

Department of Zoology, University of Oxford
Recanati-Kaplan Centre, Tubney House, Abingdon Road
Tubney, Abingdon OX13 5QL, UK

T +44 (0) 1865 393100
F +44 (0) 1865 393101
E wcru@zoo.ox.ac.uk
www.wildcru.org



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Professor David Macdonald, Professor of Wildlife Conservation; Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) in the Department of Zoology at the University of Oxford; and Fellow of Oxford college, Lady Margaret Hall, has been made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for services to natural sciences. This news was announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2010, released on Saturday 12 June 2010, and David should receive his honour from the Queen at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace within the next six months.

In 1986, David established WildCRU (see: www.wildcru.org) within the Department of Zoology at the University of Oxford – the first university-based conservation research institute in the UK. His concept was to tackle the emerging biodiversity crisis and wider environmental issues by bridging the gap between academic theory and practical problem solving. WildCRU's work is about solving conflict between peoples' futures and wildlife conservation. Today WildCRU has a team of around 60 people, who study endangered animals across the globe, and has become recognised as one of the most productive conservation research institutes in the world.

In 2005 David received the Dawkins Prize for Conservation and Animal Welfare; in 2006 the medal of the American Society of Mammalogists' Merriam Prize for research in mammalogy; and in 2007 the British equivalent, the Mammal Society of Great Britain's gold medal for research in mammalogy. Also in 2007 he was named among the top ten most influential living conservationists by BBC Wildlife Magazine. He finished ninth in the feature — one place behind veteran botanist, David Bellamy. In 2008 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and in 2009 received the Zoological Society of London's Silver Medal.

David also contributes keenly to the public understanding of science. His books have twice won the Natural World Natural History Author of the Year Award ('Running with the Fox' and 'European Mammals'), and been best sellers (e.g. 'The Velvet Claw, a natural history of carnivores', BBC Books), and the third edition of his 'Encyclopaedia of Mammals' was published by OUP in 2006, and published in paperback by both OUP and Princeton in September 2009. Of his TV documentaries, 'The Night of the Fox' was BAFTA finalist for Best Documentary of the Year and made TV history by being the first broadcast-quality infra-red video ever transmitted on TV; 'Meerkats United' won a Special Award from WildScreen and has reputedly been watched by over 500 million people; and the 7-part BBC1 series the 'Velvet Claw: a natural history of the Carnivores' was broadcast in every television territory of the world.

A fundamental commitment of David's is translating evidence into policy. He currently serves on the Board of Natural England as Chairman of the Science Advisory Committee. He is also Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Darwin Initiative for the Conservation of Biodiversity and is, or has been, Vice President of the Wildlife Trusts, the Zoological Society of London and the RSPCA, Chairman of the Earthwatch Institute (Europe), and a Trustee of the WWF and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. For 25 years he was the founding Chairman of the IUCN/SSC Canid Specialist Group.

Most recently, David's longstanding specialisation in wild carnivores has led to a partnership with Panthera, with the aim of WildCRU becoming the world's foremost university centre for felid conservation research.

Allied to this, July 2009 saw the official launch of a new diploma and new facilities at Tubney House – WildCRU's base outside Oxford. Both the diploma and the new facilities have been funded by Dr Thomas Kaplan and his wife Daphne Recanati Kaplan, founders of Panthera. The diploma aims to equip conservation practitioners from the developing world with the practical skills and theoretical understanding that will enable them to contribute effectively to conservation research and action in their home countries. The students (known as 'the WildCRU Panthers') benefit from the high calibre teaching and research at Oxford University. The current intake of eight students come from Bhutan, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

On hearing at the weekend about being made a CBE, David said that: "This is a wonderful honour. Of course, its main significance is to draw attention to the importance of wildlife conservation as a global priority, and to the amazing work that members of WildCRU have achieved". Asked whether he had expected his career to lead to such acclaim, David answered "As a boyhood naturalist, I couldn't have imagined the path of good fortune and amazing supporters that have led me here, and to be Oxford's first Professor of Wildlife Conservation, but over the years, during which I struggled to create WildCRU, I did have complete confidence in the idea that cutting-edge science could make an enormous contribution to solving practical conservation problems. So, I had faith in the vision – even if, as Isaac Newton said, my view of the horizon has been thanks to the giants who have let me perch on their shoulders."

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