

Councillor Ndiaye's Delegate Report: Rainforest Connections 2024 Conference

Recommendation:

That Council receive and note Councillor Ndiaye's delegate report on the Rainforest Connections 2024 Conference

Date: Wednesday 5 June 2024

Introduction:

I saw the opportunity to attend the Rainforest Connections 2024 conference and was very keen after seeing who was going to be presenting. I thank Rous for supporting me to attend. I only went for one of the four days but I wish I'd had time to emerge myself in it further.

The Rainforest Connections 2024 conference held in Ballina at the RSL marked a significant milestone as the first event in over two decades dedicated to the restoration, rehabilitation, and management of Australia's unique rainforest habitats.

Key Themes and Discussions:

The conference provided a comprehensive exploration of key themes and topics related to rainforest conservation and management. Discussions ranged from species recovery programs to cutting-edge environmental research and weed management, showcasing the diverse array of initiatives aimed at preserving and restoring rainforest ecosystems.

Highlights and Takeaways:

Several presentations and discussions left a lasting impression, offering valuable insights and practical strategies for addressing the challenges facing rainforest conservation.

Highlights included:

- Case studies of successful on-ground action and restoration efforts.
- Innovative techniques and tools for managing rainforest habitats.
- The importance of recognizing the connection between nature and culture in conservation efforts.
- Engaging people in nature through art and cultural stories.

Speaker Highlights:

The conference featured an impressive lineup of speakers who shared their expertise and experiences in rainforest conservation:

- **Sean Dooley:** Author, comedian, and birdman, Sean Dooley's passion for connecting people with nature was evident in his presentation. He shared anecdotes from his experiences in birdwatching and highlighted the significance of rainforest habitats for bird diversity.
- **Dr. Tony Parkes AO:** As the founder and past president of Big Scrub Landcare, Dr. Tony Parkes AO's leadership in rainforest restoration has been instrumental in advancing conservation efforts in northern New South Wales. His insights into community-based conservation initiatives were particularly enlightening.

- Prof. Maurizio Rossetto: Leading the Research Centre of Ecosystem Resilience at the Botanic Garden of Sydney, Prof. Maurizio Rossetto's research integrates molecular ecology, environmental modelling, and innovative approaches to understanding rainforest ecosystems. His presentation on landscape genomic projects shed light on cutting-edge conservation strategies.
- Professor Carla Catterall: Professor Emeritus in environmental sciences at Griffith University, Prof. Carla Catterall's research into rainforest restoration processes has informed land management practices and biodiversity outcomes. Her expertise in plant-animal interactions and ecological processes was evident in her engaging presentation.
- Prof. Brendan Mackey: Director of the Climate Action Beacon at Griffith University, Prof. Brendan Mackey's contributions to forest ecology, biogeography, and conservation biology have shaped our understanding of climate and ecosystem dynamics. His presentation on the impacts of climate change on rainforest habitats provided valuable insights into future challenges.
- Dr. Robert Kooyman: Honorary Research Fellow at Macquarie University, Dr. Robert Kooyman's extensive research in rainforest ecology has contributed to our understanding of species distribution and assembly processes. His presentation on rainforest assembly dynamics provided a deeper appreciation of the complexity of rainforest ecosystems.
- Dr. Bill McDonald: Honorary Research Associate at Queensland Herbarium, Dr. Bill McDonald's expertise in rainforest vegetation surveying and mapping has been invaluable for conservation efforts in Queensland. His presentation on rainforest communities highlighted the diversity and ecological importance of these habitats.
- Hugh and Nan Nicholson: Renowned conservationists and authors, Hugh and Nan Nicholson's pioneering work in rainforest propagation and advocacy has had a lasting impact on rainforest conservation in Australia. Their presentation on the role of activism and community engagement underscored the importance of grassroots movements in driving environmental change.
- Oliver Costello: Executive Director of Jagun Alliance and Conservation Futures project co-manager at Bush Heritage Australia, Oliver Costello's leadership in Indigenous-led conservation initiatives has been transformative. His presentation on the role of Aboriginal culture in land management highlighted the importance of traditional ecological knowledge in achieving sustainable outcomes.
- Byron Shire Council's "No Bat No Me" Presentation: It was great to see Byron Shire Council's engaging presentation titled "No Bat No Me." Liz Caddick's creative portrayal as a bat, coupled with Claudia Caliarì's insightful sharing of knowledge and experiences, captivated the audience. Their innovative approach to raising awareness about bat conservation highlighted the importance of community engagement in environmental initiatives.

Networking Opportunities:

One of the most valuable aspects of the conference was the opportunity to connect with fellow delegates from diverse backgrounds, including scientists, program managers, practitioners, and community members. Networking sessions facilitated meaningful exchanges of ideas and fostered collaborations that hold the potential to drive positive environmental outcomes. I wish I had more time there.

Inspiration and Motivation:

Attending the conference left me feeling inspired and motivated to contribute to rainforest conservation efforts in my professional capacity. The passion and dedication of the speakers served as a powerful reminder of the importance of collective action in safeguarding our precious rainforest environments.

Recommendations for Future Participation:

Based on the success of Rainforest Connections 2024, I wholeheartedly encourage council, councillors and anyone interested in rainforest conservation and management, weed management and community management to attend future iterations of the conference. The event offers a unique opportunity to stay informed about the latest developments in the field and engage with fellow practitioners and experts.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Rainforest Connections 2024 conference provided a vital platform for advancing dialogue, sharing knowledge, and fostering collaboration in the realm of rainforest conservation. I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated in this event and encourage councillors and staff to attend if it happens again anytime soon.



Rous County Council Meeting 19 June 2024



