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From poachers to protectors: Young conservationist honoured

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A Rwandan conservationist who helped turn mountain gorilla poachers into tourism guides has been given an award by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and the International Ranger Federation.

Edwin Sabuhoro, 35, was selected as winner of the 2008 Young Conservationist Award, which honours outstanding achievements by young people in protected areas.

Edwin developed incentives for local people to protect gorillas' habitat by founding the Iby'Iwacu Cultural Village, a community-based tourism initiative, in the Musanze district of Northern Rwanda.

Revenue from tourism has encouraged communities to protect gorillas and develop small-scale businesses. Today, the outcomes of the project are astonishing. Local people own 100% of the project. The cultural village has increased tourism arrivals by 40% and has generated a sustainable income base for the village. Poaching of gorillas has been reduced by 60%.

"I feel extremely proud, honoured and excited to be awarded the second IUCN-IRF Young Conservationist Award," says Edwin. "I know just how much this means to my continuing efforts but also for inspiring other young conservationist in Rwanda, the African continent and the whole world. I would like to express my utmost appreciation to IUCN and IRF for this award."

Edwin, who has already been internationally recognized for the development of pro-poor ecotourism in his country, will be presented with the award at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona this October.

*"The IUCN-IRF Young Conservationist Award honours the contribution of young people to conservation," says **David Sheppard, Head of IUCN's Programme on Protected Areas.** "Edwin's outstanding work has benefited gorillas and local people in Rwanda. It has shown that the involvement of local people with wildlife conservation can result in win-win outcomes. We warmly congratulate Edwin on his well deserved award."*

Edwin will be invited to become a member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and its Young Professionals Working Group.

*"What impresses me most about Edwin Sabuhoro is that he found a local solution for a serious protected area problem," says **Deanne Adams, Acting President of the IRF.** "He established a way to provide a new economy for local communities that also provides new protection for threatened animals in the area – and this is a source of*

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Edwin Sabuhoro, winner of the 2008 Young Conservationist award
 Photo: IUCN

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inspiration for other communities.”

The Young Conservationist Award is a joint initiative launched by IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas and the International Ranger Federation. In 2004, the two organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote collaboration on protected areas and the rangers responsible for their protection.

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