

# Earth movers

We profile some of the men and women in, and nominated by the IUCN network, who from Uruguay to India, Malawi to Germany, are driving conservation at all levels from the village to the international policy arena.



**“I told men what they could do with my river”.**

Khadija Ahmed watched life drain from the village. The Hadejia River trickled when it should be in full spate; the dry season farm plot grew less food; each year produced less millet to thresh and winnow; ribs protruded from the family’s cattle; and more nets returned empty, reducing income from fish oil extraction. Tracing the changes upstream revealed too much river in some places, not enough in others, and weeds spreading everywhere. The situation would worsen until someone stepped forward. But what could Ahmed do? She was a woman. Men ran the military. Men controlled land rights. Men led Islam. Men even controlled the market of water supply carts. Women like Ahmed were traditionally expected to stay at home and raise children. It was a quiet frustration that elder women in northern Nigeria had learned to cope with, to quietly accept as their lot. But Ahmed felt little was gained by continued silence. So out of fear and desperation, she finally spoke up, with a new voice, and with unprecedented results. Khadija is now helping shape the local watershed management plan and persuading the men on the board to listen and adopt some of her recommendations. Women feel empowered



for the first time along the watershed, and their perspective makes decisions more inclusive and, therefore, more sustainable.

**Generosity in Colombia’s forests**

Colombian-born biologist **Hendrik Nicolas Hoeck** decided to do the opposite to what market-driven logic would suggest



he do. Instead of dedicating the 200 hectare farm in Guasca, Colombia—the place he and his sister Marianne inherited from their parents, grew up, and developed a passion for nature—to growing flowers or dividing it up for a high-value real estate, they decided to donate it to Fundación Natura, an IUCN member. They made the donation on just one condition: the land and its wonderful high Andean forests should be perpetually preserved and dedicated to research and environmental education. “Hendrik’s generosity was not restricted to donating the reserve: he has remained thoroughly involved in the development of the now-called Encenillo Biological Reserve which preserves the last ‘encenillo’ forests in Colombia’s Eastern Andes,” says Roberto León Gómez Charry of Fundación Natura. Hendrik is part of the Reserve’s Steering Committee and regularly travels back to his native country from his current home in Switzerland to participate in decision-making about the Reserve’s future. “His example carries great symbolism in this violence-hit country, where we need to restore not only social harmony but also our natural ecosystems and forest and make them accessible to all Colombians,” says Roberto.

**Saviour of the Chacoan guanaco**

At 36, the young Bolivian scientist and member of IUCN’s Species Survival Commission, **Erika Cuéllar-Soto** has already made a major contribution to wildlife conservation and in particular in saving the endangered camelid, the Chacoan guanaco from extinction in and around Bolivia’s Kaa-Iya del Gran Chaco National Park (KINP). The guanaco is one

of the flagship species that justified the creation of the KINP—the largest national park in Bolivia and the most extensive dry forest protected area in the world. Through Erika’s unconditional commitment, dedication and untiring effort to prevent the species’ extinction, she succeeded in stopping illegal sport hunting. She is working closely with the different actors who own and manage the lands on which the guanacos depend—the KINP, the Ioseño Guarani indigenous organization, CABI, the Isoso indigenous territory and local ranchers, and has formed a competent and committed team of Ioseño parabiologists. Erika has created a conservation ethic and awareness among people who years ago regarded guanacos as a source of meat. She continues to put her sensitivity and strong leadership to good



use promoting a transboundary conservation programme between Paraguay and her country. Although encumbered by political difficulties, Erika dreams of seeing this designated as the bi-national Gran Chaco World Heritage Site.

