



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wildlife Protector “Umvikeli” 2018 Recipient Announced



November 5, 2018, New York, NY - Today, Wild Tomorrow Fund announced South African wildlife veterinarian Dr. Dave Cooper as the 2018 recipient of the Umvikeli Wildlife Protector Award for his lifetime of dedication to the care, management and conservation of African rhinoceros and other wild animals in Africa.

The award recognizes an individual or organization working tirelessly to protect endangered and threatened wildlife and their habitat in Africa. Dr. Cooper will be honored and recognized at Wild Tomorrow Fund’s Annual Benefit, to be held on November 16, from 6:30 pm - 11:30 pm at the Manhattan Penthouse, 80 5th Avenue, New York.

Dr. Cooper qualified as a veterinarian in 1981, and in 1993 joined what is now known as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (Ezemvelo), the government wildlife authority for KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa. He is the sole vet at Ezemvelo responsible for all parks in the province and is the leading expert in rhinoceros care, capture, and transport.

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Dr. Cooper is regarded as one of the leading experts in rhino immobilization, capture, and transport, having relocated well over 2500 animals. He has been the principal vet involved in the “Rhinos Without Borders” project from its inception, which has to date moved 87 white rhino from South Africa to greater protection in Botswana’s Okavango Delta. He has also been involved in the relocation of over 150 black rhino to nine different localities as part of the WWF Black Rhino Range Expansion Project.

In South Africa, home to 80% of Africa's remaining rhinos, poaching has escalated from 13 killed in 2007 to over 7,425 rhinos slaughtered violently for their horns in the past ten years. After security was increased in Kruger National Park, poachers quickly moved focus to the KwaZulu-Natal region. Dr. Cooper and his team are called on to respond to each poaching incident, attending to injured and orphaned rhinos, processing fresh crime scenes, completing forensic reports, and collecting DNA samples.

"I am extremely humbled and also honored to receive the 2018 Wildlife Protector Award." says Dr Cooper, "I am humbled because I am one person of many who are involved in the daily struggle to save wildlife. I am honored that I am the person that has been selected to receive this Award in New York. I believe that raising awareness is critically important. Many people are not aware of the importance of biodiversity and what’s happening to even the well-known species like rhinos. The rhino is a symbol of representing the loss of biodiversity today. If we can’t save rhinos, what is next? It’s a struggle we must work our hardest to win”.

“The tireless dedication and sacrifice of Dr. Cooper is an inspiration for all - not only those who work on the ground with him, but for others far away who share his love and concern for African wildlife.” says John Steward, Executive Director of Wild Tomorrow Fund.

Wild Tomorrow Fund Board Member and New York city veterinarian, Dr Wendy McCulloch, said “I had the privilege to spend time working with Dave in the field in South Africa. I was astounded at his ability to work long hours under tremendous pressure making it look effortless. He is a fountain of knowledge, patient and generous with his time, and highly respected by his team and peers.”

Wild Tomorrow Fund is a registered wildlife conservation charity both in the United States and South Africa. Wild Tomorrow Fund is dedicated to the protection of threatened and endangered species and the habitats they depend on for survival. Wild Tomorrow Fund works on the ground in southern Africa with a vision for a world in which wildlife habitats are expanded and protected, and where existing reserves have the resources needed to keep their animals safe. About Wild Tomorrow Fund www.wildtomorrowfund.org

Additional Media: See Dropbox <https://bit.ly/2zdQ5P8>
60 Minutes video interview, 27 May 2018 at <https://youtu.be/IQ8oDpgqN7M>