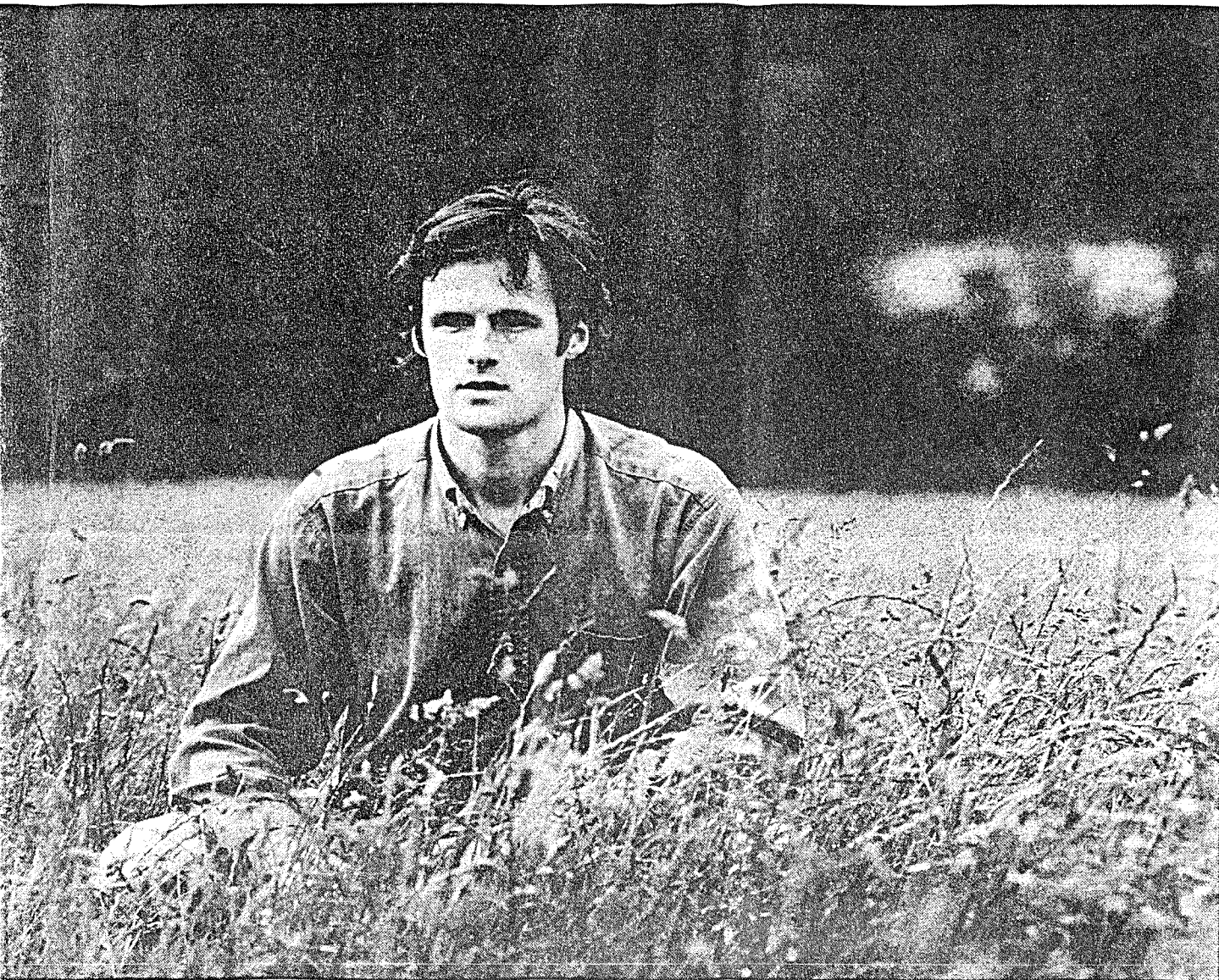


the name of conservation — but he needs some wellies, writes Jim White



survival: 'I'm very keen to back the sort of people for whom small sums make the world of difference'

Photograph: Christopher Jones

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scheme, entitled *Gerald Durrell's Army*. He became fascinated by the way committed operations of only two or three people can often make a bigger contribution to saving animals than costly government schemes. Back in England, he decided that the Whitley Trust should try to support projects like these and he dedicated himself to finding them.

"We do give money to big plans," he explained. "Last year we gave £250,000 towards a debt-for-nature swap in Guatemala. But also I'm very keen to back the sort of people for whom relatively

small sums will make the world of difference. For instance, there's a girl I'm funding in Madagascar researching black lemurs. It costs only £9,000 to support her entirely. It means she doesn't have to worry about money and can get on with saving the black lemurs.

"And I wanted to get much more involved than just handing out cheques. Because I was a banker, I can help conservationists sort out their finances. These people tend to be wonderful at preserving animals but pretty hopeless at money."

He also became aware that

species closer to home required some of his benevolence. To that end, he thought up the idea of the Whitley Prize, a £15,000 award to be granted annually to a British-based project. "The little animals we get in Britain may not be so glamorous," he said, "but they're disappearing. That's partly why I'm here, to find out what needs to be done on our doorstep."

Back on Magdalene Hill, Mr York, brusque and businesslike, was anxious to tell him. "I'm awfully sorry," Mr York apologised profusely, handing him a wad of information about his work/as

they parted. "Here I am a butterfly man and I haven't shown you a single butterfly." He needn't have worried. "He's precisely the kind of person we want to fund," Mr Whitley said, wringing out a pair of sodden socks in preparation for the journey to Dorset, where he was to spend the afternoon with a man who researches Marsh Fritillary butterflies. "It's marvellous to see one person making such a difference."

For details of the Whitley Award telephone the Royal Geographical Society in London: 71-589-5466