



Dr. Nalini Nadkarni

The Queen of the Canopy

Dubbed “The Queen of the Forest Canopy,” Dr. Nalini Nadkarni is a pioneer in forest canopy studies and communicating the biodiversity of canopy research among scientists and the worldwide public.

A professor at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA and adjunct faculty at the University of Washington, Nadkarni’s real classrooms are the in the tree tops of tropical and temperate forests.

She studies the ecology of forest canopies, particularly the roles that canopy-dwelling plants play in the forest. Nadkarni carries out her research in Monteverde, Costa Rica and in Washington State, supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society.

More than 15 years ago, Nadkarni broke new ground—or space—by creating the International Canopy Network, a non-profit organization to foster communications among researchers, educators, and conservationists concerned with forest canopies. Her efforts have been documented in the Emmy Award-winning National Geographic “Heroes of the High Frontier” and in her new book, “Between Earth and Sky: Our Intimate Connections to Trees.”

Publishers’ Weekly said, “Nadkarni’s writing is like a love letter to trees that effortlessly mixes poetry and prose, environmentalism, culture, history and science.”

Author of over 80 articles and books, Nadkarni has been recently named by the National Science Board/National Science Foundation as the 2010 recipient of NSB’s Public Service Award. Additional acknowledgements include a Guggenheim Fellowship for excellence in scholarship and creativity, the J. Sterling Morton Award from The National Arbor Day Foundation, an Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellowship, and the Presidency of the Association of Tropical Biology and Conservation. She has recently completed a series of presentations that included stops at Yale University, North Dakota State University and the 2010 Conference of the International Society of Arboriculture.

Nadkarni’s creativity knows no bounds. In a project funded by the Washington State Department of Corrections, she created a program to bring scientists to prisons to collaborate with inmates on projects in environmental science and sustainability. Her programs are now expanding to train scientists to do outreach to non-traditional public audiences in non-traditional venues such as legislative halls, churches, and rap music clubs.

Nadkarni believes that awareness about canopy issues and concern about trees can be raised by combining her research with a wide array of arts from rap music to graffiti art and “Treetop Barbie” to trees and healing.

When she is not climbing trees, Nadkarni lives in Olympia, WA with her husband, an entomologist, and two children.