



****NEWS RELEASE****

CONTACT: MARY DIXON (WCS) 347-840-1242, mdixon@wcs.org

Four WCS Conservationists Are Named Finalists for Award for Conservation Excellence

- **Scientists Joel Berger, Ullas Karanth, Nyawira Muthiga and Tim McClanahan Are WCS Nominees for Prestigious Honor**

[@Newsroom](#)

(NEW YORK- January 23, 2016) WCS is pleased to announce that four of its scientists, Dr. Joel Berger, Dr. Ullas Karanth, Dr. Nyawira Muthiga and Dr. Tim McClanahan have advanced as finalists for the 2018 Award for Conservation Excellence (ACE) (Drs. Muthiga and McClanahan have been nominated together as one finalist).

The five finalists for the prestigious award for animal conservation were selected from among 40 applicants. In recognition of their success in the conservation of at-risk species, the four join fellow finalists Drs. George Archibald and David Macdonald.

The [Award for Conservation Excellence \(ACE\)](#) was created to recognize the extraordinary contributions made to wildlife conservation by the world's leading scientists.

The award will be presented by The Banovich Wildscapes Foundation, which fosters cooperative efforts to conserve the Earth's wildlife and wild places. It was founded in 2007 by artist John Banovich, an American oil painter known internationally for his portrayals of wildlife.

The ACE recipient will be named and presented with the first ACE at a premier awards ceremony during the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition on February 14, 2018 at the Gaillard Center in Charleston, S.C.

The first place winner will be awarded a \$100,000 cash prize (donated by Cabela's Outdoor Fund and the Cabela Family Foundation) and a \$5,000 Cabela's gift certificate. The other four finalists will receive a \$5,000 Cabelas Gift Certificate and a \$5,000 cash reward (donated by Bass Pro Shops).

“We are proud of these four groundbreaking WCS scientists and extend our congratulations to all of those nominated for this honor,” said John Robinson, Executive Vice President of Conservation and Science at WCS. “These are people striving to, and succeeding in making the world a better place to live in, both for people and for wildlife. It is a personal honor for me to work with all of the WCS finalists and it has been a pleasure following their careers over several decades.”

The WCS scientists are in great company with the other two finalists George Archibald (Co-Founder & Senior Conservationist, International Crane Foundation); and David Macdonald (Director of WildCRU, Zoology, University of Oxford, The Recanati-Kaplan Centre).

Meet the WCS Finalists

Joel Berger, Ph.D WCS Senior Conservation Scientist

Dr. Joel Berger is a senior conservation scientist for WCS working across the globe on such enigmatic species as wild yaks in Tibet, Mongolian saiga, muskoxen in the Asian and Alaskan Arctic and pronghorn in the American West. When not going to extremes to study wildlife in the remote corners of the globe, Joel serves as the Barbara Cox University Chair in Wildlife Conservation at Colorado State University, where he and his students continue to push to the edges of conservation.

Among his myriad accomplishments, Dr. Berger served a leading role in the creation of America's first federally-sanctioned wildlife migration corridor, the Path of the Pronghorn at the southern periphery of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. He achieved this victory by working with key stakeholders representing many interests, including ranchers, oil and gas companies, government officials and agencies.

In addition, Berger brought attention to the consequences of dehorning both black and white rhinos, prompting re-evaluation of this conservation tactic. More recently, he unraveled the harmful effects of the global cashmere trade on Central Asia's endangered wildlife including wild yaks and snow leopards. Berger has written books on wild horses, rhinos, bison, and fear in prey species and his other writings appear in outlets such as the Washington Post, New York Times, Forbes, Mongabay and U.S. News and World Report.

K. Ullas Karanth, Ph.D
WCS Director for Science-Asia

Born and raised in the Western Ghat region of India—a global biodiversity hotspot—Ullas Karanth developed a scientific passion and expertise in animal ecology, population dynamics and statistical ecology. Karanth is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on tigers and assessing tiger and tiger prey distribution and population numbers—information critical to saving the species. Among his many accomplishments are his critique that led to the abandonment by the Indian Government of “pugmark” sampling and replacement with camera trap surveys to identify individual tigers from photos using their unique stripe patterns.

Karanth has also been an active advocate for wildlife conservation by guiding local advocacy groups to mitigate threats to wildlife and habitats. He has skillfully piloted conservation models that realistically reconcile conflicting needs of wildlife conservation and human development in, crowded, aspirational India. Karanth recently co-edited, “Methods for Monitoring Tiger and Prey Populations,” considered a “must have” reference for those looking to accurately and non-invasively inform tiger status and management.

Karanth has published 125 peer-reviewed papers on various scientific topics including carnivore biology, population dynamics and conservation policy. A sought-after opinion writer on matters of conservation, Karanth's op-eds have been published internationally in the Guardian, Scientific American, National Geographic, and other celebrated outlets.

Tim McClanahan, Ph.D (WCS Senior Conservation Zoologist)
& Nyawira Muthiga, Ph.D (Director of WCS Marine Program in Kenya)

Dr. Tim McClanahan and Dr. Nyawira Muthiga are coral reef ecologists and conservationists who have worked in coastal Kenya, East Africa, the Western Indian Ocean and around the world for more than 30 years. They were founders of WCS's Coral Reef programs and catalyzed the development of coral reef research and conservation programs in Kenya, Belize, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Fiji, and smaller more temporary field programs in other countries, including Tanzania and Mozambique.

They have pushed the frontiers of coral reef science and understanding key management needs for developing sustainable relationships between people and coral reefs. Their years of study have uncovered the natural and human disturbances that impact reef fish and habitats and the rates of recovery under different fisheries management systems. As leading coral reef scientists, they have published more than 300 peer-reviewed publications, comprising influential studies on the impacts of fishing

and the alteration of ecological food webs, tourism, sedimentation, climate change and coral bleaching, and the importance of managing gears for sustainable fishing and marine parks for conservation.

To achieve meaningful and enduring conservation, Tim and Nyawira work closely with local communities to implement agreeable conservation solutions that build the capacity for co-management by strengthening the adaptive capacity of local governance, decision-making and increasing incomes of fishers by understanding of social, economic, and ecological processes. In addition to sitting on numerous national and regional conservation boards, their mentorship and leadership have shaped the careers of dozens of local scientists and international scholars, with a particular emphasis on mentoring students and managers in the applied marine sciences and management of Western Indian Ocean coral reefs.

###

ABOUT THE WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society)

MISSION: WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS, based at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission. Visit: newsroom.wcs.org
Follow: @WCSNewsroom. For more information: 347-840-1242.

The mission of ACE is to honor and appreciate a legacy of conservation through recognition of men and women who share their passion to conserve the great outdoors, and have made extraordinary contributions to the sustainability of nature and wildlife. The Award will recognize a conservationist's long-term commitment to making our planet a better place, and empower people in both local and international communities to advance wildlife conservation.