



ACTION FOR NATURE

*We encourage young people to take personal action
to protect the environment on which all life depends*

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Action for Nature Announces 2020 “International Young Eco-Hero Award” Winners

17 Eco-Conscious Youth from Around the World Honored for Environmental Achievements

San Francisco – Today, Action for Nature (AFN) announced its 2020 Young Eco-Hero award winners, honoring 17 young environmental activists from across the globe for their creative initiatives aimed at tackling the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.

“These children, pre-teens, and teens have shown that the next generation is refusing to simply stand on the sidelines but instead is turning its passion for helping the planet into projects that have tangible, positive impacts on the environment now,” said Beryl Kay, president of Action for Nature, an international non-profit organization that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for Earth’s natural resources and to take personal action to better their environments. “Through their commitment, these young activists are shaping the world around them and inspiring other young people to take action to protect our Earth.”

Awarded annually, these outstanding young people from across the globe are selected by a panel of independent judges, including experts in environmental science, biology, and education. For the past seventeen years, the International Young Eco-Hero Awards have honored global youth in two categories – 8 to 12 years old and 13 to 16 years old – who are taking important steps to solve tough environmental problems. Since 2003, Action for Nature has recognized more than 277 young people from nearly 30 countries and over 25 U.S. states.

The winners will present their work at a virtual event, the 2020 International Eco-Hero Awards Conference, anchored in San Francisco on September 12, 2020 at 10:00 am PST. For more information about how to attend and to RSVP email holly.shulman@gmail.com. Attendance is limited.

This year’s International Young Eco-Hero Awards go to:

First Prize – Jade Bothma (age 14, Cape Town, South Africa) founded Oceano Reddentes, meaning “the ocean revives,” at the age of 12, which has removed more than 8,000 pounds of waste from beaches around Cape Town, recycling some 3,300 pounds and diverting it from polluting the ocean and from landfills. In addition to cleaning up beaches, Jade is also pioneering the use of discarded plastic for home building bricks and is currently working with Stellenbosch University to develop her “eco-bricks” concept with the goal of building one of the first eco-brick homes in South Africa. Read more about Jade’s work [here](#).

First Prize – Rylee Brooke Kamahele (age 12, Mililani, Hawai’i) has launched three environment projects – Promise to our Keiki, The Plastics Project, and the Hashtag Speak Up Movement – that tackle a multitude of local conservation challenges through legislative advocacy, direct action clean up programs that have removed several tons of plastics and trash from Hawai’i’s beaches, the education of tourists about being mindful visitors, the protection of endangered species, and the rescue and rehabilitation of animals. Rylee is also working to ban single-use plastic in Hawai’i by 2024. Read more about Rylee’s work [here](#).

Innovator Award – Adarsh Ambati (age 15, San Jose, California) noticed that while harsh drought conditions have existed in his area for several years, many of his neighbors had automatic sprinklers dispersing precious and expensive water, regardless of weather conditions.

In response, he developed a smart, low-cost, community sprinkler alert system that would conserve water that is often wasted during general-purpose landscape irrigation. Adarsh began working on his prototype in 2016, conducted a two-month pilot with 10 neighboring households, and found that these 10 homes had the potential to save 50,000 gallons of water over two months. Read more about Adarsh’s work [here](#).

Second Prize – Lazar Dukovic (age 15, Budva, Montenegro) noticed that his grandparents and the other villagers of Ilino Brdo had problems with their water supply and a lack of electric power: water was only accessible from far-away springs and wells, and residents were unable to connect with the power grid, having to resort to polluting gas generators. Lazar put his knowledge to work to help this rural village build a water pump for all residents and transition eight households to solar electric power. Read more about Lazar’s work [here](#).

Second Prize – Duncan Jurman (age 16, Weston, Florida) founded the Bring Back Butterflies initiative. Through this effort he has engaged over 3,500 students to learn about and appreciate butterfly beauty, biology, and importance, maintained gardens and a vivarium at his home where he has raised and released over 5,000 butterflies, and created a large butterfly garden and vivarium at his high school that has attracted 28 butterfly species, including two imperiled

species. Read more about Duncan's work [here](#).

