



THE HEINZ AWARDS

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

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Championing Citizen Science and Supporting Women's Environmental Leadership: Heinz Family Foundation Names Leaders of iNaturalist and Women's Earth Alliance Recipients of the 29th Heinz Awards for the Environment

PITTSBURGH, September 17, 2024 — The Heinz Family Foundation today named Scott Loarie, Ph.D., Ken-ichi Ueda, Amira Diamond and Melinda Kramer recipients of the prestigious 29th Heinz Award for the Environment. As part of the accolade, Dr. Loarie and Mr. Ueda, Co-Organizers of iNaturalist, will share an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000; Ms. Diamond and Ms. Kramer, Co-Founders of Women's Earth Alliance, will also share an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

Scott Loarie, Ph.D., is Executive Director and **Ken-ichi Ueda** is Co-Founder and Software Engineer at iNaturalist, considered the largest citizen science project in the world. iNaturalist makes it possible for millions of novice naturalists, researchers and conservation biologists to record and map nature observations across the planet through open-source technological platforms designed to connect everyday people to nature while scaling biodiversity monitoring and stewardship.

An amateur naturalist and web developer, Mr. Ueda sought to create a learning tool after a cross-country relocation sparked his desire to learn about the species around him. In 2008, he and two other students — Jessica Kline and Nate Agrin — built the platform for a master's degree project at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Loarie's research examines how species ranges change with a shifting climate, and after he met Mr. Ueda in 2010, the two combined their aims to develop iNaturalist.

The platform has galvanized a global community of millions of nature enthusiasts and hundreds of thousands of expert naturalists and researchers. Together, this group crowdsources one of the world's largest biodiversity databases from more than 4 million users each month. To date, over 200 million observations have been logged by over 3 million observers. Community observations have contributed to more than 5,000 publications on subjects that include the discovery of new species, range shifts, species rediscovery, distributions of invasive species and species' responses to climate change.

Community members range from students to retired police officers to educators and practicing biologists. In 2018, iNaturalist launched Seek, an app with a simplified interface designed for youth and beginners.

“For the general public, iNaturalist provides a gateway to expert knowledge and a meaningful way to engage with nature through biodiversity monitoring and stewardship,” says Dr. Loarie. “For researchers, it offers a global network of ‘eyes and ears,’ enabling the collection of extensive data that would be impossible to gather independently.”

Hundreds of thousands of expert naturalists on the platform help curate and identify contributions. Community members have observed 469,000 of the 2 million named species on Earth, including two-

thirds of the named vertebrates. Observations that meet the research-grade criteria are submitted to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, a pipeline of data that tracks over 100,000 biodiversity datasets.

“The citizen science model has allowed the collection of biodiversity data to scale like never before,” says Dr. Loarie. “It used to take many decades to census hundreds of thousands of species around the globe; iNaturalist now has the unique capability of doing this annually. This extensive coverage offers researchers a powerful, real-time tool for understanding how biodiversity is responding to rapid environmental changes. iNaturalist informs conservation priorities, measures restoration success and acts as an early warning system for invasive species. Additionally, the wealth of information in the form of photos provides valuable insights into species traits and interactions.”

Each year, dozens of new species are first identified through iNaturalist observations.

“In November 2023, scientists described a new mantis species, *Inimia nat*, or ‘I. nat’ (pronounced iNat), named in honor of the platform where it was first noticed,” explains Dr. Loarie. “Another significant observation was made by a school teacher visiting New Zealand, who photographed a moth that was later identified as the Frosted Phoenix. This species, often referred to as the ‘Holy Grail’ of New Zealand moths, had not been seen in decades. Such discoveries highlight the potential for amateur naturalists and researchers coming together to make impactful contributions through iNaturalist.”

By 2030, iNaturalist is poised to ignite aims to build a global movement for biodiversity, driving a net-positive trend for the planet.

“Through iNaturalist, Scott and Ken-ichi are advancing citizen science at a remarkable scale, enabling people from all walks of life, communities and backgrounds to connect with the wonder of nature,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Through their work, they inspire us to embrace curiosity, to be active participants in discovery and to pay attention to the remarkable diversity of life that is all around us, regardless of where we live. We honor Scott and Ken-ichi for creating a platform that not only welcomes everyone to contribute to our collective knowledge of biodiversity, but one that is also a model for public discourse, camaraderie and respectful engagement. These are qualities my late husband, John Heinz, exemplified in his life and work, and that we celebrate through the Heinz Awards each year.”

Amira Diamond and **Melinda Kramer** receive the Heinz Award for the Environment for their work founding and leading the Women’s Earth Alliance (WEA), which seeks to protect the environment, end the climate crisis and ensure a just, thriving world by empowering women-led climate initiatives and enterprises.

WEA empowers women’s leadership in the environmental space because women are often most affected by environmental issues, yet are unrecognized for their expertise, underrepresented in decision-making processes and underfunded. Unlike top-down approaches, WEA collaborates directly with women leaders on the ground, leveraging their deep knowledge and expertise. WEA’s holistic approach provides funding, communication tools, advocacy training, technical skills, business incubators and an in-country network of trainers and peers.

As of 2024, WEA has catalyzed the efforts of over 52,000 women leading environmental initiatives and enterprises in 31 countries, reaching millions with clean water, energy access, regenerative farming practices and climate initiatives. WEA recently launched its 20-year anniversary campaign — Rising Tides, Rising Women — to advance and vastly expand WEA’s global work supporting thousands of frontline, women-led climate justice leaders, enable the acquisition of land crucial to climate protection and resilience efforts, and resource WEA’s work for years to come.

