

The Research Ambassador Program

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National Science Foundation
<http://www.nsf.gov>
Informal Science Education Program: NSF
0322214



National Geographic Society
Conservation Trust program
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/conservation/index.html>



The International Canopy Network
<http://www.evergreen.edu/ican>



The Evergreen State College
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**THE
RESEARCH AMBASSADOR
PROGRAM**

BRANCHING OUT



An outreach project by researchers to
communicate science to public audiences.

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RESEARCH AMBASSADOR

What is Branching Out?

The potential synergism derived by bringing together artists and scientists to raise environmental awareness has been underused by conservationists. The Branching Out Project joined scientists with artists and others at a multi-aged forested area under consideration for conservation at Ellsworth Creek, a site partially owned by The Nature Conservancy in Washington State. Participants were taught to climb trees and access canopy platforms 60 feet above the forest floor.



They were encouraged to record what they perceived, felt, thought, and saw during two three-hour platform shifts each day for one week. They recorded their experiences in whatever medium they chose, such as writing, music, drawing, or sculpture. The diversity of participants facilitated new perspectives and understanding of forest canopies. Branching Out enabled the multiple values of the natural world to be expressed through a variety of means.

BRANCHING OUT

Diversity of Participants

A varied group of "forest novices", including visual artists and musicians, blind people, and Inuit were invited to participate and join with forest scientists. These "forest novice" groups provided considerably different insights and perspectives than those obtained from traditional forest-related disciplines. They were the fresh eyes for the forest.



What were the outcomes?

A striking variety of art and music was created by the diverse cadre of people who participated in the project. Pastel, acrylic, and charcoal images were composed as well as oboe, bamboo flute, opera and classical guitar music. All media beautifully captured the aesthetic values of the forest canopy. The artwork was shown in an exhibit titled "Branching Out: New Eyes in Old Growth Forests", part of an Art and Science Chautauqua held at The at The Evergreen State College.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

A major problem facing our society is the widening gap between humans and nature, exacerbated by the lack of connections among science, scientists and society. The Research Ambassador Program helps bridge those gaps by providing academic scientists with rewards and incentives to do direct outreach to the public.

The Research Ambassador Program, established in 2003, has recruited scientists from many disciplines in academia and trained them to do outreach, especially in non-traditional venues such as churches, prisons, skateboard parks and hospitals. Researchers link their research to the interest of an existing profession, trade or interest group, and give talks or write popular articles about their research as it relates to that public audience. Rewards for scientists include a financial honorarium, a letter of thanks from a high-ranking academic official and contacts to do outreach in the local community.