

Iwokrama wins Green Award 2016

Georgetown, 10 June, 2016.

To commemorate their 20th Anniversary, the Environmental Protection Agency presented Green Awards to outstanding examples of environmental leadership. A Green Award was presented to the Iwokrama International Centre for their outstanding leadership and innovation towards sustainability practices in the natural resource sector in Guyana through their innovative work with wildlife clubs in the North Rupununi, Region 9.

The Green Award recognizes the Centre's 18 year commitment to growing conservation leaders from the inception of clubs in the North Rupununi. In 1998, in response to local concern about wildlife, Iwokrama hosted a wildlife workshop with 45 village leaders and representatives from 16 indigenous communities. The workshop addressed existing benefits of wildlife to communities, threats to wildlife, international and national laws related and held discussions on the potential solutions to wildlife conservation and management problems in the North Rupununi. One of the outcomes was the development of wildlife and environmental clubs.

Community members' vision was that wildlife clubs would be an integral part of a wildlife and environmental management programme of the North Rupununi. These clubs would allow youth to gain first-hand experience of natural resource management and prepare children for the future resource management. The objectives of the clubs are to:

- Develop an awareness and understanding of the forest plants, animals, and physical characteristics;
- Help in wildlife inventories in the area;
- Understand natural resource management and conservation;
- Build personal capacity and social skills.

From then to now, club activities include forest walks, camping, learning the scientific and local names for animals and plants, meetings where club members learn new resource management skills, exchange visits to other communities, developing and maintaining nature trails, clean up campaigns, and the preparation of wildlife related art and poetry. Life skills training are an

The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development is an autonomous non-profit institution established by Guyana and the Commonwealth. The Centre manages the nearly one million acre (371,000 hectare) Iwokrama Forest in central Guyana to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used for ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

integral part of club activities as it is clear that in order to take care of the environment; youth must be able to take care of themselves in a responsible and informed manner.

Over the past 18 years, Iwokrama has championed the development and support of wildlife clubs and has hosted regular workshops with club members to help build local capacity in both scientific and personal skills building. Iwokrama rangers conduct environmental education in a fun and interactive manner to schools and wildlife clubs and club activities in the North Rupununi and Iwokrama has hosted 11 wildlife festivals to celebrate the environment and local culture and arts.

Since their inception, the number of clubs has grown from 11 to 16 and they are an integral part of the conservation leadership ladder of the North Rupununi. Research conducted in 2010 showed that many former club members are now community leaders or working in conservation in the North Rupununi. Former club members are an integral part of growing and sustaining the natural capital in the North Rupununi. Many are now Toshaos (elected leaders), guides, rangers, managers, teachers, administrators and researchers and are involved in the development of community based tourism, product development from medicinal plants, local food production and in hospitality.

Many former club members have grown up and been elected as village councilors and Toshaos and the strength of the leadership in the North Rupununi is obvious through their many ground breaking conservation initiatives: the Arapaima Management Plan (the only inland fisheries plan in Guyana), Community Monitoring Review and Verification (CMRV) where communities have mapped their resources in light of LCDS, community based tourism and research (Arapaima, Giant River Turtles, Black Caiman).

Now, when Iwokrama works with communities or hires, it is clear that its mentorship with wildlife clubs has been successful as many of its staff and colleagues in conservation were former wildlife club members. This is definite proof that support to wildlife clubs has been successful.



The Award



EPA’s Sharifah Razak (Centre), presenting the award to Samantha James (right), Iwokrama’s Community Relations Manager in the presence of Dr Raquel Thomas (left), Training and Resource Management Director at Iwokrama.

Notes to the Editors:

About Iwokrama

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) was established in 1996 under a joint mandate from the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat to manage the Iwokrama forest, a unique reserve of 371,000 hectares of rainforest “in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”.

The Centre, guided by an international Board of Trustees is unique, providing a dedicated well managed and researched forest environment. The forest is zoned into a Sustainable Utilization Area (SUA) and a Wilderness Preserve (WP) in which to test the concept of a truly sustainable forest where conservation, environmental balance and economic use can be mutually reinforcing. The IIC collaborates with the Government of Guyana, the Commonwealth and other international partners and donors to develop new approaches and forest management models to enable countries with rainforests to market their ecosystem services whilst carefully managing their resources through innovative and creative conservation practices.

Iwokrama brings together:

- 20 local communities (approximately 7,000 people) who are shareholders and participants in the IIC’s sustainable timber, tourism, research operations and forest management activities through complex co-management and benefit sharing arrangements;
- Scientists and researchers engaged in ground breaking research into the impacts of climate change on the forest and measuring the scope and value of its ecosystem services; and

- A portfolio of sustainably managed and certified business models using innovative governance systems which include participation of the private and public sectors and the local communities, earning income from the forest and its natural assets whilst employing international social, environmental and economic best practice, whilst still keeping abreast of the ever changing thinking on funding for environmental projects in the face of climate change and the perennial scarcity of international finance.

This alliance and the Centre's work programmes are committed to showing how a rain forest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change protection and real community benefit.

For further details about the Iwokrama International Centre please visit www.iwokrama.org , www.iwokramariverlodge.com or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on dgobin@iwokrama.org