WEA impacts are being realized worldwide, with its leaders working to protect forests and rivers, save threatened indigenous seeds, launch sustainable farms, conserve coral reefs, and protect land rights. In the heart of Indonesia’s Leuser ecosystem, Indigenous women are taking action to defend and conserve their ancestral lands and lifeways. WEA Accelerator leaders at the Seeds of Carver Urban Farm Collective in Los Angeles are piloting bioremediation methods such as planting sunflowers to naturally detoxify the soil and air. In Kenya, WEA-trained women’s groups grew 123,000 trees in Kakamega — the country’s last tropical rainforest — and trained communities to plant saplings for agroforestry, erosion control and climate adaptation. They are growing climate-resilient seeds and establishing community seed banks as an alternative to agrochemical seed systems. And in Narok, Kenya, WEA leaders are ensuring local Maasai communities are climate resilient with tree nurseries, community gardens, clean cooking technology, handmade soap micro-businesses and more. This, in turn, is reducing deforestation, improving financial and family well-being, garnering respect from male community members, and inspiring younger generations.

“For millennia, women have been the bedrock of the ‘care economy’ — nurturing our families, laboring to better our societies, and stewarding the Earth and its precious resources,” says Ms. Kramer. “As the climate emergency intensifies, so does the burden on our world’s women. WEA provides a powerbase for women leaders around the world who are leading critical local environmental fights and who are too often facing marginalization, persecution and deep inequity. Many leaders don’t own the land they work to protect, don’t have a say in the policies that profoundly impact their lives and don’t have access to resources, training or networks of allies. WEA supports and unites these leaders so they are never alone in their efforts to protect our environment for the next generation.”

WEA’s Accelerator-training programs, through which they form partnerships with organizations that share their vision, help to advance and scale the organizations’ work. WEA’s programming began in Africa, Asia and North America, addressing the most pressing environmental issues identified by women in those regions: in Africa, water access; in India, sustainable agriculture; and in North America, legal support for Indigenous women protecting their land and lifeways.

“What we have seen to be true through the almost two decades of WEA’s work is that networks of women community leaders are the lifeblood of this time,” says Ms. Diamond. “And when we are being pummeled by compounding crises — wars, floods, fires, earthquakes and pandemics — these women’s networks kick into gear with brilliance and foresight. It’s these moments when it becomes clear that these leaders aren’t just saving each other, they’re saving all of us. These grassroots networks have been proven throughout history to be one of our most effective and efficient ways to provide relief, distribute resources, administer care, and create lasting and just solutions.”

WEA Accelerators have expanded to Mexico, Indonesia and Brazil, with respective partnerships including their Women and Rivers Accelerator with International Rivers; Women and Forests Accelerators with local nongovernmental organizations in Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda; COVID and Climate Relief, Recovery and Resilience programming with local NGOs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, Nigeria, India, Mexico and Nicaragua; and U.S. and Mexico Climate Justice Accelerators with partners and collaborators such as the Sierra Club, Soul Fire Farm and Fondo Semillas.

“We honor Amira and Melinda for creating a global network of women who are leading effective, impactful environmental work in their communities and across whole nations,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Amira and Melinda are listening to the wisdom and insight of women living on the front lines of climate crisis. They are empowering them with the resources they need to create meaningful solutions that respond to their most urgent needs, and as a result, Women’s Earth Alliance is achieving life- and planet-saving systems change. From championing new land, water and agricultural practices to advancing eco-enterprises, Amira and Melinda are showing that together we can turn from centuries of exploitation to embrace new methods of cultivating and living on our land. Together with the women leaders they support around the globe, they are demonstrating what is possible despite tremendous obstacles. Their accomplishments leave us with no excuse and call us all to do better in protecting the beautiful world that we share.”

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards honors excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to him. The 29th Awards brings the total number of recipients to 180 and reflects more than \$37 million in monetary awards since the program was launched in 1993.

Additional recipients by category are:

Arts: Jennie C. Jones, Sonic and Visual Artist, Hudson, New York, creates works of painting, collage, sculpture and sound that engage with the history of American modernism and minimalism while investigating the era’s avant-garde music.

Arts: Gala Porrás-Kim, Visual Artist, Los Angeles, California, creates work spanning drawings, sculptures and installations that challenges institutions to reassess their role as stewards of history and culture. Through artworks that are often informed by direct engagement with museums and their staff, she aims to shift policies regarding the ownership of objects.

Economy: Aisha Nyandoro, Ph.D., Founding CEO, Springboard to Opportunities and Founder, Magnolia Mother’s Trust (MMT), Jackson, Mississippi, is a national leader in the guaranteed income movement. Her work leading Springboard to Opportunities and MMT — the first guaranteed income program for single Black mothers in the U.S. — is not only helping to alleviate economic injustices but also reframing the narrative around poverty.

Economy: Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner, Co-Founders, All Our Kin, New Haven, Connecticut, train, support and sustain family child care educators, arming these home-based providers with the resources and community connections they need to create quality early childhood environments and run

successful small businesses. Their program, All Our Kin, not only raises the earning power of providers but also raises the quality, availability and sustainability of child care.

Recipients of the 29th Heinz Awards will be honored in Pittsburgh in October. For more information on the awardees, visit www.heinzawards.org.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of the recipients, please contact Abby Manishor at amanishor@burness.com or 917-539-3308.

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About the Heinz Awards

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrates the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of greatest importance to him. The Awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, currently recognize individuals for their contributions in the areas of the Arts, the Environment and the Economy. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit www.heinzawards.org.

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