**“I bought water assets to help pay liquid dividends”.**

Hydrologists like to joke how “water flows uphill, toward money”. Maybe so. But when your booming city of 2.1 million sits 9,350 feet in the sky—earth’s highest capital city after La Paz, Bolivia—even a modest hydraulic effort would require the power of Hercules and the wealth of Midas. Lacking both, **Pablo Lloret** decided on a smarter approach. He decided to protect one of the few remaining watersheds situated above Quito. That let him work with gravity rather than against it, saving time and money. Yet conservation still required substantial





funds he didn't have. So to ensure the city's 'natural water services' remained intact, Lloret asked two questions: Who can pay how much for watershed protection? How can they be convinced it is in their interest to do so? With IUCN support, he launched a study that quantified how protection will bring positive returns to certain water users. This became the basis for a prospectus. He convinced the water and electrical utilities, and the city's biggest brewer, to invest. The result was a trust fund—the Water Protection Fund for Quito (FONAG)—to sustainably finance watershed restoration and management.

### Moving mountains

Lawrence (Larry) Hamilton is one of the best-known personalities in global mountain conservation especially in creating and managing protected areas in mountains. "He has worked hard all his long



career, with passion from both his head and heart, often for 'orphan causes'—those in need of a champion. He often sees the need to take up issues well before others do," says long-time colleague Graeme Worboys. "Larry has a natural generosity of spirit

which makes him genuinely interested in helping others learn and grow professionally. Enthusiasm for his work arises from his caring deeply about the welfare of both nature and people, and this continues to be an inspiration to others." Larry represented IUCN on the original 'Mountain Mafia' that was instrumental in having mountains included in Agenda 21 as a separate area of concern at the 1992 Earth Summit. He has been either the stimulation or among the leadership for IUCN commitments and programmes on mangroves, mountains, cloud forests, transboundary issues and conservation connectivity. He led the Mountain Programme within the World Commission on Protected Areas for 12 years, developing a Mountain Protected Areas Network of managers and scientists in 60 countries. Larry is warmly acclaimed for his infectious enthusiasm and exemplary style of leading participatory workshops that have stimulated interest worldwide in the protected areas cause.

### Dedication without borders

Franziska Tanneberger, a 30 year-old landscape and conservation ecologist from Germany, already has an impressive track record. She has made outstanding contribu-



tions to the protection of near-natural mires in Germany, Poland and West Siberia and throws her energy and talent into conserving the aquatic warbler, continental Europe's only globally threatened passerine bird species. As a student, Franziska worked at BirdLife Belarus, on conservation problems in fishpond areas and mires of the Pollessie wetlands, including those supporting the global core population of the warbler. She excelled even under extremely difficult field conditions in Shegarka, a large mire in Western Siberia gathering data that fed into a proposal for the World

Heritage site Vasyuganskoe/West-Siberian mires. Franziska is developing recovery strategies for the aquatic warbler and delivering sound management advice to the authorities of the Lower Oder National Park. "Franziska has rendered outstanding services to the protection at the last German breeding sites of this rare species in our floodplain national park," says the director, Dirk Treichel. Whilst working on an EU LIFE Nature Project to conserve the aquatic warbler in Poland and Germany, Franziska developed innovative conservation measures for the Peene valley in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, persuading local stakeholders to try new ways of managing floodplain mires. "Franziska's dedication and talent are obvious to all those she approaches, from local people to government authorities," says her colleague Hans Joosten. She combines excellent scientific knowledge with passion and, with an understanding of eight languages, crosses many cultural and linguistic borders to achieve her ambitious conservation goals. Franziska has been nominated for the Young Conservationist Award which will be presented at the World Conservation Congress.

### From the bottom up

Marina López is an indigenous leader of the Biological Corridor of Caribbean Talamanca in southern Costa Rica. As founder of the Commission of Indigenous Women of Talamanca (ACOMUITA) and president of its Board of Directors, Marina has helped reduce poverty among families living in the Bribri and Cabécar indigenous territories. She particularly helps to improve the living conditions of indigenous women by creating jobs through numerous means including a chocolate factory and



IUCN Protected Areas  
commission established



Fidel Castro takes power  
in Cuba



community tourism ventures, as well as improving the productivity of local farms. All of her initiatives are developed in ways that are compatible with the local environment and culture. Marina sees that poverty often implies a lack of power, political participation, and rights so she also leads action on empowerment, policy advocacy, and strengthening the cultural identity of indigenous women.

