

673 Lifetime Achievement Awards

CHILDREN AND PRIMATES: LEARNING TO LOVE NATURE

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Attitudes to nature are strongly influenced by culture, although it is quite likely that people have an innate fascination with living things. "Conservation education" is usually highly moralistic: it tries to inspire children or even to impose the teachers' views on them. In Africa this often means attempting to bring western attitudes to children of a local culture. However, western attitudes themselves have changed throughout history. I will discuss the Ako Project of story books and posters for Madagascar, and also other children's books, films and conservation projects, including Mrs. Sarah Trimmer's *History of the Robins* (1786), the first children's book in English to explore the feelings of wild animals. One optimistic conclusion is that children may be more open to empathy and curiosity about animals than adults in their own cultures, particularly if the books and films are fun. Real social change in empathy and understanding may start with children.

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