

National Geographic Grantmaking reaches 10,000 Mark - Young Indian Biologist Gets No. 10,000.

Excavation of the lost Inca city of Machu Picchu by archaeologist Hiram Bingham. Jane Goodall's groundbreaking study of wild chimpanzees, the pioneering exploration of the deep sea by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and now work on human dimensions of conservation by Krithi Karanth. All the legacy of National Geographic grants.

It began in 1890 with a single grant to explore the uncharted Mount St. Elias region of Alaska. Since then the National Geographic Society has funded grants to every corner of the Earth — unlocking many of its secrets, sometimes in spectacular ways. Late in 2011, the total number of National Geographic grants reached 10,000, representing a combined value of \$153 million. Conservation biologist Krithi Karanth, 32, of India is the recipient of the 10,000th grant, and a story highlighting this milestone will appear in the January issue of National Geographic magazine.

“The impact and results of these 10,000 grants are beyond calculation — they have filled countless gaps in our knowledge of the Earth and all that lives on it,” said John Francis, vice president for research, conservation and exploration at National Geographic. “The urgent need for solutions to the planet’s pressing problems means that the next 10,000 grants will be even more critical.”

Scientific research, exploration, conservation and adventure are the backbone of National Geographic’s grants; the scientific grants focus primarily on anthropology, archaeology, biology, ecology, geology, geography, oceanography and paleontology. National Geographic grants have led to countless discoveries that continue to shed light on the planet’s rich variety and diversity — and help preserve it.

The ‘Top 10’

From all of the grants made so far, the National Geographic Society has chosen 10 that have made the greatest difference in understanding the Earth (listed chronologically):

1912-15: Excavation of the “lost city of the Inca” — Machu Picchu in Peru. Grantee: Hiram Bingham.

1928-9: Man’s first flight over the South Pole, photographing 60,000 square miles of Antarctica from the air. Grantee: Richard E. Byrd.

1952: Pioneering exploration of hidden ocean life by Jacques-Yves Cousteau, beginning with underwater excavation of an ancient Roman cargo ship near Marseille, France — the first of 37 grants made to Cousteau.

1960: Search for evidence of early humans in Africa. Grantee: Louis Leakey. This was the first of a total of 76 National Geographic grants to Leakey and his wife, Mary; their son Richard; and his wife, Meave Leakey.

1961: Field study of wild chimpanzees, which confirmed use of tools by a species other than humans and unveiled the species' rich social structure. Grantee: Jane Goodall.

1963-8: Conservation grant to help establish Redwood National Park, which followed a 1916 grant to preserve endangered tracts of old-growth trees at the heart of Sequoia National Park. Grantee: Chester C. Brown (National Park Service)

1970: Mapping the ocean floor, creating a global panorama of the ocean floor and revealing an ocean bed fractured by large mountain chains. Grantees: Bruce Heezen and Marie Tharp.

1975-6: Discovery of the location of the wintering grounds of the eastern North American monarch butterfly. Grantee: Fred Urquhart.

1977: Discovery of hydrothermal vents deep in the Pacific Ocean's Galapagos Rift, containing the first known life forms not dependent on photosynthesis. Grantee: Robert Ballard.

2004: Discovery of missing-link fossil of 375 million-year-old fossil fish representing transition of life from sea to land. Grantee: Neil Shubin.

Conservation biologist Krithi K. Karanth of Bangalore, India, is the recipient of the 10,000th grant. Dr. Karanth saw her first wild tigers at the age of 2 at the side of her father, wildlife biologist and conservationist Ullas Karanth. Krithi Karanth works on human dimensions of conservation, such as human-wildlife conflicts, land use change and people-park relationships. With the National Geographic grant, she will assess human-wildlife conflicts in five parks of India's Western Ghats. The project will identify and map risks and consequences for local people and the implications for conflict-prone wildlife species such as elephants, wild pigs, leopards and tigers. Field methods will include thousands of household surveys, interviews and mapping exercises.

India's rich wildlife has been severely reduced over the past century and continues to be threatened by habitat destruction, prey depletion, poaching and the global wildlife trade. "The declines of species are so dramatic, widespread and so recent," Karanth said. "I wish I could have seen what the country was like in the 1800s with all this wildlife. In many parts of India there is human tolerance for some species, and this is why they still persist despite rapid changes in land use and high densities of people. This 'cultural' tolerance must be harnessed."

The link to the interview with Krithi K. Karanth

<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2011/12/08/and-the-10000th-national-geographic-grant-goes-to/>