

PRESS RELEASE

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Zoo's Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program awarded United Nations Equator Prize and AZA International Conservation Award

SEATTLE – Woodland Park Zoo's flagship conservation program, the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP), and its partner non-governmental organization, TKCP–Papua New Guinea (TKCP-PNG), were recently honored for their continued contributions to international conservation by the United Nations and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA).



The Equator Prize 2014 recognizes the extraordinary impact TKCP-PNG has made to the YUS community through the YUS Conservation Area, the first of its kind in PNG. TKCP established TKCP-PNG in 2013 to manage TKCP's YUS Conservation Area, a 180,000-acre area voluntarily pledged by local landowners to help protect the wildlife native to PNG's Huon Peninsula. The YUS Conservation Area has become a model of locally-owned protected forests that not only conserves wildlife but also focuses on community health, education and livelihood. The YUS region (encompassing the Yopno-Uruwa-Som watersheds) is home to more than 12,000 people across 52 villages, as well as many endemic and endangered fauna and flora—including the endangered Matschie's tree kangaroo, the signature species at the heart of TKCP.

Since the YUS Conservation Area's establishment in 2009, Woodland Park Zoo's TKCP and TKCP-PNG have made significant improvements to the YUS community, empowering local residents to manage the community's environmental and natural resources. TKCP-PNG ensures that the indigenous landowners and communities drive the efforts of land management and play a leading role in planning, monitoring and managing the land use of the YUS region.

"The Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program is a prime example of how zoos can significantly contribute to sustainable wildlife conservation," said Fred Koontz, Vice President of Field Conservation at Woodland Park Zoo. "The United Nations Equator Prize puts TKCP in a select group of community organizations that are making a difference around the world in this time of climate change. Al Gore will be the keynote speaker and will emphasize the importance of local people serving as stewards of habitats and animals. We are honored to be selected for this prize."

Karau Kuna, Conservation Strategies Manager of TKCP-PNG, and Dr. Lisa Dabek, TKCP Director and Woodland Park Zoo's Senior Conservation Scientist, will represent TKCP-PNG during the United Nations General Assembly and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in New York on September 22, 2014.

In recent years, TKCP-PNG and Woodland Park Zoo established a partnership with Caffé Vita, a Seattle-based coffee roaster, to bring alternative revenue to the YUS landowners and their communities. Through a direct trade agreement, YUS farmers have exported nearly 8 tons of coffee over three years to generate profits that benefit 11 local villages. The funds are reinvested in the community through education, health and development projects. As a result, farmers are providing their families and neighbors with necessary schooling, health education and a reliable income.

TKCP was also awarded top honors for the AZA International Conservation Award at the national AZA conference held this week in Orlando, Florida. AZA names conservation as its highest priority, and annually recognizes exceptional efforts by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums, related or international facilities, and conservation partners toward habitat preservation, species restoration, and support of biodiversity in the wild through its International Conservation Award.

Dabek will be returning to PNG this October with a team of Pacific Northwest and New England medical doctors to develop health trainings, lead midwife workshops, and promote family health and nutrition in the remote YUS region. As a long term community-based conservation program established in 1996, the program has evolved and grown over time, continuing to work on the conservation of endangered tree kangaroos with the people that live in YUS for the coming decades. For more information on TKCP and the positive impacts it is making abroad, visit zoo.org/treekangaroo.

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