### Guardian of the oceans

Graeme Kelleher is a leading advocate of marine protected areas. “He is one of those rare individuals whose enthusiasm, energy and achievements have made a significant impact on the world and the way in which we protect our seas”, says



colleague Dan Laffoley. A major achievement was guiding Australia in the implementation of what is still one of the largest and better known marine protected areas in the world—the Great Barrier Reef. Graeme was appointed the first permanent Chairman and CEO of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and held the post for 18 years. He has been instrumental in halting or reversing many of the threats to the marine park, brokering agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments for its day-to-day management, and devising and implementing multiple use zoning plans to involve the public in the park’s development under a community participation programme. The public participation approach developed as part of those early zoning plans was highly novel at the time, and is now considered a mainstay of best marine management prac-

tice throughout the world. Graeme served as the first Vice-Chair (Marine) of IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), coordinating efforts to establish a global, representative system of marine protected areas and now serves as Senior Adviser to the Commission. He has worked on marine protected area projects in many parts of the world including Tanzania, Samoa, and Vietnam and has led the WCPA High Seas Working Group. In 2007 Graeme was given a lifetime achievement award by WCPA–Marine in recognition of his outstanding contribution to protecting the world’s oceans.

### “I Imported hydro-democracy to the Sahel”.

Once it was over, newspapers criticized Nigeria’s election. But the press missed the larger story: a quiet revolution in the rule of water. Dr Muslim Idris sits on the coordinating committee of the Green Party. His candidates lost, yet his effort to spread democracy might just win. Along the Komadugu Yobe River, social unrest rumbled over a shrinking river and exploding population. Droughts raged. The population tripled from 10 to 30 million in two decades. Cattle herders and farmers clashed



in villages, with hundreds of violent incidents each year. “You cannot imagine the scale of the conflict,” said Idris. Worse, government water departments ignored each other. “Accusations flew. Everyone said ‘it wasn’t our fault.’ Politics became debilitating.” At some point, water priorities overtook paralysis, and conflict gave way to collaboration. It took Idris and IUCN’s Water and Nature Initiative two years to

crystallize the institutional framework vision into an Integrated Water Resources Management Committee, backed by a trust fund aimed at raising US\$ 125 million necessary for implementing a comprehensive catchment management plan. Reform is taking place on the ground, inside the agencies, and on the river, with funds earmarked for action.

### The biologist-fisherman

Juan Francisco Meirana González, or Coco as he is more commonly known, is a Uruguayan fisherman who lives in Playa Verde, in Río de la Plata. He has fished here all his life, just like the other men in his family. Coco always wanted to study marine biology but the fact that he lives far from any university made his dream impossible to fulfil. Links between Coco and the NGO Karumbé (Sea Turtles of Uruguay) were made because of the large number of green



turtles that get caught accidentally in Coco’s nets. “Coco shows a deep respect for the ocean, and for nature in general,” says Mariana Ríos of Karumbé. “Even though it usually happens that a newly-dead turtle would be eaten by Coco’s family and others in town, he always tries to save them.” Every time a sea turtle gets stranded in this area or tangled in nets, Coco would phone Karumbé but he now has enough experience and the equipment to help the turtles on his own. Coco took the decision not to fish too close to the rocky coastal areas where he knows more turtles get caught. He is now a member of Karumbé (part of the Uruguayan Committee

Fifteen new African nations admitted to UN



WWF set up with support of IUCN

Yuri Gagarin first man in space



of IUCN), works with members of IUCN's Marine Turtle Specialist Group and has managed to save more than 100 turtles.

