

## BBVA Foundation Awards for Biodiversity Conservation.

### **Francisco González: “At BBVA, it is our duty to do all we can for the sustainability of the natural resource base”**

- United States researchers Harold Mooney and Peter Raven, regarded as the architects of the modern science of Biodiversity, share the 500,000 euro prize in the category of Scientific Research in Ecology and Conservation Biology
- According to both scientists 60% of the services that ecosystems perform have suffered some impairment, including fresh water, fisheries, air purification, the regulation of regional and local climate or protection against natural disasters and epidemics.
- The BBVA Foundation Award for Biodiversity Conservation Projects in Latin America, with a cash prize of 250,000 euros, goes to Mexico’s Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda, while the winner of the BBVA Foundation Award for Knowledge Dissemination and Communication in Biodiversity Conservation, funded with 80,000 euros, is environmental journalist Benigno Varillas



The Minister of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, Elena Espinosa, and BBVA Foundation president Francisco González were guests of honor at today’s presentation ceremony for the BBVA Foundation Awards for Biodiversity Conservation. The event took place in the Foundation’s Madrid headquarters, the Marqués de Salamanca Palace (Madrid – Spain). The president of the BBVA Foundation, Francisco González, stressed in this speech that “One of the biggest challenges facing humanity is to halt the destruction of the environment and, especially, of biodiversity. This is a task that must be urgently addressed and in which we must all play our part”.

“Biodiversity conservation”, added Francisco González, “is clearly one of the top priorities of the 21st century and companies are an important part of that battle; at BBVA, we believe it is our duty to do all we can for the sustainability of the natural resource base”. In closing, the BBVA Foundation president remarked that “the work of the award winners here today has brought us to a deeper understanding of the effects of biodiversity losses as well as showing us how conservation efforts can generate wealth and well-being for the community”.

An international award jury honored the eminent scientists Harold Mooney (Stanford University) and Peter Raven (president of the Missouri Botanical Garden) ex aequo with the Award for Scientific Research in Ecology and Conservation Biology, carrying a 500,000 euros cash prize. The contribution of these two researchers has been instrumental in improving our understanding of biodiversity losses, and they also lead the world in seeking ways to prevent the destruction of planetary ecosystems.

The work of these two experts has been vital to the shift in perspective that has taken place in conservation biology research, away from a species-centered approach to one based on

ecosystems and the services they provide to humanity. Mooney and Raven have demonstrated that species adaptations and interactions are the two phenomena that shape ecosystems and modulate their responses to climate change and the pressure exerted by human activity.

The BBVA Foundation Award for Biodiversity Conservation Projects in Latin America, with a cash prize of 250,000 euros, goes to Mexico's Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda "for demonstrating with their Management Program of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve that biodiversity conservation", in the words of the jury, "generates wealth and well-being for the community".

The BBVA Foundation Award for Knowledge Dissemination and Communication in Biodiversity Conservation, with a prize of 80,000 euros, goes to environmental journalist Benigno Varillas, founder of nature magazine Quercus.

The BBVA Foundation Awards for Biodiversity Conservation, whose global prize money of over one million euros is the highest of its kind internationally, seek to recognize and support the work of the scientific community, organizations and professionals devoting their energies to the central challenge of the 21st century that is biodiversity conservation. These Awards exemplify the BBVA Foundation's commitment to the goals of sustainable development and an improved quality of life for all citizens.

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