with the removal of over 20,000 snares, the project has already achieved an annual saving of over 2,500 wild animals. This is one of the biggest conservation experiments in Southern Africa but if it works, I think we can virtually stop poaching altogether."

## News in brief News in brief News in brief News in brief News in brief

### New WLF funding announced

The Foundation is delighted to announce that the William Brake Charitable Trust will be donating £50,000 a year to the WLF for the next five years.

William Brake, a founder and former Chairman of the catering supply company Brake Bros., is pictured below with his wife Valerie and daughter Debbie.

Conservationists working on projects involving rivers could also benefit from



new funding worth more than £30,000. The sponsor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has pledged £100,000 over the next three years.

### WLF welcomes new director

It seems only minutes since Louise Rettie joined WLF but now, after nearly two years in the director's chair and seven years of involvement with the Whitley Awards, she is sadly moving on. Our new director is the equally dynamic and wonderful Louisa Mitchell whose impeccable City background and recent work as the Hong Kong-based Executive Director of the Association



for Sustainable and Responsible Investment in Asia make her a more than appropriate successor.

Louisa, who lives in West London with her husband and daughter, said: "I have big shoes to fill and am looking forward to the challenge. It is a great opportunity to be joining a thoroughly professional organisation with an outstanding reputation in its field."

### Star Elephants

A film showcasing the work of Raman Sukumar, last year's Whitley Gold Award winner, is to be made by two Friends of the WLF. Acclaimed documentary maker, Philippa Walker and producer Eski Thomas are visiting Sukumar's project this March and the resulting documentary will be shown at our Awards Ceremony in April.

# Rufford Small Grants



**T**he WLF's highly popular Rufford Small Grants scheme goes from strength to strength, with almost £450,000 handed out in 2003

to some 104 conservationists around the world. In this newsletter, we are highlighting the activities of three RSG recipients to show just how much impact a £5,000 grant can make.

The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation is a charitable grant-making foundation. "Rufford Small Grants play a very useful role in getting small projects underway", said John Laing, Chairman. "We are continually impressed by just how much our recipients achieve with the funding."

## Rufford Small Grant Saving the Sea Cucumber in Vietnam

Sea cucumbers serve an important ecological role in the marine ecosystem, but dried sea cucumbers are also a highly prized delicacy in Asian cuisine and traditional Chinese medicine.

High demand has caused severe depletion of the slow-growing sea cucumber in many areas of Vietnam.

Often numbers are reduced to a point where wild populations cannot recover.

Dr. Maria del Mar's project aims to monitor and evaluate the status of four sea cucumber species in



Phu Quoc, a paradisaical Vietnamese island and biodiversity hotspot. This will enable her to determine how each species should be protected and raise awareness amongst local people.



## Rufford Small Grant Banyan Tree wins support from RSG

The banyan tree, sacred to Hindus, plays a vital role in local ecology by providing shade for both humans and cattle, a nesting place for birds, a refuge for squirrels and bats, and fodder for cattle.

However a massive increase in goat farming all over India is having a devastating effect on the banyan in many areas. Goats nibble at the tender aerial roots so they never reach the ground and take root,

rendering the trees highly vulnerable to cyclone damage.

Biswajit Mohanty's project in Orissa aims to explain the threat posed by goats to local people. He hopes to encourage villagers to protect the hanging roots by fencing

round them. If his pilot project in Dhenkanal district is successful, the scheme will be expanded to other areas.

## Rufford Small Grant Farmers target predators in Argentina Rangeland conflicts

Rangeland management in Argentina is a crucial national issue, where wild predators such as the puma and the culpeo fox can devastate farmers' livelihoods. Studies near Quebrada del Condorito National Park reveal that 75% of farmers have been affected, losing up to 10% of their cattle and more than 25% of their sheep. Widespread declines of native prey have forced predators to attack domestic animals instead. Landowners often use poison and traps against them and usually resent conservation efforts.

Monica Pia will study the factors affecting conflict between large carnivores and humans and help local people devise solutions that will promote coexistence with wildlife.



## The Whitley Laing Foundation

The Whitley Laing Foundation offers a wide range of awards for nature conservation projects world wide. We seek pragmatic, sustainable and long lasting nature conservation work, which generally emphasises the benefits of wildlife and habitat conservation to the local communities in which its applicants work.

The Foundation also wants to raise public awareness of the serious problems facing ecosystems through promoting the work of its winners. Whilst we realise that funding is always hard to find, we prefer to focus our resources on projects outside the first world where funding is often hardest to raise.