

Conservation Celebrities Recognized as Disney Fund Reaches Milestone \$10 Million Investment in Wildlife

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (April 6, 2006) – Five renowned conservation celebrities joined with Disney Thursday night to celebrate a \$10 million milestone for the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund (DWCF) – a program that has benefited nearly 500 wildlife projects around the world.

Actor/comedian John Cleese; elephant expert Iain Douglas-Hamilton; primatologist **Jane Goodall**; actress **Isabella Rossellini**; and Nobel Peace Prize winner **Wangari Maathai** accepted awards of \$100,000 each for their conservation causes in a ceremony at Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World Resort.

“These very special people, who have devoted their lives and lent their voices to conservation, are the key to engaging the public in caring for animals,” said Jerry Montgomery, senior vice president of Walt Disney World Public Affairs. “The adventures and excitement at Disney's Animal Kingdom help us share conservation stories with our guests, and we are thrilled that many of them join our global conservation efforts through the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund. Together, we are making a difference for wildlife and wild places –we are helping to create the next generation of Disney's conservation legacy.”

The conservation focus is a large part of the park's mission as a facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Since 1998, the DWCF has been supported by donations from guests visiting Walt Disney World Resort and enhanced by company contributions. The \$500,000 awarded at the celebration will be divided among several charitable organizations working in the U.S. and abroad:

- Cleese, who founded an organization called Conservation Matters, plans to support the Jersey Wildlife Trust (UK) and Santa Barbara Zoo species survival programs in addition to Conservation Matters.
- Douglas-Hamilton, through his Save the Elephants group, will use the funds to continue studies of elephants in Kenya that have spanned more than 30 years.
- Goodall will direct Disney's gift through her institute to support a variety of efforts, including the Roots 'N Shoots program, a global effort to engage children in caring about animals, with chapters in more than 90 countries.
- Rossellini, who plays an active role in supporting developing conservation entrepreneurs internationally, will share the funds with the Andean Cat Alliance through the Wildlife Conservation Network and the Howard Gilman Foundation, where she serves as trustee.
- Maathai, the first African female recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, created the “Greenbelt Movement” which mobilized thousands of women in Africa to plant trees. She expects to expand her efforts to focus on cultural diversity, greening the Earth, and good governance.

“Animals have been a part of Disney history since Walt's first sketch of Bambi, and today we celebrate Disney's conservation contributions by providing support to those who are making a

difference for animals and the environment,” said Dr. Beth Stevens, vice president of Disney’s Animal Kingdom. “We selected these special individuals because each brings a personal passion to studying and saving endangered species and lands.”

Disney’s Animal Kingdom and the AZA: *Disney’s Animal Kingdom is the largest of the four Walt Disney World theme parks, populating an area of more than 500 acres with attractions, shows and adventures about animals – real, extinct and mythological. It is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). With more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and a link to helping animals in their native habitats.*