



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

23 April 2024

NEWS RELEASE

#UPGraduation2024: UP honours world-renowned conservation scholar Prof Stuart Pimm



Professor Stuart Pimm delivering his address at the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences' graduation ceremony.

PRETORIA - The University of Pretoria (UP) has awarded world-renowned conservation scholar Professor Stuart Pimm with an honorary doctorate in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the field of conservation biology.

The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences conferred the doctorate on Prof Pimm, who is the Doris Duke Distinguished Professor of Conservation Ecology at the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University in the US, during UP's 2024 autumn graduation season. He studies why species become extinct, the rate of extinction and the global patterns of habitat loss, among other areas.

"I am honoured to receive an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences," Prof Pimm said. "Having collaborated with researchers and students at UP for more than 25 years, it is clear that the conservation impact of my work aligns with the vision and mission of the University of Pretoria. We share a commitment to advancing innovations in conservation globally, for a better society."

“What makes Prof Pimm’s scholarship particularly impactful is that his early theoretical work evolved into very practical conservation management guidelines, which he has implemented and refined at various sites across the world,” said Prof Barend Erasmus, Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. “His work on transboundary elephant conservation in Africa, together with that of the late Prof Rudi van Aarde, remains a scholarly benchmark and guides regional conservation frameworks. It is exceptional to have this level of translation from theory into practice on a global scale.”

To date, Prof Pimm has published more than 350 peer-reviewed scientific papers in leading journals such as *Science*, *Nature* and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. He has also published six books, including *The Balance of Nature? Ecological Issues in the Conservation of Species and Communities* (1991) and *The World According to Pimm, a Scientist Audits the Earth* (2001).

Prof Pimm’s academic career began in 1971 at Oxford University in the UK, where he obtained an honours degree. He received a PhD from New Mexico State University, US, in 1974, and thereafter held academic positions at several US-based institutions – Clemson University, Texas Tech University, University of Tennessee and Columbia University – before finally taking up his current position at Duke University in 2002.

In addition to this, Prof Pimm is an Extraordinary Professor in UP’s Conservation Ecology Research Unit within the Department of Zoology and Entomology, a position he held from 2001 to 2010 and then from 2016 to date.

“Throughout his career, Prof Pimm has provided stimulating and insightful lectures, developed high-quality graduate students, and expanded the theoretical understanding of conservation science, which he then applies to conservation efforts across the globe,” Prof Erasmus said. “For example, he mapped in increasing detail where biodiversity remains using geographic information systems and satellite imagery. His innovations in using these tools provide researchers, land managers and legislators critical insights into remaining refuges of biodiversity.”

Through his NGO, Saving Nature, which he founded in 2007, Prof Pimm combines his theoretical understanding of large-scale patterns of biodiversity loss, the implementation of practical conservation solutions, and his engagement with policymakers, managers, the public and the media to prevent biodiversity loss.

Saving Nature’s mission is to rescue endangered habitats and vulnerable communities from environmental destruction. This is done through targeting the most biologically rich and threatened places on Earth. The NGO has projects in Brazil’s Atlantic Forest, Colombia’s Western Andes Mountains, the Ecuadorian Amazon, Tanzania’s Eastern Arc Mountains, Sumatra’s Leuser Ecosystem and India’s Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary.

“For each of these projects, Saving Nature partners with well-established local conservation groups that purchase, restore and manage the protected areas,” Prof Erasmus explained. “Moreover, through his academic efforts and the efforts of Saving Nature, Prof Pimm has generated leading research, which he has integrated into community outreach conservation programmes in several countries across four continents.”

In addition to his contribution through Saving Nature and his academic work, Prof Pimm has testified on several occasions to US congressional committees on the Endangered Species Act. He has also led many congressional briefings and routinely engages with US politicians on biodiversity loss, deforestation and climate change.

His engagements within the political and policy spheres go beyond the US – Prof Pimm has also advised the South African government on elephant management, and is engaging with practitioners who manage protected areas in China.

“Thanks to his work with UP scientists, the total population of elephants and the details of where they occur and where they have conflict with humans are known for southern Africa,” Prof Erasmus said. “This knowledge is a key element to map migration corridors, and support regional and cross-boundary conservation planning.”

--- End ---

Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The [2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings](#) placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za