

Although the cause of these deaths has not yet been definitively determined, the simultaneous deaths of a number of animals in a single location has occurred elsewhere. In 2016, 323 reindeer were killed by lightning in the Hardangervidda National Park, Norway (theverge.com/2016/8/29/12690402/lightning-strike-kills-norway-reindeer-death-why-science). Lightning can strike an animal directly from above or indirectly through tall trees via side flashes. When lightning strikes an animal directly, or the ground nearby, the energy can subsequently spread along the ground by up to 80 m, subjecting any other animal within this range to an electric shock. In the case of a side flash, lightning strikes an animal's body sideways from a tree hit directly. Fatalities from side flashes are fewer than from direct hits.

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The Whitley Awards 2021

After a challenging year, the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) announced the six conservation leaders from six different countries receiving the 2021 Whitley Awards, worth GBP 40,000 each in project funding over 1 year, in support of their work. In addition, the Whitley Gold Award worth GBP 100,000 was presented to 2014 Whitley Award winner Paula Kahumbu of WildlifeDirect, Kenya, for her work strengthening environmental law to secure justice for people and wildlife, with a focus on elephant conservation in the Kenyan landscape. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Whitley Awards Ceremony, the flagship event of the UK-based charity, was broadcast virtually.

The 2021 Whitley Award Winners are Pedro Fruet, Brazil (Building bridges to encourage co-existence with the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin); Lucy Kemp, South Africa (Community-based approach to conserve the southern ground hornbill); Nuklu Phom, India (Establishing a

Biodiversity Peace Corridor in Nagaland); Kini Roesler, Argentina (Hooded grebe—guardian of the Patagonian steppe); Sammy Safari, Kenya (Transforming the future of sea turtles through coastal stewardship); and Iroto Tanshi, Nigeria (Bats from the brink—participatory action to save the short-tailed roundleaf bat).

To date, the charity has given GBP 18 million in conservation funding to more than 200 conservation leaders in over 80 countries. The Whitley Award was one of the first awards to be given in recognition of effective conservation leadership in the Global South. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, the need to preserve the natural world has never been stronger, and WFN supports emerging country nationals working in regions where biodiversity is rich but resources are poor. They lead on projects that are deeply rooted in community involvement and are pragmatic, science-based and impactful.

With WFN's long-term commitment to conservation leaders, winners have access to the Continuation Funding programme to further fund and scale up their work on species and communities. In recognition of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, WFN launched a new Nature-based Solutions scheme under the Continuation Funding programme last year, supporting projects that tackle climate change and biodiversity loss in consultation with communities and Indigenous people. Winners are also part of a lifelong membership of the global network of Whitley Award alumni, giving them access to like-minded leaders and opportunities to foster collaborations worldwide. Over half of Whitley Award winners go on to win Continuation Funding grants, worth up to GBP 100,000 over up to 2 years. In 2020, WFN awarded a record-breaking GBP 1,000,000 in Continuation Funding, including GBP 500,000 in Nature-based Solutions projects. Many winners become some of the most influential conservationists in their field, with projects making an impact from the grassroots through to national and international levels.

For more information on the Whitley Fund for Nature, the Whitley Awards and the projects, visit whitleyaward.org.

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