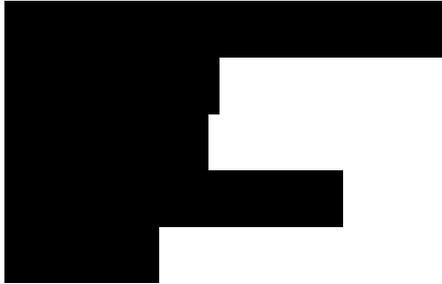


Setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

Submission

Note: My submission may be published with my name on it, but without the contact details, please.

Linus Turner



I wish to draw you toward

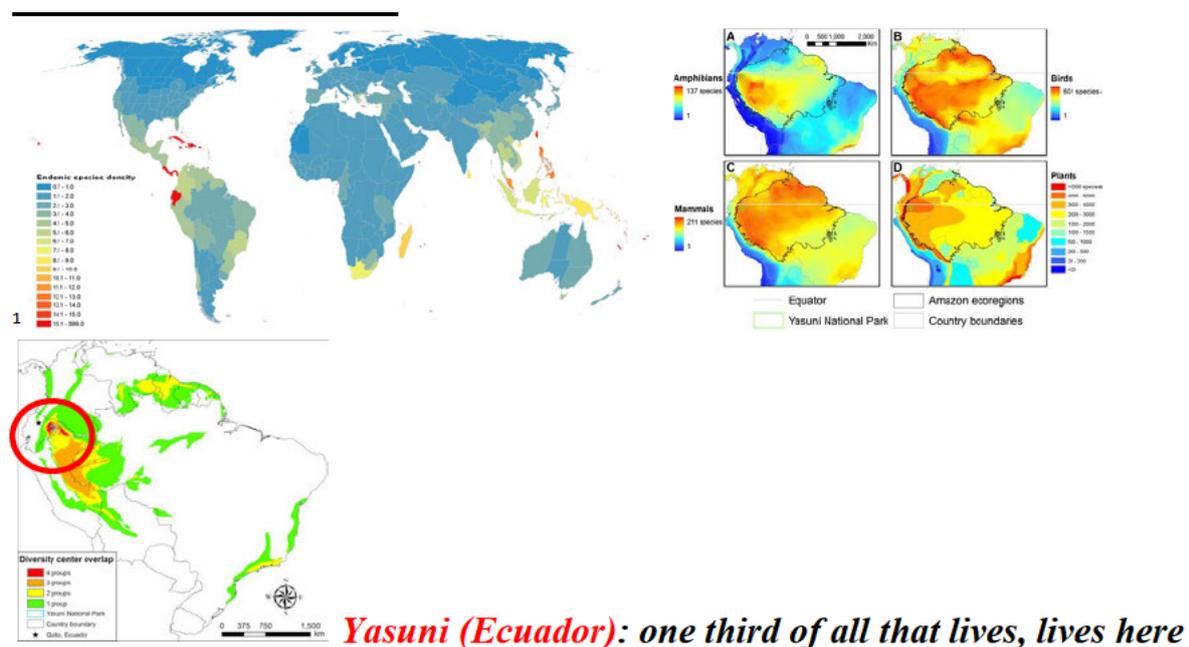
- an *understanding* of the Earth system and
- an *attitude* toward our position and roll in it
 - *Who matters?*
 - *What matters?*

I'll talk about some young people who attended the Dunedin consultative meeting, what they might have understood, and how we might represent them.

We (all) ought to understand Earth systems science, complex systems analysis and integrated processes. These are readily understood using images, posters and infographics with almost no writing (see below for *global biodiversity at a glance¹*).

Of course these are not generally taught and although we have the capability to teach all of this within an open classroom across all teaching areas, we generally do not. Instead we are inclined to teach tools and skills with a promise of a career, money, travel and choice. The most interested might wish to create something that sells a million to make a million.

The young people at the meeting seemed most fascinated with the expression of dismay and anger from some of the crowd and missed the other ideas expressed the room. While all children have heard the key words (climate change, two degrees, carbon, global warming) they do not seem to understand fully what they are, nor the implications. They seem unable to explain and discuss these and other words (biodiversity).



My family saw many young people at the dawn service on ANZAC day. They understand to some extent the significance of remembrance but might not know both the futility and the juggernaut path our societies continue to tread toward conflict and destruction.

