

Earth Day 2020 Live Speaker Profiles

Panel 1 - Tackling the illegal wildlife trade and extinction

Live Broadcast on 22 April 2020 at 10:00AM EDT, 03:00PM BST

Host

Bella Lack (UK) Conservation Youth Activist, Ivory Alliance, Born Free Foundation, STAE, RSPCA and Jane Goodall Institute

Bella is a 17-year-old conservationist and ambassador for the Born Free Foundation, STAE, RSPCA and Jane Goodall Institute. She uses social media, video-making, and blogging to try to educate and inspire a wide group of people to protect the natural world. In addition, Bella delivers speeches, including speaking at the People's Walk for Wildlife, the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in 2018 and TEDx Brighton 2019. Bella has begun to make her own short films, and since August 2019 has also been working on a feature-length documentary; 'ANIMAL', with director Cyril Dion and Jane Goodall.

Bella's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCW7GvJmeG2jrL9u7tr8ENfA>

Panellists

Kate Brooks (USA) Filmmaker & Photojournalist

Kate Brooks is an international photojournalist and filmmaker who has chronicled conflict and human rights for the past two decades. Her photographs have been extensively published in TIME, Newsweek, Smithsonian and The New Yorker and exhibited in galleries and museums around the world. In 2012-13, she was a Knight Wallace Fellow at the University of Michigan. There she researched the global wildlife trafficking crisis before embarking on directing her first film The Last Animals. The documentary premiered at Tribeca Film Festival on Earth Day 2017 and was awarded a Disruptor Award, alongside the rangers who sacrificed their lives protecting Garamba National Park. The film has been widely recognized for its ability to disrupt the status quo on policy and change hearts and minds, later winning the Terra Mater Factual Studios Impact Award in consideration with Blue Planet II. Brooks' drive and passion for conservation comes from the fundamental belief that time is running out and that we are at a critical moment in natural history. From her perspective "despite of all the human destruction on the planet, there is still a natural order and it is necessary for us to do everything we can to protect that while we can"

In response to her experiences during the making of The Last Animals, Kate established the charity The Last Animals Foundation to raise awareness about the collapse of biodiversity on the planet with a particular focus on rangers, their families and local communities in regions that have been plagued by conflict and insecurity.

The Last Animals website <https://thelastanimals.com>

Dr Thomas Hildebrandt (Germany) Professor/Department Head, Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW)

Hildebrandt studied veterinary medicine at the Humboldt-University from 1986 -1992. His doctoral thesis (1987-1993) had the topic "Heterogenic ovarian transplantation in mouse, hamster and goat model" which was co-mentored by the academy institute, Forschungsstelle für Wirbeltierforschung (FWF), the predecessor of the Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW). In 1992, Hildebrandt was employed at the IZW and in 1997 became Head of Department, Reproduction Management. In 2012 he was nominated as Honorary Professorial Fellow of Melbourne University and re-nominated in 2017 for an additional five years. In 2015 Hildebrandt became a full professor for Wildlife Reproduction Medicine at the Freie Universität Berlin. He has written 156 peer reviewed publications, 23 book chapters and six patents.

Associated Press article on Dr Hildebrandt's work

<https://apnews.com/2a445286bf6b0e0f8c5a871775376f27>

Dr Paula Kahumbu (Kenya) Chief Executive Officer of WildlifeDirect

Considered a driving force behind Africa's conservation movement, Paula Kahumbu, CEO of NGO WildlifeDirect, has demonstrated an enduring passion for preserving threatened wildlife and habitats in Kenya and beyond. In addition to running WildlifeDirect since 2008, Kahumbu has been producing and hosting Africa's First Wildlife Documentary series Wildlife Warriors on national and African Channels. She has been at the forefront of spearheading the successful Hands Off Our Elephants Campaign with Margaret Kenyatta, Kenya's First Lady, to mobilize the justice sector in combatting elephant poaching and the trafficking of ivory. During an annual field course in Kenya, she also lectures students from Princeton University where she earned her PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and conducted field research on elephants in Kenya. Among her many roles, Kahumbu ran the CITES office of the Kenya Wildlife Service, as well as Lafarge Eco Systems, a company responsible for the restoration of mined-out lands in East Africa. A documentary film producer and an accomplished writer who has co-authored globally best-selling books that inspire children about conservation, Kahumbu is the winner of many awards that recognize her achievements in fostering conservation. These include Jury for the Rolex Awards (2019), board member of the Prince Albert the Second of Monaco Foundation (since 2018), the Princeton in Africa Medal (2017), The Tribeca Disruptive Innovations Award, the Whitley Award (2014), the Presidential Award, Order of the Grand Warrior of Kenya (2014), and the National Geographic/Buffer Award for Leadership in Conservation in Africa (2011). She was named Brand Kenya Ambassador (2013) and National Geographic Emerging Explorer (2011).

Dr Kahumbu's National Geographic profile <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/find-explorers/paula-g-kahumbu>

Dr Sam Wasser (USA) Conservation Biologist & Director, Center for Conservation Biology, University of Washington

Dr Samuel Wasser holds the endowed chair in Conservation Biology at the University of Washington, where he is a Research Professor in the Department of Biology and Director of the Center for Conservation Biology. He is acknowledged worldwide for developing non-invasive tools for monitoring human impacts on wildlife. Professor Wasser pioneered methods to measure the abundance, distribution and physiological condition of wildlife from their faeces, relying on detection dogs to locate these samples over large wilderness areas. He uses these methods to address diverse conservation questions including impacts of poaching, oil development or overharvesting on the well-being of multiple endangered wildlife populations. He used elephant dung to assemble a DNA reference map of elephants across Africa. By comparing genotyped ivory to this reference map, he was able to identify Africa's largest elephant poaching hotspots, as well as track the number and connectivity of major ivory traffickers operating in Africa. His work has led to prosecutions of major transnational ivory traffickers and nurtured key collaborations with numerous law enforcement authorities worldwide. He received the title of Elephant Hero from the National Geographic Society and the Albert Schweitzer Medal for his work on wildlife trafficking.

Center for Conservation Biology, University of Washington website

<https://conservationbiology.uw.edu/>