

## **Nadine Tupp**

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I want to take you on a journey now; we are here, on the earth's surface. Above us lies the sky, normally at my family's Bach in Taipā it is clear and blue. On the winter's day outside my maths class it's generally pretty grey. Littered with clouds and birds, flying through the rain, a metaphor I think. Flying through even when the weather's tough. Keeping going even when life gets kinda depressing. When all the facts about our sky get pretty bad. The pollution, acid rain hitting an earth already too fragile to handle it or biodiversity loss.

I wish now to quote my favourite show on this earth, Doctor Who. This is one corner of one country in one continent on one planet that's a corner of a universe that is forever shrinking and growing and creating and destroying and never remaining the same for a single second. And there is so much to see.

And in my opinion, so much to learn and so much to do.

That's the story I project, if the sky's the limit, where do we go now? Where we go now is uncharted territory, it's new, it's exciting and it's up to us.

So that's me, my name is Nadine Tupp, I am 17 years old, I attend Rodney College in North Auckland, I do the rounds at environmental camps and conferences around the country and I am the author of the internationally read blog Ignore that Jellyfish Costume.

For me, biodiversity loss has already impacted upon my life. Like every child I had a few things in mind I wanted to do when I got older, first off I wanted to be a goldfish, then rabbit, then a vet and then through to a marine biologist. The last one has stuck. Although when I was around 10 I started questioning this career choice because this was about the age I was when I began to worry about marine issues.

In New Zealand 30% of our land is protected in some way, our waters only 0.3%. And this is for a country that has the fourth largest exclusive economic area.

Our waters are home 113 shark species, 30-odd marine mammal species, and countless fish and marine birds.

Our waters are lucky enough to encompass both subantarctic and subtropical waters, containing 15,000 known species and anywhere up to 65,000 including those we don't know about. And we add a new species about every fortnight.

But it's not the adding that concerns me, it's the losing.

Fishing operations, by-catch, destructive industries like the shark-fining industry, eutrophication, sedimentation, acidification or climate change are all altering our ecosystems, in ways you've heard about over the last two days.

Ultimately leading to smaller populations or eventual extinction of some species, biodiversity loss.

You see when I was about 10, I realised there might not be an ocean left for me to study by the time I got to my twenties. So I started doing something about it.

The question we are faced with today is no longer what's happening to our oceans, and terrestrial environments; but rather what can be done about it.

Despite the one-sided relationship we have with this earth, we pillage what we want, it gives us what we appear to need, and we seem to give nothing back, often lacking the inspiration or calls to action we require.

And I thank you for being here today because it shows your involvement in the issues that face our planet and our future. This is one of the most important things I feel moving forward, having people engaged in the issue, the more they know about an issue the more they can input into solving the problems associated with it.

And this will certainly sometimes be hard, but just because it is hard doesn't make it not worth it. Sometimes have to stand up and do something regardless. Another quote from doctor who demonstrates this well, I think. You don't just give up. You don't just let things happen. You make a stand. You say no. You have the guts to do what right, even when everyone else just runs away.

For me this was starting a blog [ignorethatjellyfishcostume](#), to try to raise awareness about current environmental issues and attempt to provide solutions and ideas as to how to fix it. My blog now has over 100,000 views from countries and far flung as Belgium, Ethiopia and Scotland, but also closer to home with Australia, New Zealand and many of the islands.

Through running this blog and living my life the way I do, I've come to develop an idea of what I think we can do in the future to help move towards preserving New Zealand's biodiversity.

The way I see us moving forward is education and information. I learnt in geography class that a country's birth rate tends to come down when a population's literacy rate goes up. An example of how education causes positive change. I believe the same thing will happen when people become more aware of biodiversity loss, maybe not with birth rates but species populations.

Secondly, but I believe driven by the first point, is a mental shift in how we all view the world. We can't really keep living the same way we are but at the same time we don't have to give up how we live. Just become more conscious of our actions and the type of actions we are making. Are we buying fair-trade? Are our products made with palm oil? Are we buying products with excess packaging, driving industrial undertakings? Could I car pool with my neighbour? Could I buy the grapes from my community market instead of the ones from California? It is just about being aware.

This awareness drives our connectedness. My blog has probably taught me this lesson the most, in today's society we are faced with a world so switched on. There is a multitude of different ways which we can capitalise upon that to spread a message, social media, TV, radio, newspaper, speeches, emails, websites, online petitions can all be used to spread a positive message.

This connectedness and awareness driven by our education and conscious living drives two main things that I believe need to happen to put a lid on this biodiversity loss.

The protection of ecologically important areas, preserving the biodiversity and species which inhabit that area, the importance of which speaks for itself. And the promotion of more sustainable living. To do this we don't have to go off and live off the grid in a commune in the middle of nowhere, we just need to be more conscious, like I mentioned before.

However, there is one thing that no amount of connectedness or even necessarily education can change, that is human attitude. No matter how much we try to teach people, if they come to meetings or listen to speeches with their mind already made up, we can get nowhere. Therefore the most positive thing that can happen to New Zealand to help halt biodiversity loss, is a mentality shift. There has to be some kind of mentality shift so that the retention of biodiversity becomes of paramount importance to all members of our country. It is now no longer what is happening nor even why it is happening that is important, but how is it going to affect us. Sometimes people will not take action until they realise what affect it is going to have on them. Ocean acidification is changing the chemistry of seawater, disrupting the formation of shells in mussels and other shelled creatures like plankton or clams. This means that the risk is there that in ten years time we won't be able to buy mussels in a supermarket. Mussels alone are worth 181 million dollars to exports and three of our top ten seafood exports have this vulnerable shell. But if your ecosystems can't function, food chains are interrupted, with extinctions caused by biodiversity loss inevitable, affecting the 2 billion people who rely on the marine environment in some way. People need to know this.

Because I'm still only 17. There's still a while before I make it through university and are studying the world's oceans. But I'll let you in on a secret, there's a trench off the south eastern coast of Australia called the Bremer canyon. It's a biodiversity hotspot and people don't really know why. I want to help figure that out. A lot is going to happen in the next 10 years before I can start doing that, but I want that same ocean to still be there, supporting the same life, maybe even increased life, waiting to give up some of its mystery, to teach us about how that environment works, erase some of the unknown.

One thing I know for sure is that it can be extremely frustrating to be trapped inside the physical parameters of ourselves. It takes a long time to realise that we can't really do it all, that no matter how much we try, we can't carry the earth solely upon our shoulders, we need unity to do that. Our physical selves are kind of restricted, we grow and then we stop, I for one haven't grown upwards since I was 12. But our minds, they never stop growing. And indeed, we never stop learning. We therefore also never stop making mistakes, but so long as we put our whole heart and best intentions into something, we can live with those mistakes. It's those mistakes that teach us how to keep moving forward. Often when faced by issues like biodiversity loss all we see is an insurmountable mountain, but somewhere up that mountain there's a path, it might not be immediately obvious, so we might have to explore a bit, follow the wrong path then correct ourselves, but somehow we'll find a way.

And that's not impossible, nothing is impossible. I want to end with another quote by the doctor. Impossible? Bumblebees, Terran insects. Aerodynamically impossible for them to fly, but they do. I'm rather fond of bumblebees.

And I am too.

Thank you.