

## American University of Armenia UK Conservation award



**Dr. Karen Aghababian receiving the Whitley Award**

Dr. Karen Aghababian's research on Armenian wetlands has been recognized by the United Kingdom with its top conservation award. Dr. Aghababian is Coordinator of the Environmental Conservation and Research Center at the American University of Armenia and leads research projects for the University's Birds of Armenia program.

"Receiving the Whitley Award will draw attention to environmental issues involved in wetland habitat degradation," said Karen Aghababian, "But moreover important it will let us train the next generation on how to do conservation in Armenia and protect the remainder of our wonderful nature and environment".

Dr. Aghababian received the Whitley Award, donated by the Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature, from HRH The Royal Princess Anne and Sir David Attenborough at London's Royal Geographical Society May 10. Dr. Aghababian is the first Armenian to win the £30,000 research award.

"We are extremely pleased to know that Dr. Aghababian's important work - scientific research that contributes directly to Armenia's development has been recognized internationally with the Whitley Fund award, and the whole University joins me in congratulating Dr. Aghababian," said AUA President Haroutune Armenian.

Dr. Aghababian's research on wetlands focuses on white storks and the use of nesting for species and habitat conservation. Armenia is of great importance to birds. More than 350 species have been recorded including endangered Wetland birds. For centuries the white stork has been regarded with great affection in Europe. Although they were once prolific, the intensification of agriculture and draining of wetlands has resulted in a decline in the populations. Although many Armenians feel indifferently towards wetlands, white storks are seen as a cultural icon.

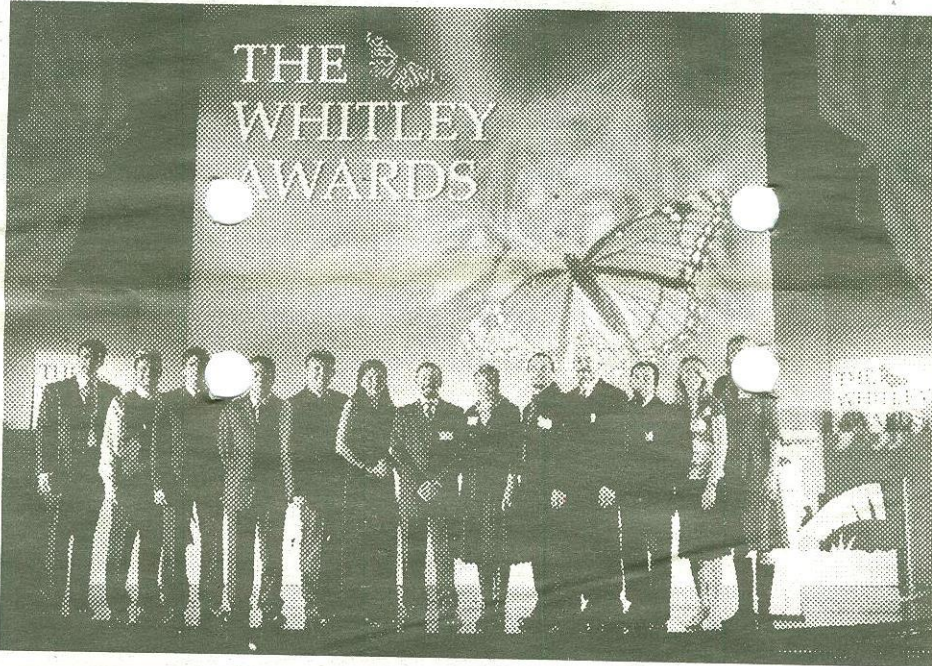
As Edward Whitley, Founder and Chairman of the Whitley Fund for Nature explained, "Using an iconic species like the White Stork is a great way of drawing attention to the drainage of wetlands, too often a neglected habitat. Working under quite difficult conditions, Karen is getting local people involved in conservation and interested in protecting Armenia's remaining wetlands, which are so important for birds."

**Continued on page 20**



## American University of Armenia UK Conservation award

Continued from page 19



### **the Friends of the Whitley Fund for Nature**

The American University of Armenia Corporation (AUAC) is registered as a non-profit organization in the United States and the American University of Armenia Fund (AUA) in Armenia. The American University of Armenia (AUA) is affiliated through AUAC with the Regents of the University of California. Receiving major support from the AGBU, USAID and private donors, AUA offers instruction leading to the Master's degree in eight graduate programs. For more information about AUA visit [www.aua.am](http://www.aua.am).