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Six Finalists Announced for World's Top Animal Conservation Award

Heroes for chimpanzees, seahorses, penguins and more in the running for the 2020 Indianapolis Prize and \$250,000

INDIANAPOLIS – Officials from the Indianapolis Zoological Society, Inc., the presenter of the world's leading award for animal conservation, today named the six Finalists that will contend for the 2020 Indianapolis Prize and \$250,000. The Indianapolis Prize Finalists represent the world's most successful professional wildlife conservationists, biologists and scientists, and their heroic work has saved dozens of animal species and their habitats from extinction.

"The rate at which animal extinctions have occurred over the last century is at least 100 times higher than what can be considered natural. More than one million animal species are now threatened with extinction. We can all find hope and inspiration in the victories of these conservationists who do the difficult work of saving animal species," said Dr. Rob Shumaker, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoological Society. "The Indianapolis Prize exists to celebrate and elevate the achievements of these heroic individuals. Their work proves that success is possible, and there are genuine reasons to be hopeful for the future of the natural world."

The Indianapolis Prize recognizes and rewards conservationists who have made significant progress in saving an animal species, or multiple species, from extinction. Every other year, the Indianapolis Prize awards \$250,000 to one Winner, while five Finalists receive \$10,000 each.

"The 2020 Indianapolis Prize Finalists have developed effective approaches to wildlife conservation that are being implemented and replicated all over the world," said Wes Sechrest, chief scientist and CEO of Global Wildlife Conservation and an Indianapolis Prize Nominating Committee member. "They have persisted despite long odds and countless obstacles to protect species that contribute to Earth's ecosystems. These individuals are not just accomplished and impressive – they are heroic. We should celebrate them and answer their call to action."

The six Finalists for the 2020 Indianapolis Prize are:

Dee Boersma, Ph.D. (University of Washington; Ecosystem Sentinels)



Dr. P. Dee Boersma is a champion for penguins. She successfully stopped penguin harvesting and redirected oil tanker lanes away from penguin colonies. Dee has developed protected areas for penguins, constructed nesting sites to increase populations, and studied the effects of environmental change on Galápagos penguins. Finalist for the 2016 and 2018 Indianapolis Prize.

Christophe Boesch, Ph.D. (Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology; Wild Chimpanzee Foundation)

Dr. Christophe Boesch fights to ensure a safe future for chimpanzees. Christophe has uncovered the effects of rapid deforestation across Sub-Saharan Africa, promoted new areas for protecting the remaining chimpanzee populations in Guinea, and studied chimpanzees to better understand culture, hunting, tool use, and the species' similarities to humans.

Gerardo Ceballos, Ph.D. (National Autonomous University of Mexico, Institute of Ecology)

Dr. Gerardo Ceballos is a conservation strategist who has created successful species survival plans for the Mexican jaguar and the black-footed ferret. Gerardo lobbied lawmakers persuading them to create the landmark Mexican Endangered Species Act. He also built Mexico's national system of protected areas including reserves expected to benefit future generations. Finalist for the 2010 and 2014 Indianapolis Prize.

Sylvia Earle, Ph.D. (Deep Ocean Exploration and Research, Inc.; Mission Blue; SEAlliance)

Dr. Sylvia Earle is a trailblazer and ambassador for the Earth's oceans. She has walked untethered along the ocean floor at the deepest point of any human being during her quest to research and monitor sea life. Sylvia also established a global network of protected marine preserves that she calls "hope spots" and has spent more than 7,000 hours underwater. Finalist for 2018 Indianapolis Prize.

John Robinson, Ph.D. (Wildlife Conservation Society)

Dr. John Robinson is a leader in using field-based scientific research to make pivotal changes for wildlife worldwide. John helped establish terrestrial and marine protected areas for tigers, gorillas, forest elephants, coral species and more. As the Chief Conservation Officer of the Wildlife Conservation Society, he has focused much of his work on watching over the world's natural resources.

Amanda Vincent, Ph.D. (The University of British Columbia, Project Seahorse)

Dr. Amanda Vincent stands guard as the protector of the world's 44 species of seahorses. As Director and co-founder of Project Seahorse, her determination to preserve the world's oceans led to regulations of international trade of marine fishes and protection of vital



underwater ecosystems. She was the first scientist to study seahorses underwater and coordinates global effort to support all marine life. Finalist for the 2010 and 2016 Indianapolis Prize.

The six Finalists for the 2020 Indianapolis Prize were selected by a nine-person committee representing the scientific and conservation communities, as well as the City of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Zoological Society. Finalists were evaluated for the significance of their achievements in the conservation of an animal species or multiple species; the measurable outcomes resulting from their work; the quality of science involved in their conservation efforts; the number of years dedicated to conservation work; and a demonstrated spirit of cooperation with zoological societies and other like-minded institutions.

“While the challenges facing wildlife and wild places are sizable, so too is our will to make a difference. These Indianapolis Prize Finalists remind us that we are succeeding every day, and solutions are within our reach,” said actor and Indianapolis Prize Honorary Chair Jane Alexander. “This award offers an important platform to advance hope for species and empower people all over the world to become conservation heroes in their own right.”

The Winner of the 2020 Indianapolis Prize will be announced later this spring and honored at the Indianapolis Prize Gala presented by Cummins Inc. on Sept. 12, 2020.

For extended biographies and multimedia assets for the 2020 Finalists, [click here](#) to access the Indianapolis Prize press kit. To learn more about previous Indianapolis Prize Winners, visit IndianapolisPrize.org.

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About the Indianapolis Prize

The Indianapolis Prize recognizes and rewards conservationists who have achieved major victories in advancing the sustainability of an animal species or group of species. Winners receive an unrestricted \$250,000 award. Remaining Finalists each receive \$10,000. Since 2006, the Indianapolis Prize has administered more than \$1.3 million in unrestricted cash awards. The Indianapolis Prize is administered by the Indianapolis Zoological Society, Inc.