



*I feel a sense of urgency.  
There is so much we don't know.  
The loss of biodiversity, the presence  
of acid rain—all are related to canopy  
science. We can't fix anything until  
we know how the canopy works.*  
— Nalini Nadkarni

## TOPICS:

### **The Power of Diversity: In the Rain Forest and in the Workplace**

Explore biodiversity at work in the forest and through cleverly drawn parallels with everyday life. This presentation emphasizes the strength we gain when diverse forces come together and enhance the value of one another.

### **Rain Forest Research From Root Tips to Tree Tops**

Find out how and why ecologists study the complex world of tropical rain forests.

### **Branching Out**

This project, funded by the National Geographic Conservation Trust, brings together scientists, artists, Native Americans, and the blind to document, celebrate, and conserve nature in the Pacific Northwest and Costa Rica.

### **Arboreal Images in Art, Myth, Religion, and Poetry**

In this lyrical presentation Nadkarni explores the use of trees as an integrative cross-cultural theme in literature, film, medicine, religion, mathematics, and popular culture.

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Nalini Nadkarni has been called “the queen of forest canopy research,” a field that relates directly to three of the most pressing environmental issues of our time: the maintenance of biodiversity, the stability of world climate, and the sustainability of forests. A fierce crusader for the immeasurable biodiversity that resides in and depends upon the canopy, Dr. Nadkarni is a true pioneer in forest ecology. After more than two decades of climbing tall trees in Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific Northwest, she has demonstrated that it is critical to actually be *in* the canopy in order to comprehend the myriad species and interactions that exist within it.

Her early work consisted of climbing and exploring the poorly-known world of plants and animals who live their entire lives in the forest canopy, and understanding how they interact with denizens of the forest floor. In 1994 she realized that there was no central database for storing and analyzing the research she was gathering, so she invented one. This state-of-the-art repository, called the Big Canopy Database, is expected to speed and enable forest-canopy research just as a common database revolutionized the mapping of the human genome.

A professor at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, Dr. Nadkarni focuses her research on the ecology of tropical and temperate forest canopies. In 1994 she co-founded the International Canopy Network, a not-for-profit organization devoted to facilitating communication among researchers, educators, and conservationists concerned with forest canopies. The organization conducts outreach programs through schools and works with policy-makers on matters concerning forest conservation.

Supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society, Dr. Nadkarni has written more than 70 scientific papers and books documenting the roles that canopy-dwelling plants play in fostering diversity, providing resources for arboreal birds and mammals, and increasing the efficiency of nutrient cycling. In 2001 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship to explore the obstacles that scientists face in sharing their information with nonscientific audiences. Widely credited with bridging the communication gap between scientists and the general public, Dr. Nadkarni uses nontraditional means to focus the public's attention on the rain forest. One project featured major-league baseball player Mark McGwire in a public service campaign about sustainable forests, using baseball bats as the hook. Another project involves working with prison inmates to develop ways of growing moss for the horticulture trade in the prison yard, which is helping to relieve collecting pressure of wild-grown mosses from old-growth forests. Her work has also inspired prison wide changes in practices that enhance sustainability, including recycling, composting, and organic gardens at the corrections facility. Her work has been featured in *Glamour Magazine* and the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine, on PBS and network television, and in a giant-screen film, as well as in traditional science publications. A recent National Geographic Television documentary, *Exploring the High Frontier*, featuring Dr. Nadkarni, won the Emmy in 2000 for outstanding informational or cultural programming.

In her presentations Nadkarni emphasizes the importance of diversity in all aspects of life, from the rain forest to the boardroom.

