

**Zoo's conservation scientist nominated for
world's leading animal conservation award**

SEATTLE—Officials from the Indianapolis Prize have announced 51 global leaders in the field of wildlife conservation as nominees for the 2023 Indianapolis Prize, the world's leading award for animal conservation. Woodland Park Zoo is proud to announce that its own Lisa Dabek, PhD, senior conservation scientist at the zoo and founder of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program in Papua New Guinea, is among the world's greatest champions of wildlife who have been nominated.



The Indianapolis Prize elevates a message of hope for the planet and highlights the stories of the dedicated people whose work not only saves species but ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

[Nominees](#) hail from countries across the globe with these individuals representing a diverse range of iconic and elusive species from primates, reptiles, birds and many more. The winner of the Indianapolis Prize receives \$250,000 while the five finalists each receive \$50,000.

Twenty-five years ago, Dabek traveled to the remote peninsula in Papua New Guinea in search of the elusive Matschie's tree kangaroo, a marsupial that had never been studied in the wild. What began as a conservation research study on the endangered Matschie's tree kangaroo has blossomed into a holistic program: the [Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program](#) (TKCP) which focuses on protecting tree kangaroos—and a wide range of endemic wildlife and Papua New Guinea's rain forests—and empowering the people who share the forests.

Papua New Guinea's forests are one of the most pristine and biodiverse regions in the world and is home to the Matschie's tree kangaroo, birds of paradise, and other unique and indigenous wildlife.

Under Dabek's leadership, TKCP worked with 50 villages and more than 14,000 indigenous landowners, their families, and the national government to create the first nationally recognized community-managed Conservation Area in Papua New Guinea's history. The YUS (Yopno-Uruwa-Som) Conservation Area protects more than 187,000 acres of pristine rain forest habitat against logging, mining and overhunting—and stretches from mountainous cloud forests to lowland rain forests to coral reefs.

From school-aged junior rangers and coffee entrepreneurs to midwives and hunters-turned-trackers, every person living in the YUS region has contributed to the program, working together to safeguard forest biodiversity in one of the most distinctive places on the planet. Dabek is also recognized for pioneering the use of Crittercam© technology on arboreal mammals for the first time, allowing scientists to record animal behavior through mounted video cameras and transmitters.

"Conservation is ultimately about people. The Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program revolves around people making choices to have healthy lives, healthy communities and healthy forests, and to protect endangered species," said Lisa Dabek, PhD, senior conservation scientist at the zoo and founder of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program. "I'm honored to be nominated for the 2023 Indianapolis Prize among these dedicated global leaders who have also centered their lives and passion on protecting and preserving animal species into the future."

"The 2023 Indianapolis Prize nominees represent the most accomplished wildlife conservationists dedicated to protecting and preserving animal species," said Rob Shumaker,

president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoo. “It is an honor to highlight their incredible work through the Indianapolis Prize.”

The Indianapolis Prize Nominating Committee and Jury composed of internationally renowned professional conservationists and local Indianapolis representatives will select six finalists and determine a winner. The finalists and winner will be honored at the Indianapolis Prize Gala presented by Cummins Inc. on Sept. 30, 2023.

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