What they almost certainly did not notice was that (at the beginning of that dawning day) we were standing in the *edge* of the shadow of the Earth as the light appeared, indigo first (*where was violet?*), then all of the colours of the rainbow blazing through clouds and air, splashed across a whole sky, fading to bright blue and all around regaining its colours from the day before. They would not have realised that this happens here (on this planet) and nowhere else as far as we know. This event occurs at the beginning and the ending of each day, everywhere here on Earth alone. They would not know to look at the end of the day, as the light goes from the western sky, across the eastern ocean horizon a curved dark shadow (Earth is a sphere after all!) rises, a violet fringe (*there it is!*) diffracted back to us. The last colour of Earth's rainbow, not seen at dawn. The light fades into indigo again and a universe of stars appear in the dark. We live on a singularly wonderful planet under a glorious sky, but mostly don't seem to notice.

At the Dunedin meeting the young innocently might not have understood that while your offering of discussion topics was about New Zealand, “economics²”, and our local balance of carbon, this makes no sense. I suggested a couple of examples (your new beach in Wellington is getting a sifting of sand from down here... a half million tonnes, or so; Australia gets schist rock from here in the

² “Eco” is the Greek word for “*house*”: Adding a degree of unconditional love makes it a *home*. The cynical extraction and processing of whatever we can find to sell then throw away has no love, no consideration at all, neither for the future we lyingly promise our children, nor the interconnected life systems around us. If humans are anything now that is worth valuing it is as the consciousness and conscience of Earth. We are the hands and feet that will look after it.

backloads of steel shipments for the Christchurch rebuild. Of course we can describe almost anything: coal from here to China used to produce steel from Brazilian iron ore; 90% of all of our “stuff” shipped to or from somewhere-to-somewhere-else (the 15 largest ships using as much oil as all cars in the world). We ironically talk about “food miles” missing all of the other material and non-essential transporting of “goods” across and around. We cannot talk about a New Zealand scenario.

In the Glenroy auditorium the night you visited we heard different groups speak. The first were the angry and the dismayed, some of who have already dropped the façade of style, “success” and “progress”, to blend in hope with their world. They wear what fits, eat what they might, live in houses that are adequate and contribute as best they can locally and sometimes globally. Sadly they were seen as unusual by the young ones and were reported on as the main feature of the evening in the Otago Daily Times.

Another group was the gathering of recent knowledgeable and intent graduates, speaking eloquently and clearly about the world they are being left.

Third a group of medical professors, practicing doctors and specialists, who talked about a particular duty of care we have for Earth, a living system, as we might an individual.

The fourth group were noted experts. Botany, physics, business studies, chemistry and more. These people are old. Nearing retirement or retired. They have grace and carry the flame of life’s understandings overlaid with specialist knowledge of our local and global environment, its peculiarities, and vulnerabilities. These are our most valuable asset.

Beyond that there were a couple of hundred concerned and knowledgeable people who would like to be heard but mostly would like you to make the best decisions for “our” future and in our role as custodians now of all that lives and all in between.

A small group of children, some quite young, some in school uniform attended. Seemingly bemused and out of their element, with grace and decorum they listened for a couple of hours. Eventually one stood and addressed the audience and the delegation from the Ministry with a clarity and strength that impacted on many.

The last I would like to mention are two young Dunedin City Counsellors who spoke with tears in their voice and a tearing in their heart. They had been in chambers all day setting the rates for the year, among other items. Arriving in time for the presentation, they stood with care and concern, deferential about their own knowledge, but making a plea to consider “all things”. One expressed an emotional doubt about whether they could, in all integrity, consider having children, knowing what they know about what we might hopefully do for their future world, but could possibly miss.

When I spoke, I explained that I stand here in Dunedin, and New Zealand, of course, but on Earth. Butterflies travel thousands of kilometres heedless of national boundaries. While we honour and cherish ourselves and our differences, we live in peril if we for a moment think this is only about “us” (in whatever guise we frame our classifications)

I’d like to offer a different attitude:

A duty of care

“All of this” does not belong to us

Who are the important people?

- 1 The experts: the keepers of the flame
- 2 The young: the guardians of tomorrow

What is important?

The interconnected living systems and supports
which make Earth blue, warm, alive and conscious

In the wonder of a dawn sky
Or the last light of the day
In the miracle of a new life
Or the ending of a fully lived one
It is not collection,
Consumption,
Or the mark-up in a deal
That matters:
It is where we belong

We are ancestors.

This is the age of responsibility!

Home

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2015

It looks as though the sun will rise (again) tomorrow
Regardless
Without any feeling for it
The Earth will perform a precessional pirouette
Past a shining pivot point
A wobbly imperfect *perfect* dance
Around a star
That seems to cross a sky
During daylight alone
There is no sky after dusk
The last of the diffracted day
Dissolves into
A universe
No sky dome
No constellations
Consolation in the knowledge that for the moment we live
Consternation that from any other angle
As far as the eye can see
We certainly are here
Certainly have not noticed
A breath of wind
Or a dew drop
Anywhere else

This, if it weren't for all the rest
Ought to give us a sense
Of where we belong

A place to call home