## A human dynamo

In 2006, when the IUCN/Consortium of International Protected Area Management unanimously granted a 26 year-old Russian



environmentalist the Youth Scholarship award to attend the International Seminar on Protected Area Management in Montana, USA, **Svetlana Kopylova** was already leaving her mark on conservation. The accolade was in recognition of her depth and breadth of protected area experience and innovative approaches to their management. Svetlana has an impressive background; she was Project Manager for a Global Environment Facility/UNEP project at Russia's EcoCenter 'Zapovedniks', where she was responsible for strengthening the network of training centres for protected area staff in Northern Eurasia. "Svetlana is one of the most talented, well organized and dedicated young people I have met in the protected areas community," says Natalia Danilina, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Regional Vice-chair for Northern Eurasia. Svetlana also worked as the Environmental Education Programme Coordinator at the EcoCenter and trained protected area directors, environmental educators, ecotourism specialists and rangers on innovative management and conservation. Svetlana helped create the Russian National Strategy for Protected Area Management, and is working on a PhD on integration of European ecological networks and protected area systems into regional socio-economic development. And, as if she wasn't busy enough, she is the proud mother of a new baby boy.

## Fighting for rights

**Oswaldo Munguía**, founding director of Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska (MOPAWI), the Agency for the Development of the Mosquitia has worked tirelessly for more than 20 years for the conservation of the Honduran Mosquitia, a vast expanse of unspoiled rainforest in north-eastern Honduras. This area includes the Río Plátano Reserve and is home to the indige-



nous Miskitos, Tawahkas, Pech, Garifunas and Ladinos-Mestizos. When MOPAWI, now an IUCN member, started work it found that these people believed that they owned the land they lived on, when in fact, it was classed as national land. This meant that no one had secure tenure and that anyone could 'peacefully' settle on the land and after some years, claim it as their own. MOPAWI began to create awareness of land tenure and helped people organize themselves at the community level and is still working with the indigenous communities and the government to grant land rights to the communities. When this happens they will be in a much stronger position to prevent unwanted development and control their own future. Oswaldo is instrumental in promoting sustainable natural resource management and development and strengthening local management capacity—all serving to substantially improve the living conditions of local people. Oswaldo continually has to stave off a barrage of political and economic pressures that threaten the future of the Mosquitia.

## "I own the rain to double my income".

Driving his heavy-duty pick-up truck, wearing a baseball cap and sporting a plump middle, **Humberto "Beto" Ruiz Granadino** could pass for yet another anti-environmental rancher. In fact he's a farmer who also presides over an environmental initiative that's become a model for northern El Salvador. The San Pedro River flows



16 km into the Sunzacuapa River. Local farmers like Ruiz squeeze it for irrigation, as do the estimated 18,000 residents from five municipalities for their daily needs. IUCN helped his Micro-Watershed Community Association gain legal status, technical assistance and formal investments to embark on rainwater harvesting. That brought multiple gains. Relying entirely on nature, Santiago Amaya could only manage one crop a year during the rainy season. Now he can irrigate a second crop through the dry season when scarce supplies push prices skywards. Amaya sells his output locally, providing residents with fresh fish they would otherwise find hard to get, and further boosting his income. "Now I can stay here without having to migrate," said Amaya. "I'm very thankful."

## From music to mountains

**Martha 'Paty' Ruiz Corzo** left her life as a music teacher in the city to dedicate herself to environmental education and sustainable development activities among the inhabitants of the Sierra Gorda mountains. She and her colleagues are an

Berlin wall erected



Cuban missile crisis

First television satellite launched



outstanding example of the power of grass-roots action. Paty founded the Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda (an IUCN member), along with her husband, Roberto Pedraza Muñoz, and a group of neighbours. From the beginning the organization has been fundamental to generating a social movement for conservation. Paty was one



of the driving forces behind the agreement to make Sierra Gorda a Biosphere Reserve—the most ecologically diverse in Mexico—and now acts as its director, the first director of a natural protected area in Mexico to be selected from local civil society. After a long process of development and gaining international recognition, Paty won approval for a full-scale Global Environment Facility project. The Sierra Gorda is now an innovative, holistic model of protected area co-management where local communities have adopted new practices and attitudes towards their natural resources.

