

Introducing Dr Estella B. Leopold: recipient of the 18th International Cosmos Prize



Source: Commemorative Foundation for the International Garden and Greenery Exposition

On 11 October 2010, I had the great pleasure of introducing Dr Estella Bergere Leopold, the 18th International Cosmos Prize winner, and professor emeritus, University of Washington, on the occasion of a commemorative lecture at the Shiran Kaikan, Kyoto University. Awarded annually in the fall by the Expo '90 Foundation, an organization established in 1991 to further the mission of the 1990 International Garden and Greenery Exposition held in Osaka, Japan, the International Cosmos Prize goes to individuals whose research and work are recognized as contributing to a significant understanding of the relationships among living organisms, the interdependence of life, and the global environment. Past prizewinners have included Dr Jared Diamond, scientist and author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997) and *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2005); Sir David Frederick Attenborough, broadcaster, naturalist and the much respected face and voice of natural history programs on British television for more than 50 years; and Dr Gretchen Daily, proponent of the value of biodiversity-based ecosystem services upon which human

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societies depend. What Dr Leopold and past prizewinners share is a global perspective that illuminates the relationships between diverse phenomena, in keeping with the guiding principle of the harmonious coexistence of nature and mankind celebrated by the Expo '90 Foundation.

Dr Estella Leopold was born in 1927 in Wisconsin, USA, and she obtained her PhD in plant science from Yale University in 1955. As a paleoecologist and wilderness advocate, Dr Leopold has made tremendous achievements by developing and disseminating the land ethic philosophy first espoused by her father, Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) — “land” here referring not merely to soil but to the ecological community that includes soil, water, plants, animals and humans as its members, all bound in a relationship of interdependency and interaction. As a conservationist, she is renowned for the pollen analysis that provided the scientific basis for the preservation and protection of the Florissant fossil beds in Colorado in the 1960s. That the Florissant fossil beds, which include fossilized trees, fish, birds, insects and many other ancient organisms, are now an internationally famous national monument is largely thanks to her leading role in saving these beds from development. More recently, when Mount St Helens, Washington, lost as much as 600 km² of its native forest due to an eruption, Dr Leopold again provided distinguished leadership, helping to galvanize a movement to create a national monument that now serves as a natural laboratory for studying recovering ecosystems.

Propagator of the land ethic, tireless conservationist, distinguished researcher and enthusiastic citizen: it is for her achievements — all of which have value for activities all over the world that advance environmental protection and bio-preservation — that Dr Estella Leopold was considered highly deserving of the 2010 International Cosmos Prize. As the initial offering in our new Voices section, it is my great honor here to share with the readers of *Sansai* a complete transcript of Dr Leopold's commemorative lecture, which she delivered in Kyoto shortly before receiving the 18th International Cosmos Prize.

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