



## Whitley Award donated by Goldman Sachs winner Hotlin Ompusunggu, Borneo.

11 May, 2011

**NEWS from THE WHITLEY FUND FOR NATURE**

**Princess presents top conservation accolade to Indonesian health carer**

**Whitley Award donated by Goldman Sachs Hotlin Ompusunggu – Dentistry and Deforestation: local community health through forest stewardship, Gunung Palung national park, Borneo.**

**EMBARGO: Not for publication, please, before 20:30hrs GMT on Wednesday 11 May 2011**

**LONDON, UK: 11 MAY 2011** - HRH The Princess Royal (Princess Anne) tonight presented one of the world's top prizes for grassroots nature conservation – a Whitley Award – to **Luis Rivera**, of **Argentina**, for his work to safeguard the Southern Yungas forests of Argentina and Bolivia which support an unusually high variety of birds as well as many other endangered species.

Luis Rivera, a biologist at Jujay National University and the president of the conservation foundation CEBio received his prize during a ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society, London, hosted by The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) – the UK-based charity behind the international awards scheme.

His Whitley Award includes a project grant of £30,000 – donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust – an engraved trophy, membership of the influential network of past Whitley Award winners, international recognition and professional development training.

The prize recognises his efforts to protect the rich biodiversity of the Southern Yungas (home to 50% of Argentina's bird species), including by raising public awareness of the damage caused by forest cutting and burning and poaching, and the more sustainable economic potential of wildlife-watching tourism.

The evening's top honour – the £60,000 Whitley Gold Award – went to marine biologist Dr Rachel Graham, of **Belize**, for her work to put in place a national action plan for sharks and get more local people actively involved in protecting ocean wildlife and coastal biodiversity and so safeguard local livelihoods and Belize's economically important tourist industry.

In addition, Her Royal Highness presented other Whitley Awards worth £30,000 each to conservation leaders from Croatia, India, Indonesian Borneo, Russia and Uzbekistan.

*For the full results, please see the Notes overleaf.*

Commenting on Luis Rivera's success, WFN director Georgina Domberger, said: *"The aim of the Whitley*

*Awards is to identify and applaud inspirational conservation leaders, and give them new funds and skills to enable them to make even greater use of their scientific expertise and local knowledge to deliver real and lasting benefits for people and wildlife and the places both share.*

*“In the case of Luis this year’s judges were particularly impressed by the celebratory air to Luis’s campaign, such as his adoption of the colourful yet vulnerable Alder Amazon parrot as a symbol of the threats and opportunities for the Southern Yungas and how wildlife themes are being added to fiestas and other entertainments, so adding to public understanding while also attracting more tourists.”*

The ceremony at which Luis Rivera received his accolade was co-hosted by the author and broadcaster John McCarthy and witnessed by a 350-strong audience which included embassy officials, Whitley Fund for Nature donors, including HSBC and WWF-UK, and leading environmentalists.

The Whitley Awards scheme is an annual competition, first held in 1994. In the 18 years since the scheme began, it has given grants worth more than £6m to support the work of inspirational conservation leaders in 70 countries and built a network of more than 120 Whitley alumni. To learn more about the charity, its donors and past winners, please see: [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org).

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### **Awards Ceremony photographs**

Copyright-cleared photographs of winners receiving their Whitley Awards will be available from <https://picasaweb.google.com/105548002819098368093> shortly after the ceremony ends or can be emailed direct on request (see contact details above). Portraits of the finalists and project images are also available from the same Picasa folder or by email, on request.

### **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 120 international conservation leaders in 70 countries. For more information, please see [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org).

## **The Whitley Awards 2011 – the results**

### **Whitley Gold Award, donated by WWF-UK**

#### **+ Whitley Award donated by George and Natasha Duffield**

**Dr Rachel T. GRAHAM (Belize)**, the Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Gulf and Caribbean Sharks and Rays Programme, who is protecting Belize's sharks, rays and other ocean giants – a valuable eco-tourism attraction but increasingly imperilled by local misconceptions and unsustainable fishing by other countries.

#### **Whitley Award donated by The Friends of The WFN**

**Dr Ramana ATHREYA (India)**, an associate professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and a co-ordinator with Eco-Systems India, who is working on landscape and biodiversity protection in India's least populated state: Arunachal Pradesh, by forming conservation alliances with Himalayan tribes-people.

#### **Whitley Award donated by The Shears Foundation**

**Jana BEDEK (Croatia)**, a biologist, caver and President of the Croatian Bio-speleological Society who is capturing local knowledge to protect both the vast limestone cave systems which lie beneath the Dinaric Alps, stretching from Italy to Albania, and the many unusual creatures found there and nowhere else on Earth.

#### **Whitley Award donated by The Scottish Friends of The WFN**

**Elena BYKOVA (Uzbekistan)**, , who, as Executive Secretary of the Saiga Conservation Alliance and as a researcher with the Institute of Zoology at Uzbekistan's Academy of Sciences, is working in the desert-steppes between the Aral and Caspian Seas on safeguarding the critically-endangered saiga antelope, including by restoring local pride in traditions associated with the animal.

#### **Whitley Award donated by Goldman Sachs**

**Dr Hotlin OMPUSUNGGU (Indonesian Borneo)**, who as head of Alam Sehat Lestari (Healthy, Nature, Everlasting) and a dentist is trying to sever the links between poverty, ill-health and ecological damage to the Gunung Palung National Park, in West Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, by letting poor communities 'pay' for healthcare by becoming guardians of the forests where gibbons and orangutans live.

#### **Whitley Award donated by The Garfield Weston Foundation**

**Dr Igor PROKOFYEV (Russia)**, the director of PERESVET (Grassroots Alliance) and head of bio-monitoring at Bryansk University, who is inspiring communities in Western Russia to take part in the country's first ever conservation movement for bats and ensuring the region remains a world-relevant haven for them, despite recent loss of habitat to urban development.

#### **Whitley Award donated by The William Brake Charitable Trust**

**Luis RIVERA (Argentina)**, a biologist at Jujuy National University and the President of the CEBio Foundation who is using colourful endangered parrots as the emblem of a campaign to boost tourism income and rally public support for the conservation of the species-rich Yungas forests, in the eastern shadow of the Andes.

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