### People for plants

Vineet Soni, a young biologist from India knows that conservation cannot work without the involvement of the people who depend on biodiversity. So he's involving local tribes people in the conservation of an important medicinal plant—*Commiphora wightii*, or guggal as it is known locally, a small, slow-growing tree found in the arid regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The plant's resin has been a key component in the ancient Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine as an effective treatment for bone

fractures, arthritis, inflammation and obesity, and is now widely used in modern medicine for heart problems. But guggal has become scarce because of over-harvesting by the pharmaceutical industry and by local people for religious purposes. Enlisting the help of tribespeople, Vineet, who carried out post-doctorate work on plant biology in Geneva, Switzerland, now leads efforts to secure the species in its natural habitat through large scale propagation and the creation of a network of protected areas. He and a group of friends recently founded the Indian Council for Plant Conservation to conserve threatened plant species of Rajasthan through community involvement, running workshops to help make local people aware of the importance and conservation of plants. Vineet is a member of IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication and Species Survival



Commission (SSC) and received a grant from SSC's Sir Peter Scott Fund for Conservation Action to support his work.

### Reaching the masses

Attia Ayub Qutub is so committed to making a better world that she used her own savings and worked voluntarily to start a pilot programme on environmental education in her home country, Pakistan. The Centre for Environment Education through Participatory Action Learning (CEEPAL) has a participatory approach towards teaching students about the environment and sustainability. It works with schools across Pakistan to share best practices for strengthening conservation values and promotes hygiene among children to



stem the incidence of disease. The programme, which formally started with four schools of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, has now gone national working in 126 schools in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Kabirwala, Quetta and Peshawar and has been introduced in a number of low-income Urdu medium schools. CEEPAL shows teachers, students and parents how they can play a role in sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and in protecting the interests of indigenous people. Attia is full of praise for all those involved. "There are no heights to which our more than 20,000 young heroes cannot rise to, their eyes are open and ideas are multiplying daily on ways and means to conserve their resources and resolve their local, national and universal environmental issues, for a sustainable environmental future. The task is enormous but the resolve is immense to overcome the odds and create a harmonious environment for all."

### Smoothing troubled waters

As Head of Ecuador's Fisheries Directorate General, Jimmy Martinez has a tough job, facing conflict with fisherman almost daily. He is a marine biologist who has always held a fascination for sharks. He also teaches in a fisheries school in Manta where he trains young students in shark biology and monitoring, often financing their research out of his own pocket. He now finds himself in the highly political arena of fisheries management. Fishing, both commercial and artisanal, is an important component of Ecuador's economy and export of shark fins is a particularly lucrative trade often attracting illegal activity.



IUCN Red List established

President John F Kennedy assassinated

IUCN Law Commission founded



But Jimmy is not one to shy away from difficulty and has been instrumental in designing and implementing a new catch and trade documentation scheme from scratch which has even won the support of local fishermen. The aim is to make the shark fin trade and export more transparent which inevitably means more controls. “Jimmy’s strength is working from the grassroots level and balancing the needs of the species with the needs of the people. He is challenged on a daily basis but manages to stay committed and positive. It is truly remarkable what he achieves,” says IUCN Marine Policy Coordinator Imène Meliane. At one stage a ban had been imposed on fin exports which provoked an outcry between



fishermen and conservationists but Jimmy managed to build a bridge between all stakeholders. He has helped reduce the level of shark finning and is working towards a sustainable shark fishery in Ecuador and beyond. Jimmy is a member of IUCN’s extremely active Shark Specialist Group.

