

PRESS RELEASE

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Local conservation champion named as 2025 DeHaan Finalist for world's leading animal conservation award, the Indianapolis Prize

***Lisa Dabek is a finalist for her decades of work with
endangered tree kangaroos***

SEATTLE—The Indianapolis Prize has named six distinguished conservationists as DeHaan Finalists for the 2025 award, and Woodland Park Zoo is proud to announce that Lisa Dabek, PhD, senior conservation scientist at the zoo and founder of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program in Papua New Guinea, is among the six finalists.



The esteemed biennial award recognizes animal conservationists who have achieved major victories in saving an animal species or group of species. The DeHaan Finalists will each receive a \$50,000 award to continue their efforts. Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Indianapolis Prize is the **world's leading award for animal conservation**, honoring individuals who are at the forefront of species protection and research.

Nearly 30 years ago, Dabek traveled to the remote Huon Peninsula in Papua New Guinea in search of the elusive Matschie's tree kangaroo, a marsupial that had never been studied before 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. As a signature program of Woodland Park Zoo, TKCP works to benefit local communities through supporting education, health and livelihoods programs.

"I am honored to work with the local landowners and communities of YUS (Yopno-Uruwa-Som) and the local staff of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program on behalf of tree kangaroos, people and the environment. This is an award for all involved in our efforts," said Lisa Dabek, PhD, senior conservation scientist at Woodland Park Zoo and founder of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program.

Under Dabek's leadership, TKCP helped establish Papua New Guinea's first nationally recognized, community-managed Conservation Area, which protects more than 187,000 acres of forest and 50 villages against logging, mining and over-hunting and stretches from mountainous cloud forests to lowland rain forests to coral reefs.

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 endemic wildlife.

The [2025 DeHaan Finalists](#) were chosen from a group of 44 nominees based on the measurable outcomes from their work, the quality of science applied to their efforts and a demonstrated spirit of cooperation.

“These six extraordinary conservationists have achieved tangible results in safeguarding threatened species across the globe. Through the Indianapolis Prize, we are proud to shine a light on these conservation heroes whose work gives us hope for the future of our planet’s vulnerable species,” said Dr. Rob Shumaker, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoological Society.

The Winner of the 2025 Indianapolis Prize will be announced in May and will receive a \$250,000 award. The Winner and DeHaan Finalists will be honored at the Indianapolis Prize Gala on Sept. 27, 2025, presented by Cummins Inc., in downtown Indianapolis. For additional media assets, click [here](#).

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