

Conservation news

Tusk Conservation Awards 2021 winners

In November 2021, the Tusk Trust announced the winners of its 2021 Conservation Awards. Now in their 9th year, these awards were devised with the input of Tusk Royal Patron, HRH Prince William, The Duke of Cambridge. The Tusk Conservation Awards comprise three awards, each focused on recognizing and supporting the work of leading conservationists in Africa: The Prince William Award for Conservation in Africa, the Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa and the Tusk Wildlife Ranger Award. The winners were presented with their awards by HRH The Duke of Cambridge at a ceremony in London on 22 November 2021, hosted by broadcaster Kate Silverton.

Simson !Uri-≠Khob, CEO of Save the Rhino Trust in Namibia, won the Prince William Award for Conservation in Africa. This lifetime achievement award (GBP 100,000 over 3 years) recognizes the 30 years that Simson has worked with Save the Rhino Trust to conserve Namibia's Critically Endangered black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*, a species on the brink of extinction when he first joined the organization.

Three emerging conservationists were shortlisted for the Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa (GBP 75,000 over 3 years): Rachel Ikemeh (founder and Director of the SW/Niger Delta Forest Project, Nigeria), Caleb Ofori-Boateng (founder and Director of Herp-Conservation Ghana) and Julie Razafimanahaka (Director of Madagasikara Voakajy, Madagascar) all received commendations in recognition of their outstanding successes, with Julie chosen as the overall winner. Both Julie and Caleb are alumni of the Conservation Leadership Programme, a partnership between Fauna & Flora International, BirdLife International and the Wildlife Conservation Society that provides project funding, training and mentoring to early-career leaders tackling priority conservation challenges. The Conservation Leadership Programme nominated both Julie and Caleb for the award.

The award celebrates Julie's 16 years working in conservation. Among her many accomplishments, she has led the formation of seven protected areas in eastern Madagascar and ensured the survival of threatened amphibians, bats and lemurs. In particular, she spearheaded the first conservation strategy for the country's iconic baobab trees, securing the management rights of over 10,000 ha of baobab forest that were previously unprotected.

The Tusk Wildlife Ranger Award (GBP 30,000 over 3 years) was given to Suleiman Saidu, a senior game guard ranger at Yankari Game Reserve in Nigeria, in appreciation of his efforts in reducing elephant poaching to only one case since 2015.

More information, including videos of the ceremony and award winners, are at tuskawards.com.

KATE TOINTON (✉ orcid.org/0000-0002-7106-8606, kate.tointon@fauna-flora.org) Fauna & Flora International, Cambridge, UK

© Fauna & Flora International, 2022. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Rediscovery of *Staurogyne repens* (Acanthaceae) in the wild after 115 years

Staurogyne repens (family Acanthaceae), informally known as creeping staurogyne, is popular for aquascaping, the aesthetic arrangement of plants, rocks and driftwood in an aquarium. This aquatic plant species, described by Nees in *Flora Brasiliensis* in 1847, is native to Brazil and Guyana, with records from the states of Amazonas, Mato Grosso and Pará in Brazil. Despite being widely cultivated and commercialized, *S. repens* is underrepresented in herbaria, with only c. 10 specimens including duplicates, the most recent collected in 1907, in Pará.

Brazil's *Official National List of Threatened Flora Species* categorizes seven of 28 native species of *Staurogyne* as Vulnerable or Endangered but *S. repens* is not included and has not yet been assessed on the IUCN Red List. In the latest revision of *Staurogyne*, Braz & Monteiro (2017, *Phytotaxa*, 296, 1–40) argued that the lack of recent collections of *S. repens* indicates it is either rare or extinct in the wild. The abundance of clones of *S. repens* available commercially suggested to us that this species could fall into Schrödinger's cat extinction paradox (Roberts & Fisher, 2020, *Oryx*, 54, 143–144), being considered simultaneously both extant and extinct, with lack of knowledge of occurrence in the wild hindering conservation of the species.

In August 2021, however, during an expedition to the Parque Nacional da Chapada das Mesas in the Cerrado of Maranhão, Brazil, we collected two small specimens of *Staurogyne* growing on rocky banks of the Farinha River. Concurrently, photographs of a similar plant on rocky banks of the Teles Pires river in Mato Grosso were posted by Milton Cordova Neyra on DetWeb, a Facebook group for Brazilian taxonomists and plant enthusiasts. Following examination of the specimens and photographs, we have been able to confirm they are *S. repens*. These are the first records of this species in the wild for 115 years and expand its known distribution to the Brazilian Cerrado. We will monitor known populations and aim to provide a Red List assessment for *S. repens*.

We thank FAPEMA (PDCTR-00123/20) and CNPq (301691/2021-5) for financial support, and Lucas Marinho for helpful insights. Our collections were the minimum required for validating the occurrence of *S. repens* and were made with permission of ICMBio (number 77388-1).