

News release

Mauritius conservationist honored as biodiversity 'Hotspot Hero' by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

Vikash Tatayah is being recognized for achievements in protecting the country's species and ecosystems

Arlington, Virginia, USA (22 May 2020) – On this International Day for Biological Diversity, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) announces that Vikash Tatayah and nine other conservationists from around the world have been named "Hotspot Heroes" for their efforts to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots. The honorees were chosen from the hundreds of civil society organizations that have received grants from CEPF in the 10 global biodiversity hotspots where the fund is currently active.

CEPF is recognizing these heroes as part of the celebration of its 20th anniversary. The fund empowers nongovernmental organizations, indigenous groups, universities and private enterprises to protect the world's biodiversity hotspots—the world's most biologically diverse yet threatened terrestrial regions—and help communities thrive. CEPF does this through grants and technical support for conservation, organizational strengthening and sustainable development.

The Hotspot Heroes and the nongovernmental organizations they work for are making outstanding contributions to the conservation of the hotspots. They exemplify the kinds of dedicated, dynamic people who work to ensure that intact ecosystems can continue to sustain flora and fauna and provide clean air, fresh water, healthy soils, sustainable livelihoods, resilience to climate change and much more.

Born in Mauritius, Dr. Tatayah serves as the conservation director for the [Mauritian Wildlife Foundation](#) (MWF), where he has worked for 23 years. Mauritius is one of the most degraded islands on the planet, and MWF is one of only a few local organizations that focuses on protecting the country's threatened endemic plants and animals.

MWF has spearheaded decades'-long efforts to bring back species on the verge of extinction, including the echo parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) and pink pigeon (*Nesoenas mayeri*), both of which were recently downlisted on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, from Endangered to Vulnerable.

Under Dr. Tatayah's leadership, MWF used a grant from CEPF to reintroduce the echo parakeet and pink pigeon, as well as the Mauritius kestrel (*Falco punctatus*), to several forests where they had become locally extinct.

"Dr. Tatayah has been a strong advocate of biodiversity conservation and an indispensable collaborator since CEPF started working in Mauritius in 2015," said Monique Vieille, CEPF grant director for the [Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot](#), which includes Mauritius.

MWF used a second grant from CEPF to support strategies to better protect the understudied ecosystems of the St. Brandon archipelago.

"The Hotspot Heroes represent the many tenacious, committed conservationists who are taking action every day to ensure the future of the biodiversity hotspots and the people who depend on these vital ecosystems," said CEPF Executive Director Olivier Langrand. "They endure a multitude of challenges—long hours, grueling travel, difficult working conditions, political hurdles and even threats to their lives—in pursuit of a healthy, sustainable world."

"Dr. Tatayah has devoted his professional life to saving the amazing nature of Mauritius, and his steadfast determination is yielding exciting results, not only in regard to conserving species and ecosystems, but also through the inspiration he provides new generations of local conservationists through his leadership and perseverance," said Langrand.

Read more about [Vikash Tatayah](#) and the other [Hotspot Heroes](#).

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

Since 2001, CEPF has catalyzed enduring, locally led biodiversity conservation through US\$250 million in grants to more than 2,400 organizations in 98 developing and transitional countries. Results include more than 15 million hectares of formal protected areas established, at least 890 globally threatened species supported, and more than 3,500 communities benefiting. Learn more at www.cepf.net, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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Download a photo of Vikash Tatayah [here](#). (*Note: you will need to read through Conservation International's terms of use document before downloading.)