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## Press release

Immediate release

### WWF Colombia's Associate Wins the Overall Whitley Award Conservation Prize



Dr Fernando Trujillo, Overall Whitley Award Winner in the Amazon – Jason Orfanon

Cali, Colombia – WWF Colombia proudly celebrates Dr Fernando Trujillo's announcement – May 10, 2007 – as the Overall Winner of the Whitley Award conservation prize for his work to conserve South America's pink river dolphins.

Fernando, a Colombian scientist, founder and Scientific Director of the Fundación Omacha – WWF Colombia's associate in the Amazon and Orinoco Basins –, won both the Whitley Award sponsored by HSBC Holdings and the Whitley Gold Award for his ambitious conservation programme.

Only 10 conservationists were shortlisted for the Awards from more than 80 applications from

around the world. Six of the finalists were from South America. Fernando was selected from among the shortlist to be named overall winner. He received both his awards – worth a total of £60,000 of funding over two years – from HRH The Princess Royal and Sir David Attenborough at London's Royal Geographical Society.

Edward Whitley, Founder and Chairman of the Whitley Fund for Nature said: "Fernando's work in Colombia is ambitious and he has overcome many barriers. Fernando is combining a truly holistic approach. As well as researching threatened species such as the pink river dolphin, he is engaging people in the Amazon basin, working closely with fishermen, and is even working with supermarkets. Without his work, we would not even be aware of the threat the Colombian catfish industry poses river dolphins. We are delighted to announce him as the overall Whitley Gold Award Winner".



Fernando's motivation: River Dolphins WWF Colombia/Sandra Valenzuela



One of South America's flagship species, River dolphins, are now among the world's endangered cetaceans. Recent studies show the River Dolphins endemic to the Amazon and Orinoco basins are extremely threatened by mounting fisheries, the use of dolphins as bait, pollution and habitat loss in both Basins.

Working with a team of young South American scientists and with the support of WWF, WCS, WDCS, Dr Trujillo leads an ambitious programme of conservation in the Amazon and Orinoco basins, conducting systematic research along the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers and their tributaries in Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador to estimate river dolphin numbers. Central to their work is a strong campaign to stop the killing of the dolphins and other endangered species for use in the catfish industry.

Currently there are no governmental initiatives to protect endangered species in these river basins and Dr Trujillo hopes that dolphin watching and other sustainable economic activities could strongly help to promote conservation of river dolphins as well as giant otters, manatees, turtles and caimans, at the same time providing important economic alternatives for local people.

“Fernando and his work deserved such recognition; his discipline and commitment have led his cause to different places and now it has been acknowledged. Though this important global award will benefit his work with dolphins and other freshwater species, it constitutes a real inspiring and motivating example for other individuals and organizations working in favor of nature”, said Mary Louise Higgins, WWF Colombia Country Representative. “We are just waiting for him to come back and continue to Bolivia, where the First South American River Dolphin Census will conclude next June”.



Fernando and his team in the Orinoco Basin - WWF Colombia/Maria Ximena Galeano

### **Editors Notes:**

- 1. The Whitley Fund for Nature** – the charity behind the Whitley Awards – is a UK based international conservation charity that recognises some of the world's leading conservationists. The Whitley Awards are given to support science based conservation work that also benefits local communities [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org) for press releases on all the 2007 Award Winners



2. **Whitley Awards** are worth up to **£30,000 each** and are one of the largest nature conservation awards available. Of the Award winners selected each year, one recipient goes on to win the **Gold Award** worth an **additional £30,000**. Hosted by Patron HRH Princess Royal and Trustee Sir David Attenborough, the Whitley Awards Ceremony is held annually at the Royal Geographical Society in London.
3. The First South American Dolphin River Census is carried out by Fundacion Omacha, WCS, WDCS and WWF Colombia. It counts with financial support of WWF Switzerland.

**For further information**

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