

Café Scientifique Headingley

Monday 10 June 2019 at 7:30pm

Chasing Unicorns in Paradise: Making space for nature in our cities by Christopher Hassall



Outline: The world has changed immeasurably under the hand of humankind. Dense forests are now grazing pasture, wetlands have been drained, and coral reefs have been bleached. But nature can still thrive when given a chance. Cities represent an unusual opportunity for nature conservation, but also an important landscape within which many people experience their only encounters with the natural world. This talk will consider some of the challenges and opportunities of rewilding and renaturing cities, bringing together evidence from the social and natural sciences under the umbrella of “reconciliation ecology” - the study of how to encourage biodiversity in human-dominated landscapes. Current research has shown the value that cities can hold as oases of biodiversity, while also concentrating the benefits that biodiversity brings to people. However, in order to push the boundaries of this field, we need to understand not only how to enhance nature but how to do so while also maximising the many benefits that people want to extract from the landscape. That goal requires us to delve into attitudes to landscapes, and perhaps attempt to influence people to think more sustainably about the places that they live.

Christopher Hassall is an Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Leeds, where he has worked since 2012. He developed his interests in the natural sciences during degrees at the University of Liverpool and fellowships at Carleton University in Canada, working on the impacts of climate change on the biology of British dragonflies. Insects are still a central part of Chris’ research, both in terms of the conservation of endangered insects and the evolution of phenomena such as camouflage and mimicry. However, those projects led to interests in ponds, lakes, cities, people, evolution, urban engineering, and education, and Chris now manages a programme of research on understanding the causes, consequences, and solutions to biodiversity decline with a focus on cities.

Venue: The New Headingley Club, 56 St Michael's Rd., Leeds LS6 3BG

Time: Club opens at 7:00pm for drinks & the room at 7:30; talk begins promptly at 7:45pm

Entry: Donation please for room hire and expenses: **£3 at the door**



Café Scientifique Headingley is a programme run under the auspices of the Headingley Development Trust www.headingleydevelopmenttrust.org.uk