

From: The Indianapolis Prize

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Finalists Announced for 2014 Indianapolis Prize

Six Heroes Advance to Vie for Quarter of a Million Dollars in World's Leading Award for Animal Conservation

INDIANAPOLIS – Six exceptional conservationists have advanced as finalists for the 2014 Indianapolis Prize, the world's leading award for animal conservation. Selected from a group of 39 nominees, the finalists in the running for \$250,000 include: Joel Berger, Ph.D.; Gerardo Ceballos, Ph.D.; Carl Jones, Ph.D.; Russell A. Mittermeier, Ph.D.; Carl Safina, Ph.D.; and Patricia C. Wright, Ph.D. These heroes were nominated and named finalists for their outstanding achievements on behalf of the world's most endangered species.

"I applaud the finalists for their commitment and perseverance in protecting the world's most endangered species," said Jane Alexander, honorary co-chair of the 2014 Indianapolis Prize and 2012 Global Wildlife Ambassador Award winner. "These heroes create successful action plans that other conservationists can model. Our planet is a better place because of their efforts and we are thrilled to tell their stories through the Indianapolis Prize."

The winner of the Prize will receive an unrestricted \$250,000 cash award and the Lilly Medal, an original work of art that signifies the winner's contributions to saving some of the world's most threatened animals. The remaining five finalists will each receive \$10,000. The Indianapolis Prize jury, made up of distinguished conservation leaders, will determine the winner of the 2014 Indianapolis Prize. The winner will be announced in mid-2014 and honored at the next Indianapolis Prize Gala presented by Cummins Inc., to be held September 27, 2014 in Indianapolis.

"Our finalists are among the most important wildlife conservationists working in the field today," said Michael Crowther, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoo, which initiated the Indianapolis Prize as part of its core mission. "They are achieving real victories in saving animal species,

creating hope and making the world a better place, and we're pleased that they are finalists for the world's leading award for animal conservation."

In alphabetical order, the finalists for the 2014 Indianapolis Prize are:

Joel Berger, Ph.D. (Wildlife Conservation Society)

In the Arctic as on the Tibetan Plateau, global warming advances at twice the rate of the rest of the world. Land animals - particularly muskoxen and wild yak - are modern metaphors for climate change. Finalist Joel Berger works to understand why their populations are changing, and what we can do about it. Berger approaches his work as "actionable conservation," effecting change throughout the world for large mammals. His studies and economic analyses have led African nations to reevaluate the practice of rhino dehorning and U.S. officials to create the first federally-protected American wildlife corridor, Wyoming's Path of the Pronghorn. Through visionary thinking, science and implementation, Berger's work ignites excitement about conservation initiatives in Mongolia and far beyond.

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

Finalist Gerardo Ceballos is at the forefront of groundbreaking research and animal conservation in Mexico, acting as a key proponent in passage of the country's Act for Endangered Species, which now protects over 40,000 animals. Developing successful conservation strategies for a wide variety of species, including the jaguar and the black-footed ferret - the most endangered mammal in North America - Ceballos' approaches to conservation are broadly applicable and undeniably impactful.

Carl Jones, Ph.D. (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation)

A global center of avian diversity, the Republic of Mauritius was once home to the famed, now-extinct dodo. Finalist Carl Jones has saved the islands' other unique birds from a similar fate. He has saved a dozen species, including Mauritius kestrels, pink pigeons and echo parakeets, whose effective populations were once less than 10 and now range in the hundreds. He has also controlled invasive species and re-introduced endemic plants, reptiles, and birds - including giant tortoises brought to the islands by Charles Darwin - to revitalize the Mauritian ecosystems. The tools for ecosystem restoration and species recovery that he has developed will be crucial to conservation efforts elsewhere in the world.

Russell A. Mittermeier, Ph.D. (Conservation International)

As a leader of one of the world's most important conservation organizations, finalist Russell Mittermeier is a conservation icon. He was one of the first academic primatologists to become concerned with primate conservation and to see synergies among field research, zoos, universities, government agencies and protected areas, leading him to develop the first global primate conservation strategy more than 35 years ago. Mittermeier remains a classical field biologist, carrying out expeditions through forests and swamps in Brazil, Suriname, Peru, Madagascar and many other tropical rain forest countries, and working to create new protected areas in the highest priority areas for primate conservation. He is also credited with developing the concept of "megadiversity countries" and has been a major proponent of the concept of "biodiversity hotspots," first developed by British ecologist Norman Myers in 1988. The hotspots concept has become synonymous with habitat and animal conservation, and has been perhaps the most influential strategy in biodiversity conservation over the past quarter century. In addition, Mittermeier has rediscovered several species, described 12 species new to science (three turtles, seven monkeys and two lemurs), with several more in the works, and seven new species have been named after him.

Carl Safina, Ph.D. (Blue Ocean Institute)

Called a "Thoreau for the 21st century," finalist Carl Safina is an accomplished ocean conservationist who seeks to create a "sea ethic" through science, art and literature.

Noting the steady declines in fish populations in the 1990s, Safina became a voice for the conservation and restoration of marine life. Safina led movements to explore the aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil blowout, ban high-seas drift nets, reform federal fisheries laws and achieve the passage of a United Nations Global Fisheries Treaty. The author of six critically acclaimed books and host of PBS's, "Saving the Ocean with Carl Safina," Safina uses his talent for communicative science to demonstrate how the ocean is changing. The result is compelling, lyrical storytelling that inspires a wide audience to action.

Patricia C. Wright, Ph.D. (Centre ValBio at Stony Brook University)

Finalist Patricia C. Wright found a species that was thought to be extinct for 50 years, Madagascar's golden bamboo lemur, just one year after earning her doctorate. Facing timber exploitation, government corruption and cultural barriers, Wright led the creation of Ranomafana National Park – now a UNESCO

World Heritage Site. Wright transformed Madagascar's park system to champion the survival of the island's most iconic animal – the lemur. Fiercely committed to the Malagasy people, Wright works to empower and partner with the people who have always been tied to the forests for a living, implementing a conservation model that is replicated all over the world. The key to her continued success is a keen understanding of the importance of cooperation and empowerment.

The Indianapolis Prize was first awarded in 2006 to George Archibald, Ph.D., the co-founder of the International Crane Foundation . The 2008 winner was George Schaller, Ph.D., senior conservationist for the Wildlife Conservation Society and an icon in field conservation around the world. In 2010, the Indianapolis Prize was awarded to Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Ph.D., founder of Save the Elephants , who pioneered research in elephant social behavior and has led the way in fighting the poaching of African elephants. Steven Amstrup, Ph.D., of Polar Bears International , received the 2012 Indianapolis Prize for his field work and research that led the United States to declare polar bears as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

To learn more about each of the finalists, how you can support their work and the Indianapolis Prize, please visit indianapolisprize.org .

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MEDIA NOTE: Images that accompany this story are available for download on the Indianapolis Prize Press Room .

The Indianapolis Prize was initiated by the Indianapolis Zoo as a significant component of its mission to empower people and communities, both locally and globally, to advance animal conservation. This biennial award brings the world's attention to the cause of animal conservation and the brave, talented and dedicated men and women who spend their lives saving the Earth's endangered animal species. The Indianapolis Prize has received support from the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation since its inception in 2006

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