

Christie's Conservation Lecture: Iain Douglas-Hamilton

Hope for Elephants in a Time of Danger



The second Christie's Conservation Lecture in aid of Tusk took place on Wednesday 28th May, opening with a welcome from Viscount Linley, Chairman of Christie's, followed by an introduction by Charlie Mayhew, CEO of Tusk. Speaking to a sell-out audience, Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton then took to the podium, speaking on the theme of "Hope for Elephants in a Time of Danger:" The renowned conservationist reviewed his five decades of experience in Africa studying and working to save elephants, starting in the 1960's which he termed "a golden age for elephants". He pointed that the killing of elephants is not new, referring back to the decimation in Roman times.

The depth of Iain's perspective on the ongoing elephant poaching crisis is second to none and he alluded to the dangerous new involvement in organised crime and even terrorist organisations. He noted there is little sign that the ongoing elephant crisis is easing, as the heart-rending litany of individual elephants such as the recent killing of Mountain Bull attests.



Iain then referred to the political momentum for change, witnessed by events such as the Senate Hearings, the UN General Assembly and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conferences in London and Tanzania. He called for a global coalition of all stakeholders, young and old, from politicians and religious leaders to global film stars and Kenyan smallholders, to turn the situation around through anti-poaching, anti-trafficking and reducing demand for ivory. Although less than 100 Great Tuskers survive across Africa, Iain was able to highlight there is real hope, demonstrated by advances in technology such as DNA geolocation and the awareness campaigns of Yao Ming and Li Bing Bing in China and the Far East, orchestrated by WildAid. Iain warned that if the killing continues at the present rate, "the priceless spectacle of elephants living their natural lives according to their ways, without fear" is at stake.

The evening was held in support of a joint project between Tusk and Save the Elephants to provide tracking collars for the elephants of northern Kenya in memory of Mountain Bull.

Tusk would like to thank Christie's for their tremendous hospitality and support, with particular thanks to Viscount Linley, Anthony Browne, Lucy Campbell and Emily Finn. Special thanks go to Iain and to his wife Oria, to the STE team and Gemma Francis. Thank you all.