## Leaving a huge hole

“At our first meeting, many years ago, **Dickson Kamundi** described his career objective as to make a difference in plant systematic research, ethnobotany and conservation status assessments,” says Wendy Foden, of IUCN’s Species Programme and fellow member of the Southern African Plant Specialist Group. In his 18 years as a senior scientist at the National Herbarium and Botanic Gardens of Malawi, Dickson was not only an able curator but also coordinated the management of biodiversity in protected areas of Malawi project. He played an important role in the Southern African Botanical



Network, particularly though his work on the Red List of Malawi’s Plants. While studying in South Africa, Dickson applied his skills and experience to helping the South African National Biodiversity Institute to complete the Red List of South African Plants. His huge contribution is shown by the hundreds of assessments bearing his name and the ongoing application of his approaches by the young conservationists he mentored. When Dickson returned to Malawi and his much-loved family he resumed his position at the National Herbarium and had been preparing to update the Red List of Malawian plants. Our community is greatly saddened by Dickson’s untimely passing away in June. We are left with a large gap not only in Africa’s botanical expertise, but also in the place of our trusted colleague. “Although his career was cut unnecessarily short, Dickson more than managed to meet his career objectives. His achievements rested on kindness, humility and wisdom, as well as on exceptionally hard work and perseverance. He held a quiet, strong belief that he could make a difference—and he did,” adds Wendy.

## Effective on all levels

Born in an area that is home to the giant panda, it seems **Yan Xie** was destined to dedicate her life to saving China’s biodiversity—one of the richest and most threatened. Yan is now an Associate Research Professor at the Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. She served as coordinator of biodiversity studies under the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, a high level governmental advisory body, for over 10 years, where she made a great contribution to the country’s conservation policy. Yan’s mission is to provide biodiversity information for better conservation

decision-making—the Conserving China’s Biodiversity website and the China Species Information Service have become the most important biodiversity information hubs in China. Yan also led the evaluation of more than 10,000 species for the China Red List. She moves deftly through politically-sensitive issues and is well respected by NGOs and governments alike. In 2005 she became the China Country Programme Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society and leads teams working in Qiangtang and Pamir in western China, Amur tiger habitat in north-east China, and a long term programme on controlling wildlife trade.



She is a prolific writer with many important conservation books under her belt including *A Guide to the Mammals of China* published this year. Yan has had along relationship with IUCN, currently serving as the Vice-Chair of the World Commission on Protected Areas for East Asia.

## From youth to royalty

Since childhood **Arthur Dahl** has been fascinated with nature and all the treasures it holds. He managed to turn this fascina-



Nelson Mandela jailed



Congo General Mobuto takes power



tion into a career, devoting much of his life to the ecology of the oceans, particularly coral reefs, first as a scientist and later as a conservationist working for the United Nations and other international organizations. His last position was Head of the UN Environment Programme's Coral Reef Unit but he has always been a true activist for the planet and its people. Arthur is founder and President of the International Environment Forum, and sits on the Board of the European Baha'i Business Forum and of the Global Islands Network. In whatever free time he has, Arthur, who is a member of IUCN's commissions on ecosystem management and protected areas gives lectures on the faltering relationship between people and their environment and

the consequences this is having. He is coordinator of the UNEP/University of Geneva Environmental Diplomacy Programme and also teaches and lectures widely on sustainable development. "It was his lectures that motivated me to focus on societal values and sustainable development for my PhD," says Joachim Monkelbaan, a Policy Officer with IUCN. Arthur still receives emails from people who heard him more than 40 years ago and remember the insights he offered. "By drawing on the source of his own inspiration for solutions to the global ecological crisis, he inspires all who listen to him to reevaluate their own actions and perspectives," says Joachim. On a personal level, Arthur lives as 'light' as he possibly can, using the minimum of resources and

has transformed his small cottage in France with all kinds of water and energy saving devices. "Arthur leads by example and continues to inspire all those he meets, from youth to royalty," Joachim adds. ■



1966

US passes Endangered Species Act

Mao Zedong proclaims Cultural Revolution

1967

