

PRESS RELEASE

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LEADING ENVIRONMENTALIST TO RECEIVE OBE

London, UK: The Chairman of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is to receive an OBE in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace today at 10am.

The Officer of the Order of the British Empire is being awarded Allan Thornton in recognition of his outstanding work to protect the environment.

Canadian-born Thornton is a co-founder of EIA, which covertly investigates environmental crimes including the illegal wildlife trade threatening endangered species, illegal logging, hazardous waste, and trade in climate and ozone-altering chemicals.

Using pioneering techniques and undercover filming, its investigators work around the world in often dangerous circumstances to expose crime and use their evidence to campaign for changes in international law and the policy of governments.

"I am honoured to receive an OBE in recognition of the work of the entire EIA team, many of whom risk their lives to document and expose major environmental crimes by powerful syndicates around the world," said Thornton.

Thornton began as a Greenpeace volunteer in Canada and in 1976 came to London, where he set up and was twice Executive Director of the British office of Greenpeace. He was also a co-founder of Greenpeace's flagship, The Rainbow Warrior.

Co-founding the Environmental Investigation Agency in 1984 with fellow activists Dave Currey and Jennifer Lonsdale, Thornton helped to pioneer the organisation's groundbreaking approach to activism which continues to this day.

Among EIA's major successes are:

- * Playing a vital role in securing the worldwide ban on the trade in ivory in 1989;
- * Reducing the international trade in wild caught birds;
- * Uncovering the largest poaching rhino horn operation in the world;
- * Reducing the demand for whale and dolphin meat in Japan;
- * Raising over £80,000 for Kaziranga National Park in India and providing equipment for the Kenyan Wildlife Service;
- * Turning global attention to the re-emerging illegal trade in big cat skins and exposing the trans-Himalayan trafficking routes for big cat body parts;
- * Contributing to the closure of 53 illegal mines which were destroying prime tiger habitat in India.

Working from EIA's US office, which opened in Washington DC in 1989, Thornton spearheaded a lengthy campaign to ban imports of illegal timber. It was passed by the US Congress in June 2008, and the European Union followed suit this year with a ban due to be enacted in early 2013.

Thornton has worked for 35 years to protect the environment through highly strategic and focused campaigns which gather evidence to drive increased enforcement and protection for endangered habitats and species.

"EIA will continue to fight to expose the crimelords behind illegal logging and the ivory trade, and all those profiteering from the ransacking of the environment," he vowed. "We have to do more to protect our beautiful world."

For further information, contact EIA Press Officer Paul Newman via paulnewman@eia-international.org or call 020 7354 7960.

EDITORS' NOTES

1. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is a UK-based Non Governmental Organisation and charitable trust (registered charity number 1040615) that investigates and campaigns against a wide range of environmental crimes, including illegal wildlife trade, illegal logging, hazardous waste, and trade in climate and ozone-altering chemicals.
2. EIA was founded in 1984 in London by Dave Currey, Jennifer Lonsdale and Allan Thornton. An office was opened in Washington DC in 1989.
3. Allan Thornton was born in Windsor Ontario in 1949. His father Robert Thornton was a Canadian firefighter, who met Allan's English mother, Jessie Waldram from Birmingham, when he served with the Canadian armed forces in the Second World War and his mother was in the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).
4. Thornton organised Greenpeace's campaigns against whale hunting in Iceland and Spain in 1978 and 1979, resulting in the eventual closure of both whaling operations. He also instigated the Rainbow warrior campaign against dumping radioactive waste in the North Atlantic.
5. Thornton left Greenpeace in 1982 and undertook an investigation into large-scale dolphin kills in the Black Sea off Turkey where 25,000 dolphins and porpoises were killed each year. His successful campaign resulted in the hunt being banned in April 1983.
6. In 1984, Thornton, Lonsdale and Currey set up the Environmental Investigation Agency to document the worldwide killing of small whales, dolphins and porpoises, which were excluded from the global ban on killing the great whales.

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