

Jose Sarukhan wins Tyler Prize, the most important ecology in the US

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Distinction. The award recognizes its trajectory in the study of the biological wealth and the having founded the Conabio. Julia Marton-Lefèvre says she has a scientific problem and created a solution that was inserted in the laws of her country.



Dr. José Sarukhán will receive the award on May 4, in Washington, DC.

Mexican biologist and ecologist José Sarukhán was selected as the winner of the Tyler Environmental Achievement Award 2017, which is presented by the Tyler Foundation and the University of Southern California (USC). This is the most important recognition that is given in the United States for scientists who study the biological wealth of the planet. Previously, it was won by Jane Goodal and the pheromone anterogists' expert biologist Edward Osborne Wilson.

The award committee, which will make the official decision on Tuesday, February 21, considered that one of José Sarukhán's greatest contributions to the planet's environment is that he has founded the National Commission for Knowledge and Use 25 years ago. Biodiversity (Conabio), which has served as a model for other countries to gather databases on biodiversity present in their respective territories. In the case of Mexico, Conabio has gathered, over a quarter of a century, information of more than 11.2 million specimens.

The judges of the award recalled in their opinion that the former president of the United States, Barack Obama, said during his administration that Conabio of Mexico is an example for the United States, and promoted the development of a similar database.

"At one point when the rainforests were in critical danger due to extensive deforestation, then Mexican President Carlos Salinas turned to Sarukhán for advice on how to show the global community that the country valued its natural resources. In response, Sarukhán devised a federal government institution Focused exclusively on biodiversity. It was known as the Conabio and was one of the first of its kind in the world," details the argumentation of award assignment.

In a statement, Tyler Prize Executive Committee Chairman Julia Marton-Lefèvre explained that Sarukhan will be recognized for identifying a scientific problem and creating a solution that was embedded in the laws and

regulations of her country through strong institutions.

"As a world-class scientist, Sarukhan has published in all the most recognized scientific journals and has received the highest awards to which every scientist aspires. But he knew that" seeking knowledge by mere knowledge "is no longer sufficient, and that saving biodiversity In Mexico's ecosystems would require much more than excellent science,"said Julia Marton-Lefèvre.

"Few scientists could convince the President to find the budget for an agency that would integrate all the scientific knowledge needed for conservation at the federal level, but Sarukhan succeeded, and because of that, Mexico's ecosystems now have institutional oversight that protects their biodiversity. Changing the lives of people and changing the way the environment can offer us a home for the future,"added Marton-Lefèvre.

The Tyler Prize was created in 1973 and is one of the oldest to recognize the work of defending biodiversity. The announcement that Jose Sarukhan is the winner will be made official on Tuesday, February 21, in California, and the award will be presented at a ceremony on May 4 in Washington, DC.

The Conabio's national coordinator, Sarukhán has worked with five different presidential administrations from different political parties, a role that has often required him to champion biodiversity as a national priority.

PROFILE

Founder of scientific institutions

Although the majority of Mexicans know the name of Jose Sarukhán Kermez for having been rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) between 1989 and 1997, his legacy as a scientist and founder of institutions is much deeper: The UNAM was founded the Institute of Ecology and shortly after the creation of the Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Conabio).

As a scientist he has focused on plant biology, particularly palm populations and how these plants can provide information on evolution and interactions with other living organisms. He has received the honorary doctorate degree from 10 universities in the world. He was the first Mexican to be a member of the Royal Society of England, and in Mexico he is a member of The National College and the Mexican Academy of Sciences. Most of his students are prominent internationally renowned biologists.

He has been a member of the Academy of Sciences of the Third World and of the Academy of Sciences of the United States since 1993.

He studied biology in the Faculty of Sciences of the UNAM, masters in the College of Postgraduate Studies of Chapingo and doctorate in the University of Wales, United Kingdom.