

WORLD ECOLOGY AWARD
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TROPICAL ECOLOGY
PRESENTED TO THE ROCKEFELLER FAMILY
ACCEPTED BY DAVID ROCKEFELLER, JR.
MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN
(APRIL 26, 2004)

Thank you, Hal Kroeger, and thank you, Chancellor Tom George, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Dr. Peter Raven, Missouri Botanical Garden and Dr. Patrick Osborne, International Center for Tropical Ecology.

As a worker on behalf of our National Parks, and as a frequent enjoyer of them, I especially want to invoke the work of two members of my family tonight, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (my Grandfather) and Laurance S. Rockefeller (my Uncle). The two of them made major contributions to the establishment of seven National Parks, in particular:

- Acadia National Park, Maine (which Hal Kroeger and I enjoy)
- Grand Teton National Park, Jackson Hole, Wyoming
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Appalachians, Tennessee, and North Carolina
- Virgin Islands National Park, St. John, St. Croix
- Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado
- Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Vermont
- Redwood National Park, California

Alas, we can't claim credit for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial or the Arch!

It is humbling to glance down the list of previous recipients of the World Ecology Award (see below) and realize all the things they have done much better – certainly better than I have done and better than most of my family: better at singing and sailing, better at ruling or reigning, better at acting or mimicking, better at diving or digging, better at studying or supposing, and even better at giving!

So I asked myself what might it be that justifies an award of this distinction being bestowed upon my collective family, and the words I came up with were “vision linked to action” – the ability to see what needs to be done and the courage to act upon that vision.

I stand here tonight very proud to invoke the names of others in my family who have turned that vision into action, not only the aforementioned family vanguard, but also my father and mother, David and Peggy Rockefeller (Maine Coast), my siblings, especially Neva Goodwin and Richard Rockefeller and Cousin, Steven Rockefeller (Northern Forests of the Northeast), other Cousins, like Abby O'Neill and her family (New York City), Mark Rockefeller and Lucy Waletzky (Hudson River), and Larry Rockefeller (Alaska). And I am happy to report that my oldest child, Ariana Rockefeller, is about to

embark on an ecological research project in the Brazilian rain forest, a Columbia University Project – so the Rockefeller Family has not yet done all that it will do, I promise you!

In fact, it is so important to catch the imagination of the young with messages of the natural world. For me, it was the likes of Mark Twain and *Life on the Mississippi*, plus Ansel Adams and Elliot Porter – the grand and the intimate.

My own work in conservation has led me to identify at least three themes of special importance for Americans to honor:

- Taking the long view and resisting the emphasis on short-term gains,
- Respect for all species, not just *Homo sapiens*, and
- The importance of taking an ecosystem approach (not just a single species approach) to conservation.

In other words, going beyond “NOW, ME and EASY”.

I certainly congratulate the International Center for Tropical Ecology on its work in training young people around the world who may someday themselves be honored in award ceremonies such as this one tonight.

Tropical rain forests are the original poster children for remote areas of importance to our survival, our comfort and our pleasure on earth. It is my hope, as an active member of the Alaska Conservation Foundation and the Pew Oceans Commission, that we Americans will soon become just as informed and passionate about our polar regions and our oceans with all of their surprising biodiversity and impact on global climate. That is a life mission of mine.

I would like to close my remarks tonight with a poetic and proactive quote from the writings of Terry Tempest Williams entitled *Wild Mercy*:

The eyes of the future are looking back at us, and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with clasped hands that we might act with restraint, leaving room for the life that is destined to come.

To protect what is wild is to protect what is gentle. Perhaps the wilderness we fear is the pause within our heartbeats, the silent space that says “we live only by grace”. Wilderness lives by this same grace.

We have it within our power to create merciful acts. The act of restraint by the United States Congress in the name of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would be the most powerful act of all. Call it the act of wild mercy, an interval of silence sustained in the 21st Century.

Thank you very much, indeed.

Past Recipients:

John Denver (1991)

Captain Jacques Cousteau (1992)

Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (1993)

Dr. Paul Ehrlich (1994)

President José Figueres (1995)

Dr. Richard Leakey (1997)

Dr. Jane Goodall (1999)

Ted Turner (2000)

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland (2001)

Harrison Ford (2002)

Conservation International (2002)

Teresa Heinz Kerry (2003)

H.R.H. The Prince of Wales (2003)