

SA rhinos champ wins Tusk Award

Cathy Dreyer, a local champion for black rhino, was awarded the Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa on Wednesday, 30 November. Presented in London by Sir David Attenborough and the royal patron of TUSK Prince William, Dreyer is not only the first woman, but also the first South African to receive this accolade.

Established in partnership with Investec Asset Management, the TUSK Awards recognise Africa's unsung conservation heroes – those individuals who have undertaken outstanding, inspirational conservation work throughout Africa.



Dreyer was recognised for her exceptional commitment and success in protecting black rhinos. She started her career over 17 years ago at the age of 22 as a conservation student with South African National Parks, assisting with the capture of black rhino. This became a turning point in her life and her work has led directly to the establishment of new black rhino populations. In a country with the highest population of rhino – yet facing the highest rate of poaching – Dreyer offers the potential to provide vital protection for this species. “I am driven by the need to feel that I am making a difference and contributing meaningfully to conservation.”

Humble roots

Coming from humble roots and starting a career at the bottom of the ladder, Dreyer's perseverance and focus built a career which graphically illustrates that being disadvantaged is not a barrier to achieving great heights, not only in conservation but also in life itself. Her success has been totally through her own efforts and as a woman she has faced greater challenges than most.

She admits that: “I have always been driven by my work and family has had to take a back seat for a number of years.” Crucially, Dreyer has helped to bring people working in conservation together, principally in a number of national and international rhino translocations.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge said: “As ever, tonight I have been humbled by the sheer dedication and commitment that all of our 2016 nominees have shown, in preserving – against the odds - our precious natural world. Their work is dangerous but vitally important – and we are immensely grateful for it.

“Let’s remember,” he added “that the illegal wildlife trade is the fourth biggest illegal trade in the world after drugs, weapons and human slavery.”



Two other awards presented

In addition to the Tusk Award for Conservation, two other awards were also presented. Angola’s Manuel Sacaia was named the winner of the Tusk Wildlife Ranger Award, in recognition of his fearless dedication to protecting the critically endangered giant sable antelope from extinction.

The Prince William Award for Conservation in Africa was presented by Prince William to John Kahekwa from the Democratic Republic of Congo for a life lived in pursuit of a future for the Grauers gorilla within the Congo’s war zones.

In a surprise twist, Sir David Attenborough was also presented with a lifetime achievement award by the prince for his "immense contribution" to conservation and for inspiring generations around the globe to care for the natural world.

Hendrik du Toit, CEO of Investec Asset Management, added, “We live in unprecedented times. Over the last 40 years the world’s wildlife population has decreased by more than half and some of the planet’s most iconic species, many of which count the continent of Africa as their home, are on the brink of extinction. Now is the time to act if we are to reverse this. The awards are not only a celebration of the achievements of the nominees; they are also about inspiring all of us for the ongoing battle to preserve our natural heritage for the generations to come.”

The ceremony was attended by many of the charity’s high profile supporters and Tusk Patrons including Bear Grylls,

Ronnie Wood and Katherine Jenkins.

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