

Wildlife

Attenborough backs award for fight to save night monkeys

A Colombian scientist who risked her life to save rare monkeys from scientific research has won an award from a charity backed by Sir David Attenborough.



[Link to this video](#)



By Louise Gray, Environment Correspondent 7:00AM BST 13 May 2010

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Dr Angela Maldonado gave up a lucrative career in business to dedicate her life to conservation after rescuing a woolly monkey from the pet trade. A few days later the research centre where she took the monkey before release into the wild was torched by revolutionary guerrillas.

Unperturbed she went on to study biology in Britain and now works on the dangerous Colombia-Peru border to stop the removal of an estimated 4,000 wild night monkeys a year for use in biomedical experiments.

The "owl monkeys" as they are known are one of the few monkey species to be affected by the same form of malaria as humans and so are extremely lucrative, but are almost extinct in the wild. The trade, worth up to £60,000 every year, was outlawed by international agreement more than 30 years ago.

As project director of the Fundacion Entropika, Dr Maldonado offers new ways for local people to earn a sustainable living from rainforest resources, for example by freeze drying forest fruits.

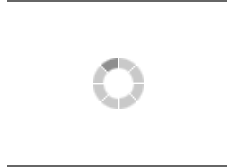
"Our aim is to find a sustainable activity that will substitute the income from illegal extraction of resources," she said.

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She is also finding out more about the mysterious night monkeys – the world's only true nocturnal primate – that are also known as earless monkeys on account of their tiny ears.

Dr Maldonado, a graduate of Oxford Brookes University and the University of St Andrew's, was presented with the Whitley Gold Award in



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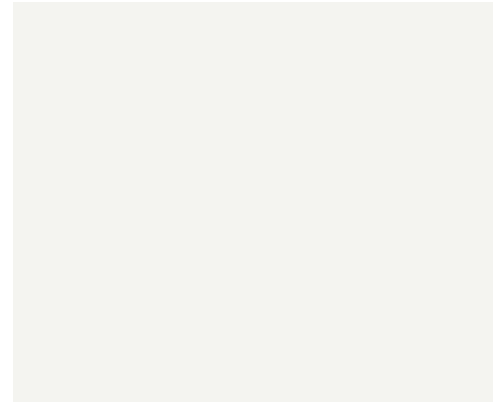
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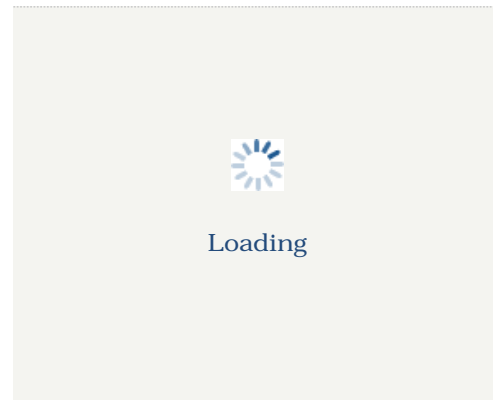
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the Princess Royal at a ceremony in London.

She also received £60,000 towards the project.

The **Whitley Fund for Nature**, backed by David Attenborough and the Princess Anne, rewards projects helping communities and wildlife around the world.

Georgina Domberger, the director of WFN, congratulated Dr Madonado for her brave stance.

"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," she said.

The full list of 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 tensile 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. [Watch the video.](#)

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. [Watch the video.](#)

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 overfishing, oil pollution and climate change. Whitley Award donated by Natasha and George Duffield. [Watch the video.](#)

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 one per cent of the area covered in 1900. Whitley Award donated by The Garfield Weston Foundation. [Watch the video.](#)

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. [Watch the video.](#)

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. [Watch the video.](#)

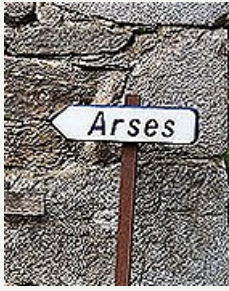
Jimmy Muheebwa (Uganda) who is inspiring communities in Lake Victoria's catchment zone to use the wetlands sustainably, to improve livelihoods and save the region's local wildlife, including Uganda's national bird, the grey-crowned crane. Whitley Award donated by The Shears Foundation. [Watch the video.](#)

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. [Watch the video.](#)



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