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### **A Tusk Bagged in Madagascar**

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It took some time for the news to sink that I had won [Tusk Award for Conservation in Africa 2021](#). The singular biogeography of Madagascar was hidden from my plain sight as a kid.

On my first camping trip as a scout at the Andasibe National Park, sighting the indri and other lemurs was thrilling, missing some species a disappointment, and getting to know some would go extinct because of human activities was my big wakeup call at thirteen.

I was raised along with two brothers in 67ha, a bustling suburb of Antananarivo, and we would visit the countryside with a host of relatives during school vacations. I opted for forestry as major because I could travel more and visit most of the island!



Julie at fieldwork in Madagascar

During the last semester, I sent out applications to many organizations including Bat Conservation Madagascar (now known as Madagasikara Voakajy) and was invited to interview with them a few days later. The project leader, Dr Richard Jenkins, said that they could potentially get me on the team for my research project at the Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park. I jumped and accepted the offer.

I started as a student, became an assistant, project leader, programme manager and finally director. I am motivated by challenges like the start-up of protected areas which involves working the stakeholders; communities, forest personnel, conservationists, and NGOs to write the management plan and get it implemented.

I was nominated for the Tusk Award by Kate Tointon at the Conservation Leadership Programme, and my referees were Professor Paul Racey, Professor Julia Jones, and Dr Richard Jenkins. I thank them all, in addition to the local communities – the heart and soul of the work I am blessed to do.

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