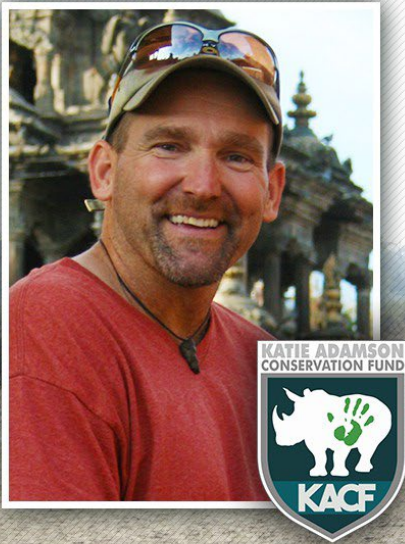


## Dave Johnson – Nominee for the Indianapolis Prize

**Dave Johnson**  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**ZOOKEEPER  
CONSERVATIONIST  
WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST  
KIDS BOOK AUTHOR  
ANIMAL NERD**

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<https://www.katieadamsonconservationfund.org/dave-johnson-indy-prize>

1. Dave Johnson worked as a Zookeeper in Denver, CO for over 25 years.
2. He has a degree in Wildlife Biology and worked in Alaska for the BLM for nine months as a seasonal bear biologist on behalf of the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort, KY. He also worked in South Carolina at the Hollywild Animal Park before coming to Colorado.
3. He began working with animals at age fifteen at the Western North Carolina Nature Center in Asheville, NC and was part of a mountain lion sensitivity study while still in high school.
4. He worked with the Explorer Post at the zoo in Denver, CO as an advisor to kids aged 14-21 who are interested in exploring animal careers as options. The Explorer post is sponsored by Boy Scouts of America. Dave performed this duty for 20 years.
5. Dave started running marathons for pachyderms and called them Mimi Marathons, named after the older female elephant, Dolly, who lived in Denver for 51 years. He led relays, ran 10K races, half marathons, and finally a full marathon in Dolly's honor in 2010. He made shirts and got the community involved in elephant conservation.
6. He started a Nepal conservation project that he dubbed "*Team Nepalorado - A fusion of cultures in the name of conservation.*" He began leading trips to Nepal in 2010, and in 2024 he will have been to Nepal 14 times and taken 230 people to engage with conservation.

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7. Dave's conservation efforts help in Nepal where they help support a former poaching community, called the Chepang, with sustainability projects. A solar-powered electric fence was built to protect Chepang lands from other people and wildlife intrusion. A new beehive fence project has been installed in collaboration with the Chepang to help mitigate human/elephant conflict as well as to produce honey for the community to sell and utilize. This project has helped reduce rhino poaching incidents in Chitwan National Park from 10-12 annually down to near zero. The last four years has seen only two rhino poaching incidents.
8. Dave was a member of the local AAZK (American Association of Zookeepers) for fifteen years and helped them to raise thousands of dollars for conservation. They earned national awards for best chapter and Dave won a Conservation Merit Award and photography awards for his submissions.
9. **In 2014, Dave established the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of people who help endangered animals by helping people. It was established to promote endangered animal conservation initiatives worldwide and is how he now supports initiatives which are now expanding to support sea turtles in Mexico, tiger anti-poaching dogs in India, wild dogs in Zimbabwe, penguins in South Africa, conservation field work in Nepal, saola work in Vietnam and now jaguar conservation in Costa Rica. The mission of KACF is to help empower the people of our planet to work together to save our remaining ecosystems and all of the creatures they contain. In the first year of operation, the KACF raised \$10,000 for conservation. In 2024, the fund is on target to reach four million in cumulative funds through the organization.**
10. He has written three children's conservation books in his Sassafras series to educate kids on global problems effecting wildlife. Elephants of Denver (2012), Narayani: The Unicorn of Nepal (2013), and Zodiac Kids (2015). A fourth book called "I Am Katie" is scheduled for release in Summer 2024. These are sold throughout the country and directly to schools and kids when he does community outreach. They are used as school, community, organization and individual fundraisers, and KACF splits the take 50/50.
11. In 2016, Dave climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with a conservation team. They delivered \$10,000 to the Mkomazi National Park in Tanzania, Africa for their rhino and elephant programs. Twenty people from the community went to help with Tanzania conservation. They sponsored an anti-poaching team, had guest speakers come to engage them in the Serengeti, and continues to sponsor youth soccer tournaments for conservation. Dave has climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro two additional times for conservation in Tanzania.
12. Dave's conservation efforts support youth street drama groups in Bardia National Park, Nepal. They receive money for costumes, microphones and school scholarships. The youth directly impact their community by teaching about poaching and how they can live in harmony with nature. Dave's annual visits to Nepal allow him to visit the groups.
13. In 2024, Dave joined the development team of a new bees and elephants research center in Tanzania. This center is in partnership with the Tanzanian Elephant Foundation and will be located in the Kitenden Wildlife Corridor, a critical wildlife corridor that connects Amboseli National Park in Kenya to the Maasai Mara National Reserve and other protected areas in Tanzania.

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