

Extinctions Embrace Symposium

Reconciliation Ecology: The Key To Living With Nature

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Introduction: What is Reconciliation Ecology?

Reconciliation ecology is an emerging field of study looking at the separation of man and nature and how to encourage biodiversity within human dominated ecosystems. Officially reconciliation ecology is defined as the science of inventing, establishing and maintaining new habitats to conserve species diversity in places where people live, work and play. Essentially it is the study of “reintroducing” natural elements into human society, and encouraging the successful coexistence of man and nature.

Reconciliation Ecology in Practice: Urban Farming



Urban farming, the reconciliation ecology poster child, has been implemented across the U.S. in numerous cities. The idea is to utilize unused urban space, such as roofs or abandoned lots, as agricultural land. Urban farms promote biodiversity in urban areas and lessen the impacts of non-local food importation. The local food movement and urban farming both aim to lower fossil fuel use on an individual scale within cities. Buying and consuming locally grown foods is the perfect way for individuals to invigorate the local economy and lower their personal carbon footprint. Because cities are essentially dead zones of biodiversity, even small implementations of urban farming can boost local carbon sinks, increase biodiversity and produce a local source of food. Unfortunately many cities underutilize the potential of urban farming and leave huge spaces unused. Rooftops get sun all day long and are perfect for local gardens, and some cities are filled with abandoned lots waiting to be turned into farms. Also urban farming keeps money out of the pockets of large often unethical farming companies. When individuals choose to

invest in local products and participate in urban farming, they are also choosing not to invest in big companies. By not investing in these companies, consumers are directly voicing the fact that they do not support the use of monocultures, GMO's, or fossil fuel use for trade.



Xeriscaping

Across much of the country, homeowners give their homes beautiful lush green gardens and surround their homes with green grass lawns. The trouble with this is that many areas can not sustainably grow these foreign grasses and plants without using huge amounts of water. Homeowners in the Southwest have realized the negative impact of landscaping with invasive species, and began to landscape using local species of plants. This process is known as xeriscaping and hugely lowers water use in areas that implement these unconventional gardens. Xeriscaping not only prevents invasive species, but it also helps sustain local biodiversity, lower water use, keep local natural beauty, and save homeowners money.



The Costa Rican Model

In Costa Rica, deforestation rates were once some of the worst in the world until completely cleaning up their act in the past 20 years. Since then, through restoration ecology, Costa Rica has been able to boast a 50% recovery in forest cover. Ecologists have identified and protected the most threatened areas using restoration ecology. Costa Rica utilizes the “ecosystem approach” for restoration efforts, which involves four steps: 1) Map and inventory species within an ecosystem 2) locate and protect the

most endangered ecosystems and species with an emphasis on protecting plant biodiversity and ecosystem services 3) Restore degraded ecosystems, and 4) Make development biodiversity-friendly through tax incentives and write-offs. This plan has proven to be successful through Costa Rica’s restorative efforts and proves that these plans can be implemented all around the world. It also stresses the involvement of the government in restoring the environment, and creates incentive for the economy to be environmentally conscious. Costa Rica is a prime example of non-individual pushes to combat climate change taken out by the government and private sector.