



MARSH CHRISTIAN TRUST



BGCI Press release

Chinese botanists recognised for contribution to plant conservation

September 25, 2014

Two new awards for conserving the world's imperilled flora have been awarded to Chinese botanists by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) on behalf of the Marsh Christian Trust.

The awards and their winners are:

Marsh Award for International Plant Conservation: Zheng Naiyuan

Mr Zheng Naiyuan is a teacher who was inspired to conserve plant species in their natural habitats by a book of Jiangxi folk legends. He has focussed his efforts on China's largest population of a globally endangered conifer *Taxus chinensis* var. *mairei* which grows around YouLing village, in Jiangxi province. This tree is protected by law in China but has been logged because of its medicinal value. Zheng Naiyuan moved his home to the remote mountainous village of YouLing in order to study and watch over the trees. He organised a local conservation group to protect the yew tree population and invited experts to survey and study the plants. Government and local people have been inspired by his hard work and in 2010, YouLing *Taxus chinensis* var. *mairei* (Yew) Nature Reserve was officially established. Now, about 120,000 yew plants are growing in this nature reserve, which Mr. Zheng hopes will soon be upgraded to a municipal reserve. Mr Zheng also has plans to establish a private botanical garden for the *ex situ* conservation of this species and to educate people on the importance of plants.

Marsh Award for Education in Botanic Gardens: Wang Ximin

Wang Ximin writes: *"About 12 years ago, when I was a police officer in China, every weekend, I was so excited to organize outdoor bird watching activities for kids and their parents, show them the beauty of birds in the wild, and inspire them the appreciation for the nature. At that time, I didn't know too much about the term of environmental education. The only reason I did this because I thought the nature was so amazing and beautiful, I just want others to enjoy it."*

Wang Ximin has now been working in Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG), southwest Yunnan, for nearly four years. With colleagues he has developed a wide range of educational programmes relating to rare plant species as well as bird and butterfly watching, night hikes, and other nature experience activities. Wang Ximin's innovative approach has drawn a wide range of visitors to XTBG, including children and their families, teenagers from big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, ethnic students from local communities, and more than 600,000 tourists from all over the world. In order to engage with the local communities more effectively, Ximin and his colleagues launched a series of conservation-based lectures for local schools, which link the students' daily life with biodiversity conservation. Hundreds of students attended the lectures in 2013.



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The awards will be presented at an event at the Linnaean Society on Monday 29 September by **Mr Brian Marsh** who said *“We set up these awards in partnership with BGCI because we were concerned that so many of the world’s wild plants face extinction. Hopefully the awards, in a small way, will inspire people who care passionately about the loss of wild plants to take action.”*

Quotes:

Sara Oldfield, Secretary General of BGCI said *“We are delighted to be involved with these Awards, which complement so well our global work to prevent the loss of plant diversity and explain why plants are essential for us all”*

Xiangying Wen, Executive Director, BGCI China Programme, said *“I am thrilled that the work of Wang Ximin and Zheng Naiyuan has been recognised in this way. Both are local heroes who are working so hard to make a difference in China. They are both extremely proud to have gained international recognition.”*

Notes to editors

The Marsh Awards

The Marsh Christian Trust was established in 1981 and it runs a portfolio of awards which recognise the contribution of dedicated individuals working in different sectors – to improve the world we live in. The *Marsh Award for International Plant Conservation* and the *Marsh Award for Education in Botanic Gardens* were set up to recognise the work of early/mid career individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to promoting public awareness of the importance of plants, respectively. The annual prize for each Award is £500.

Botanic Gardens Conservation International

BGCI is the world authority on botanic gardens and plant conservation and the only global organisation devoted to conserving the world's plant diversity. BGCI represents over 700 members - mostly botanic gardens - in 118 countries. BGCI’s activities are focused on securing a future for threatened plant species and their habitats, whilst strengthening the contribution of botanic gardens to plant conservation and engaging with wider audiences.

For further information, please visit: www.bgci.org

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