Second Prize – Sofia Molina (age 11, San Luis Potosi, Mexico) developed a program called "Cococu," named in Spanish for the initial syllables of her three main actions, COncientizar (to raise awareness), COnocer (to know), and CUidar (to care). This effort – which she launched at age 7 – gives kids the tools they need to carry out small actions for sustainable development and to care for the environment. Since its founding, Sofia has organized more than 1,000 children to participate in a variety of conservation projects, and secured 30,000 acres for voluntary protection of ecosystems and sustainable use of resources. Read more about Sofia's work [here](#).

Second Prize – Ivanna Ortega Serret (age 12, Ciudad López Mateos, Atizapán De Zaragoza, Mexico) lives near Madin Dam, an essential ecosystem in the area, which has been a source of water for her town and others and home to wildlife. But in 2019, budget cuts left the municipality without funds to keep the water clean, so water lilies and other plants took over, the fish began to die, and the birds disappeared. In response, Ivanna launched a petition against the land's owner and got over 19,000 signatures in just two weeks advocating for maintenance efforts to preserve this natural gem, and today, thanks to Ivanna, volunteers, and her community, the Madin Dam is officially lily free. Read more about Ivanna's work [here](#).

Third Prize – Sarah Goody (age 15, Corte Madera, California) founded Climate Now, a youth-led organization in Marin County, California, whose members strive to ensure a sustainable planet for our future by educating and empowering youth in order to combat the climate crisis. To date, Climate NOW has educated over 500 local students about the urgency of the climate crisis, has provided high school environmental groups with the resources and connections they need to be a part of the worldwide climate movement, and has helped local student organizations fight for composting and recycling programs on campus. Read more about Sarah's work [here](#).

Third Prize – Lesein Mutunkei (age 15, Nairobi, Kenya) knew that when he read about trees being cut down in Kenya that he had to do something. He vowed to plant 11 trees for every soccer goal he scored, and got his teammates to agree to do the same, launching Trees for Goals. To date, Lesein – with the participation of 5,000 young people - has planted over 1,000 trees in Kenya. Read more about Lesein's work [here](#).

Third Prize – Justin Sather (age 9, Los Angeles, California) founded For Love Of Frogs. Through this initiative he organized wetland cleanups, studied frogs with herpetologists worldwide, worked with companies that turned plastic waste into treasures, and raised over \$22,000 to conserve land, reduce plastics, and improve water quality for frogs and beyond. Now, he is

focused on a new project: raising the funds needed to purchase land to protect rainforests in Ecuador that are home to thousands of frogs and other critically endangered animals and plants. Read more about Justin's work [here](#).

Third Prize – Riva Tulpule (age 14, Dubai, United Arab Emirates) saw the need to responsibly recycle electronic waste, and what started as a small community project in 2017, has evolved into a major enterprise in just three years. By increasing public awareness and enlisting the help of friends as well as local businesses, she has now collected and recycled more than 20 tons of e-waste. Read more about Riva's work [here](#).

Young people receiving honorable mentions include:

Zach Hartman (age 11, Tampa, Florida) for his project, "Zach's Planet: Helping the Planet and Its People!" You can read about Zach's work [here](#).

Lily Kay (age 10, Dallas, Texas) for her project, "Free Texas State Parks for Fifth Graders." You can read about Lily's work [here](#).

Ishan Goyal (age 15, San Jose, California) for his project, "Pin & Post." You can read about Ishan's work [here](#).

Eiman Jawwad (age 15, Lahore, Pakistan) for her project, "Organic Fertilizer from Tea and Coffee Residue." You can read more about Eiman's work [here](#).

Aditya Mukarji (age 15, Gurgaon, Haryana, India) for his project, "Refuse If You Cannot Reuse." You can read more about Aditya's work [here](#).

Demetri Sedita (age 16, Tampa, Florida) for his project, "Green Gasparilla." You can read more about Demetri's work [here](#).

To learn more about the Young Eco-Hero Awards and this year's winners and access high-res images and view their individual videos, visit actionfornature.org.

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Action for Nature. (AFN) is an international non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California, that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for Earth's natural resources and to take personal action to better their environments.