# Conservation news

## The Whitley Awards 2026

On 29 April 2026 the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) announced the six conservation leaders receiving the Whitley Awards 2026. The Whitley Awards ceremony was held at the Royal Geographical Society for the flagship event of the UK-based charity, which was also broadcast online.

These are awards worth GBP 50,000 each in project funding over 1 year. The 2026 Whitley Award Winners are Marina Kameni, Cameroon (Frogs and farmers in Mount Manengouba); Moreangels Mbizah, Zimbabwe (Lions and livelihoods: promoting human–wildlife coexistence in Zimbabwe); Paola Sangolquí, Ecuador (Rescuing the Galápagos petrel from the brink of extinction); Issah Seidu, Ghana (Fishers and guitarfish: preventing extinction along Ghana's western coastline); Parveen Shaikh, India (Skimmer guardians: protecting riverine birds and their habitat, India); and Barkha Subba, India (Survivor of a lost world: saving the Himalayan salamander and its wetlands).

In addition, a Whitley Award alumnus is chosen to receive the Whitley Gold Award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to conservation. Worth GBP 120,000, this top prize was presented to 2016 Whitley Award winner Farwiza Farhan and her team at HAkA. Over the last decade, Farwiza has fought to conserve Sumatra's iconic species in the Leuser ecosystem in Aceh, Indonesia, by enabling communities to challenge development plans that threaten the forest and its people. With WFN's support, HAkA halted the construction of a mega-dam that would have drowned 4,000 ha of pristine forest, and scored a major victory against a palm oil company, PT Kallista Allam, for illegally burning 1,000 ha of forest. With this Whitley Gold Award, HAkA will accelerate community protection of water catchments in Leuser after cyclone Senyar brought floods and landslides to Aceh in late 2025, after vulnerable watersheds affected by extensive deforestation failed to cope with the extreme rainfall. Over 2 years, the team will monitor priority watersheds through advanced geospatial technologies, provide evidence to government to inform watershed management and forest conservation policies, and scale up local stewardship to galvanize public action through communities, youth organizations and partners.

Whitley Fund for Nature was set up to accelerate the work of grassroots conservation leaders and has funded more than 230 conservationists—primarily in Latin America, Africa and Asia—since it was founded by Edward Whitley, OBE, over 30 years ago. The charity has awarded over GBP 26 million in conservation grants to date. By including local people as stakeholders in protecting ecosystems, today's conservationists are helping to tackle biodiversity loss, climate change, land grabs, food insecurity and water scarcity.

Whitley Fund for Nature has a long-term commitment to conservation leaders. Previous winners can repeatedly apply for further Continuation Funding grants worth up to GBP 100,000 over 2 years, to scale their work or respond to new threats. Winners also gain a significant boost in profile, PR assistance and membership to a global conservation network, giving them access to peer support and learning opportunities.

For more information on the Whitley Awards or how to apply, visit whitleyaward.org.

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